

May 3rd, 2020

# How to Wait on the Lord

Habakkuk 2:1-3

## Where we've been

We begin chapter two of Habakkuk this morning. If you are just joining us, Habakkuk was one of the prophets of Judah immediately before the Babylonian captivity 587 B.C. This short book is a dialog between Habakkuk and God: Habakkuk speaks, God responds, Habakkuk speaks, God responds. In the first chapter, Habakkuk is perplexed that Judah has been overrun by the wickedness of God's own people, and he essentially asks: God why aren't you doing anything about this? Then God responds in v.5 with more than Habakkuk was looking for. The LORD said 'I'm going to send that wicked nation Babylon against you, they will accomplish my work of judgment.' Habakkuk is even more perplexed. His second speech has two unsolvable questions from his perspective. His **first question** is from v.13 'God why would you use the wicked to swallow up the man more righteous than he?' He understands that God is using Babylon as an instrument to correct and reprove His covenant people (v. 12). But Babylon is worse than Judah. So He is perplexed that a holy God would use a wicked instrument to accomplish his purpose. His **second question** is in v.17, essentially 'God how long are you going to permit this seemingly endless slaughter to go on?' From Habakkuk's perspective, Babylon has turned God's design for humanity on it's head. She is the tyrannical fisherman who is cruelly killing all the fish. Habakkuk is asking 'how long O LORD?'

## The contradiction of God's ways?

As we begin chapter two, Habakkuk has reached the end of his ability to reason how God works in the world. He discovered the truth of **Isaiah 55:8** "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." So what does Habakkuk do? He *waits* on the LORD. This is perhaps the most difficult thing for a Christian to do: to wait on the LORD.

Why is waiting difficult? Because there *seems* to be a contradiction between what we experience *and* who we know God to be. There seems to be a contradiction between what we see, *and* what God has promised. Sarah was old and advanced in years and the Scripture says “the way of women had ceased to be with Sarah” (**Genesis 18:11**)—that was her experience. Yet God promised her that she would bear a child. There seemed to be a contradiction between her experience and God’s promise. She laughed at it. The contradiction was ridiculous to her.

### **The ‘contradictions’ we face**

Dear congregation, we often face what we think are contradictions between what we experience *and* what God has promised. He has promised that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas (**Habakkuk 3:14**). But what do we experience? Humanity nearly universally ignores God. **Psalms 10:4** “All his thoughts are, “There is no God.” God has promised “that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (**Romans 8:28**). Yet what does a large portion of the church, especially in the east, experience? Persecution, prison, death. How do we handle these and many more such seeming contradictions in our lives? How do we reconcile our experience with God’s promises? Habakkuk shows us. We are to wait on the LORD. It is when we wait on the LORD that these seeming contradictions melt away. That is where he is taking us today.

### *The Big Idea...*

When you find yourself perplexed with God's dealings, wait on the LORD for  
His good purposes will surely come to pass

- ☆The Silence of Waiting
- ☆The Diligence of Waiting
- ☆The Confidence of Waiting<sup>1</sup>

## I. The Silence of Waiting

### The watchman

Please look with me **2:1**. As far as Habakkuk's experience goes, this verse is the verse upon which the whole book turns. Prior to this verse, he is perplexed, after this verse, he is full of praise. **v.1** "I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower..." Let's stop there. He's using the metaphor of a watchman. He says it twice so we won't miss it. "I will take my stand *at my watch post* and station myself *on the tower*..." A watchman was the person who stood high above the city in a lookout. He was responsible to simply wait and see what was coming, whether it be an enemy army or a messenger. In **2 Samuel 18:24-25**, the watchman on the roof of the gate called out to David about the messengers returning bringing news of Absalom's death. The watchman was in a privileged position to see something that David couldn't see. In **Song of Solomon 3**, the bride is searching for her Beloved. Who does she ask for help? The watchmen. **v.3** "The watchmen found me...[she asks them] 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'" They could see the whole of the city, something she was blind to since she was on the ground.

### You must rise above the world

This is how Habakkuk is using the metaphor. As long as Habakkuk was on the ground—as long as he reasoned on a *purely* human level—he was perplexed as to what God was doing. His last speech made this clear. Habakkuk came to the end of his own wisdom. And this is the **first thing** you must see. As long as you stay on the ground, that is, as long as you lean on your

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<sup>1</sup> These three components of waiting came from John Owen's exposition of Psalm 130:5-6 found in *The Works of John Owen Vol. 6*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth, 2009), pg. 611

own understanding, then you will be very troubled by the perplexities you face in this life. What does Habakkuk do? He ‘ascends’ the watchtower. I don’t believe this was a literal tower. Rather through this imagery, Habakkuk rises above this world. Calvin says here that Habakkuk “extricated [or freed] himself from the thoughts of his flesh.”<sup>2</sup> You see, it’s not just the world and the devil that are trying to deceive you. Your own fleshly heart is constantly distorting who God is. How do you escape these thoughts?

### **The enchantment must be broken**

Remember in the *Hobbit*, when Bilbo and the dwarves were walking through Mirkwood? It was a sick forest—an enchanted forest—that put a spell on anyone who walked through it. Bilbo and the dwarves are hallucinating, and everything is distorted. They are in grave danger of getting forever lost or worse. Finally, Bilbo climbs high up a tree and breaks through the ceiling of the forest. He sees the light, and feels the warmth of sun, and the breeze of the wind. At once, the enchantment is broken. The distortion is gone.

### **The difficulty of silence**

That’s what’s happening here, Habakkuk, in chapter one, was enchanted, and his own reasoning had started to distort God’s promises. So what does he do? He lifted himself above this world, that is, he resolved to bid adieu to his own reason.<sup>3</sup> What does this look like practically? It means that he silenced the voice of his own heart. He turned off the recording that was playing in his head. This may be the most difficult part about waiting on the Lord. We can to the LORD in prayer and tell Him about our burdens, and even cast them upon Him. But the temptation is, that once we cast those burdens upon God, then we pick them right back up after we get done praying. That’s climbing up and down the tower. That is no way to live. You see, in our waiting on God, we must do what Habakkuk does here. He actually puts a silence to these thoughts.

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XV*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 56

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, pg. 58

He, like a watchman, climbed above the crowds and the chaos, into a quiet, isolated tower, where the clamor and confusion was gone. The imagery is very descriptive here. And this is the first ingredient of waiting on the LORD—we must be silent before Him.

### **The opposite of silence**

Perhaps it would be helpful if we were to describe what the opposite of this silence is. There are two opposite of silence: 1) A murmuring spirit. 2) A hasty spirit.

#### **1. A murmuring spirit**

The first opposite of silence is to have murmuring spirit. A murmuring spirit is when you complain (verbally or non-verbally) against God's providences because you feel know better than Him. In **Exodus 16**, the children of Israel had experienced one of these seeming contradictions between their experience and God's promise. They were in the wilderness, God promised to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. *But* they wanted it that promise yesterday. So they started to grumble against the LORD.<sup>4</sup> Moses tells them in **v.7** “[the LORD] has heard your grumbling against the LORD.” Ultimately a grumbling spirit is so offensive to the LORD, because it says that either God is not powerful enough to deliver, or that He is not wise enough to govern, or that He is not good enough to bless.

Now Habakkuk shows us the way right way here. It's true that he questions God. He's trying to understand what's going on. But he stops. He doesn't murmur. He climbs the tower to God in order to put Himself in God's presence. The silence that Habakkuk practices is seen in **Ecclesiastes 5:2** “God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.” Notice that when he gets to the tower, he's not longer talking. He's not murmuring, he has silenced himself. He's looking for an answer from God, patiently, quietly. He has left all his complaints on the earth.

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<sup>4</sup> “...he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” v.7

## 2. A hasty spirit

The second opposite of silence is to have a hasty spirit. A hasty spirit is the one that seeks a solution not according to God's ways, or not according to God's timing. King Saul had a hasty spirit. Samuel told him to wait seven days until his arrival and then he would tell what Saul must do (1 Samuel 10:8). Seven days passed. There seemed to be a contradiction between Saul's experience and the promise given to him. So what did he do? He performed the sacrifice on his own which was forbidden. Samuel shows up and ask "What have you done?" Saul replies in 1 Samuel 13:11-12 "...the people were scattering from me...the Philistines [are coming] down against me...and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." Saul forced himself, that is, he came up with his own solution to the perplexity. He had a hasty spirit, he was not silently waiting for the Lord's word to be fulfilled. As a result Samuel told him his kingdom would not endure.

David shows us the opposite of a hasty spirit. He was silent before the LORD. When King Saul was hunting him down to try and kill him, David had two opportunities to kill Saul, two opportunities to create his own solution. What did David say? 1 Samuel 26:10-11 "As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed." You see silence is not necessarily *not speaking*. It's resolving to silence your own wisdom, silence your own solutions to how this problem should be solved. David placed himself in the loving hands of God and silenced his own solutions, and trusted that God would solve his problems.

### Experimental silence

Dear congregation, this is one of the secrets of the Christian life: knowing how to silently wait before the LORD. Don't you see that when Habakkuk focused on his problems, he was in a state of perplexity and his soul was troubled. But he knew the solution. Have you experienced this solution? Get up into the tower, climb above the trees of Mirkwood, rise above your own

understanding. If you walk according to your own understanding, there is only darkness and despair. You must start by putting a silence to your own complaining, and your own solutions. For some of you, this will be the most difficult part of waiting. It is for me. This past week I murmured so much about what our government is doing, and I gave more than my share of solutions. Silence is hard. But don't you see that it is precisely here where our hearts are tested? Are we letting God be God or not? Do we really believe that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from our Father? (**Matthew 10:29**) Do we really believe that every king's heart—including our president, and governor and mayor—is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD and that he turns it wherever He will? (**Proverbs 21:1**). If so, then let us be silent before Him. We must take a stand, and resolve to look at God and not our problems.<sup>5</sup> We must detach ourselves from the problem.<sup>6</sup> Let's see how Habakkuk does this.

## II. The Diligence of Waiting

### **Waiting is not a passive thing**

Look at what Habakkuk says next. v.1 “I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower, *and look out to see what he will say to me...*” Let's stop there. Do you see what Habakkuk is doing? He is *actively* seeking an answer from the LORD. Waiting on the Lord is not a passive thing. It is just as active as anything else you do in this life. Habakkuk doubles up his verbs, he says: ‘I will look out to see.’ In his looking, *he is looking*. He's searching. He is looking for God to give him an answer. He didn't stop at silencing his own thoughts. That was just the first step. But the second step is this: Habakkuk actively sought to hear what God would say. “I will look out to see *what he will say to me...*” He wanted to hear from the LORD.

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<sup>5</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *From Fear to Faith: Rejoicing in the Lord in Turbulent Times*, (Nottingham, England,: IVP, 1997), pg. 36

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, pg. 34

### The blank chalk board

I remember nearly 20 years ago a well meaning Christian tried to teach me how to ‘hear’ from the LORD. He explained it like this: ‘imagine sitting before a blank chalk board, you simply need to wait until something appears.’ He went on to explain his parable by saying that the chalk board represents your mind, which you are to empty, and wait until the Lord suggests something to it’s blank canvas. Now that sounds really spiritual, but it’s not Scriptural. That has more in common with Eastern Mysticism than Christianity.

### The diligent use of means

No, in order to hear from the LORD, we are called to be active and *diligent* in our waiting. John Owen defines **diligence** like this: “Diligence is the activity of the mind, *in the regular use of means*, for the pursuit of any end.”<sup>7</sup> So the diligent farmer must use *the means* of sowing seek if he is going to reap a harvest. In order for the traveler to stay warm in the winter, he must use *the means* of adequately clothing himself. If children want to read, they have to use the means of learning their ABC’s. You see, in all things, “God has appointed one thing to be *the means* of obtaining another thing.”<sup>8</sup> And just as we must use *means* in the natural realm, so we must use *means* in the spiritual realm. That’s what Habakkuk is doing here. He’s not staring at a blank chalkboard, he is using spiritual means in order to hear from God.

### The means of the saints

Consider how the saints of old used means as they waited on the LORD. In Genesis 32, Jacob was experiencing one of those seeming contradictions between his experience and the promise of God. God had told Jacob’s mother, Rebekkah, that Jacob and Esau would become two nations, but Jacob would be stronger and Esau would serve him.<sup>9</sup> But now as Jacob travels back to his

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<sup>7</sup> Owen, pg. 612

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, pg. 613

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 25:23

home, Esau who promised to kill him (**Genesis 27:41**) for cheating him out of his birthright was coming to meet him. What does Jacob do? He prayed all night. Moses describes it as Jacob wrestling with God. Jacob's waiting wasn't passivity. No he sought the LORD. And what was the end of the matter? **Genesis 32:29** says "And there [God] blessed him."

Or consider again **Song of Solomon 3**. The bride had lost her Beloved. The chapter begins with her lying in bed. **v. 1** "On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not." Did she just wait for Him there? No, in **v.2** she says, "I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves." She resolves to use all means possible to find Him. "In the city, streets, fields, she would inquire after him."<sup>10</sup> And then her diligence finds its reward, she says in **v.4** "I found him who my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go..."<sup>11</sup>

### The ordinary means of grace

Dear congregation, God has graciously given us *means* to seek Him so we never have to guess where the path is. Christianity is not like the ancient gnostic sects which depends on you having secret knowledge to make progress. Nor is it like Catholicism that requires the mediation of the Pope or a hierarchy of bishops in order for you to find your way. No God has given us direct access to Him *through* His Word. That's what Habakkuk is waiting for in **v.1**, *a word from the LORD*. You must never think that when Jesus said "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"<sup>12</sup> that He was speaking in riddles, or that He was laying out some complicated and

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<sup>10</sup> Owen, pg. 613

<sup>11</sup> In the book of Esther, when the Jews were threatened with destruction, what did Esther do? She told Mordecai "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do" (**Esther 4:16**). She employed means.

In Acts 12, we read that King Herod killed James with the sword and put Peter in prison. What did the church do? **Acts 12:5** "So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church."

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 7:7

burdensome way to find Him. No. God makes Himself know to us *through* the ordinary means of grace: through the preaching of the Word, through prayer, the ordinances of baptism and Lord's Supper, through memorizing, meditating, reading, hearing and singing the Word. These are how we *hear from the LORD*—the ordinary means of grace.

### **Satan's foul breath**

But this is precisely where we must be aware of Satan's strategies. You find yourself in trouble, perplexed about some problem. The problem is massive, bigger than you, bigger than anything that you've ever faced before. The devil will suggest that you need some grand and spectacular sign from God. 'The ordinary means of grace,' he will whisper, 'are just *too ordinary*. Ordinary means are for ordinary problems, but you are facing a perplexing problem, a real problem, and you need real answers.' It's here where so many Christians can go astray.

### **The power of God's 'ordinary' Word**

Do you realize what God says about His *ordinary Word*?<sup>13</sup>

**2 Peter 3:5** says that "the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed... *by the word of God.*" God's *ordinary Word* did that.

It is God's *ordinary Word* that brings the dead to life. **1 Peter 1:23** "...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through *the living and abiding word of God.*"

God's *ordinary Word* revives the soul (**Ps. 19:7**) and rejoices the heart (**Ps. 19:8**).

God's *ordinary Word* has shaped the destiny of every nation (**Daniel 4:35**).

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<sup>13</sup> He says His Word is living and active (**Hebrews 4:12**)

And God's *ordinary Word* promises that it provides you with everything you need for life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**).

The devil is lying when he suggests you need a bigger better answer. Beloved, don't you have something *better* than Habakkuk had. You have the full revelation of God's Word—the complete canon—everything that God wanted His church to know in this age before His second coming. Are you pressing into *this means*? Are you looking to see what He will say to you?

### **Expecting God to speak back**

There's one more thing we need to see before we move on. Please look at the end of v.1. After Habakkuk says he will look for God to speak, he says "... *and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*" Now the last phrase here is translated differently depending upon which version you have. The NASB and KJV says "and how I may reply *when I am reprov'd.*" Don't get hung up on these differences. The vital thing to see here is that Habakkuk fully expects that God will speak to him. Follow Habakkuk's logic. He's going to consider how to respond how to answer God *when God speaks to him*. Do you see? God speaking to him is *a given, it's assumed*, Habakkuk is taking it for granted that God is going to speak to him. You must lay hold of this. Is this how you come to God's Word? Do you come like Habakkuk to this Word, expecting that God will speak to you through it? Do you ever say to yourself: "This is the Word of God through which He speaks to men...I wonder what He has to say to me?"<sup>14</sup> Habakkuk was not *merely* seeking God, He fully believed that God would answer him. Do you believe that God speaks to you through His Word? If not, why not? If you believe that God is your Father; that His thoughts towards you are more numerous than the sand;<sup>15</sup> that are your days are written in His book;<sup>16</sup> then why would you not expect this loving Father speak to you through His

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<sup>14</sup> Jones, pg. 37

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 139:18

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 139:16

Word? Don't you know His promise? **James 4:8** "Draw near to God, and *he will draw near to you.*"<sup>17</sup> We should expect our loving Father to commune with us as we diligently seek Him. That's our **second point**. Waiting on the LORD isn't a passive thing, it is a diligent use of the means He has graciously given.

### III. The Confidence of Waiting

#### The reward of waiting

Now Habakkuk's expectations are rewarded in **v.2-3**. The LORD *speaks* to him. Dear congregation, this is where we can find all our confidence for waiting on the LORD. But you must realize that the way God deals with Habakkuk is how God typically deals with the whole church. Calvin says here "There is no doubt...that the Prophet accommodates...his own example to the common instruction of the whole church [so that] we ought to entertain a cheerful hope, that the Lord, when he finds us stationed in our watch-tower, will in due season [grant] to us the [comfort] which he sees we need."<sup>18</sup> So I want to draw out five things that show us we can have utmost confidence when we wait upon the LORD. **1)** God's Word is personal; **2)** God's Word is prophetic; **3)** God's Word is clear; **4)** God's Word has an appointed time; **5)** God's Word will certainly come to pass.

#### 1. God's Word is personal

Please look at **v.2** "And the LORD answered *me*:" To whom has the LORD spoken? To whom has He given this revelation of His Word? This Word is not for the angels. It's not even ultimately for the reprobate. It's not for any other creature under all the Heavens, except for us—His church. Habakkuk says "the LORD answered *me*." Oh the privilege that God would condescend to a people and speak with them. "What is man that you are mindful of him, and

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<sup>17</sup> Also see Galatians 6:9; Isaiah 30:18; Psalm 91:15; Psalm 50:15

<sup>18</sup> Calvin, pg. 63

the son of man that you care for him?” (**Psalm 8:4**) And why did He give us a this Word? In order “to declare, reveal, and make known [Himself] to believers.”<sup>19</sup> Beloved, this Word is for you, so you can know Him. The Living God speaks to you in it. And each part of His word is designed to build your confidence as you wait on Him. His commands show us how holy He is, that He will never lie to us. His judgments show us that He is righteous, that He will one day put an end to all evil and all perplexities. His promises show us that He is full of goodness, grace, love, and patience and He will never leave us nor forsake us.<sup>20</sup> What could we possibly need in order to wait on God, than this personal Word?

## 2. God’s Word is prophetic

The LORD continues in **v.2** “Write the *vision...*” By “vision” the Lord means a prophecy, a fore-telling of events, a declaration of things that will take place in the future. The specific vision that God gives is in **v.4** to the end of the chapter. Essentially, He answers all of Habakkuk’s perplexities. The wicked Babylonians that God Himself is raising up in order to judge and reprove Judah, will themselves be destroyed, *but* the just shall live by faith. It is a matter of historical fact that the Babylonians fell to the Medes and the Persians just as God had prophesied. Here’s the principle: No other Word, save God’s Word, declares to planet earth what the future is, what is going to happen at the end of this age. **Isaiah 46:9-10** I am God...declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done.” God’s prophetic word alone solves the seeming contradiction between our observable experience and what He has promised. It’s His prophetic Word that gives us confidence in our waiting.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Owen, pg. 638

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> He will not let one of His words fall to the ground (1 Samuel 3:19). He watches over His word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12).

### 3. God's Word is clear

The LORD continues in v.2 “Write the vision; *make it plain on tablets*, so he may run who reads it.” The allusion to tablets here is meant for us to recall God’s original giving of the ten commandments on tablets of stone.<sup>22</sup> The emphasis is on the clarity of this word. When He says make it plain, the idea is that this vision would be so clear that anyone running by it could see what it says without even stopping. Dear congregation, God’s purposes for this world, for His church, for the end of this age, for the punishment of the wicked, and the salvation of His elect is so plainly laid out in Scripture that even little children can understand.<sup>23</sup> Peter says that God’s Word is like a lamp shining in a dark place (**2 Peter 1:19**). Paul says “The word is near to you, in your mouth and in your heart” (**Romans 10:8**). If you are in need confidence, go and see for yourself how plainly God speaks about the most important things. Go to the upper room discourse, listen to how Jesus speaks plainly about His preparing a place for us, and His returning to take us to Himself.<sup>24</sup> Go to Romans 8 and listen to the clarity in which Paul speaks that if God did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him graciously give us all things.<sup>25</sup> The Words that will bring you the most confidence in this life, are the most clear in Scripture.

### 4. God's Word has an appointed time

v.3 “For still the vision awaits its *appointed time*; it hastens to the end—it will not lie.”<sup>26</sup> So here’s a very direct answer to Habakkuk’s question. He asked

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<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 27:8 says “And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly.”

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 119:130 “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”

<sup>24</sup> John 14:1-3

<sup>25</sup> Romans 8:32

<sup>26</sup> “...it hastens to the end—it will not lie.” Note these two rapid statements about this vision. **1)** “It *hastens* to the end...” The Hebrew word means to *yearn* or *pant* for the end. There is a personification involved. This vision *itself* wants to be fulfilled. Not only does Habakkuk, but God Himself longs for *this* appointed time. **2)** “It will not lie.” Since God is not a man that He should lie (**Numbers 23:19**), it is impossible that His Word ever lie.

the LORD in 1:17 if Babylon was going to mercilessly kill forever. And the LORD here tells him, that there is an appointed time for Babylon's doom. God has a "divinely pre-determined moment"<sup>27</sup> for everything that takes place. **Ecclesiastes 3:1** says "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven."<sup>28</sup> There was an appointed time for God that God told Noah that He was going to flood the earth—120 years (**Genesis 6:3**). The scoffers scoffed, but the flood came exactly on time. There was an appointed time that God would rescue Israel from their captivity—400 years (**Genesis 15:13**). And all of Pharaoh's army could not prevent God when the appointed time came.<sup>29</sup>

Part of the seeming contradiction between our observable experience and God's promises is because we don't realize this point. "We [become] anxious that God should immediately accomplish what he promised."<sup>30</sup> But God does things in His own timing, not ours.<sup>31</sup> And thank God for this fact! Don't you realize that the 1st century Christians who were suffering at the hands of their persecutors were longing for Christ to return? So much so, that they were mocked over it. **2 Peter 3:4** records their scoffers "Where is the promise of his coming?" They desperately wanted their trial to end. But what does God say? **2 Peter 3:9** "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." Don't you see beloved? Christ had you in mind in concerning this exact timing His return. He was patient so that you could come to repentance. Had He returned according to man's timing, you would have never known the Light of World. You would have never known the One whom the Psalmist said of "Your steadfast love is better than life" (**Psalms 63:3**). No.

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<sup>27</sup> Jones, pg. 43

<sup>28</sup> NASB

<sup>29</sup> There was an appointed time for Jesus Christ to come into the world. Galatians 4:4 "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." And Christ came at the exact moment God had decreed from before the foundation of the world.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, pg. 64

<sup>31</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time."

The fact that God does everything in *His* appointed time is the greatest confidence we can have while we wait for His Word to be accomplished.

### 5. God's Word will certainly come to pass

The LORD continues in v.3 “If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”<sup>32</sup> We live in a world where nothing *seems* certain. Doesn't this morning prove the point? There's no certainty attached to where or if we can meet. There's no certainty to how long this virus will last. There's no certainty that financial ruin won't follow. There's no certainty to anything we experience. And the problem is, that we can start to apply that God's Word. Everything in our experience says nothing is certain, therefore we can reason that God's Word must not be certain either. Maybe we wouldn't say that out loud, but our anxieties about state the world can betray that we are unsure if what God said will certainly come to pass. What do we do with this uncertainty? How do we recover our confidence in the certainty of God's Word?

We'll consider how the author of Hebrews applies this verse. Please turn with me to **Hebrews 10:37**. Now this verse is directly quoting **Habakkuk 2:3**. But there is an important difference. Habbakuk says “...*it* will surely come; *it* will not delay.” But the author of Hebrews changes this *it*, to a Person. He says “Yet a little while, and the coming *one* will come and will not delay.”<sup>33</sup> It's the same verse, but through Divine inspiration, it is changed to a Person, to this Coming One. Who is this? It's the LORD Jesus Christ. Don't you see? The people of God, beginning with Adam, down to this day, have never placed their hope a disembodied abstract Word from the LORD. We have placed our hope on a Person. In the seed of the woman, in the offspring of Abraham, in David's

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<sup>32</sup> Notice at first these two statements seem to contradict each other. The first statement says “If it seems slow”; the second says “It will not delay.” But God is simply condescending to our perspective, as if to say ‘I know it may *seem* to you that I am working slow, but there is no delay in My plan.’ There is never any delay with God.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, the LXX translation of Habakkuk similarly reads “If he tarry, wait for him.”

Son, in the Suffering Servant, in the Lamb of God, in the King of Glory. In a veiled way, the Lord is directing Habakkuk to the Christ.<sup>34</sup>

But it is not veiled to us. We have seen already seen the greatest prophecy come to pass—in the person of the LORD Jesus. What was promised about this Jesus that didn't come to pass?

It was promised that He would be punished in the place for sinners (**Isaiah 53:5**). This invincibly came to pass. **Romans 5:6** “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”

It was promised that He would be raised from the dead (**Psalm 16:10**). This invincibly came to pass. **Matthew 28:6** “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.”

It was promised that He would bring a people to Himself. Look at yourself. You are a walking monument to the certainty of God's Word. You used to be a son of disobedience, but now you are a child of God. You used to be without God and without hope in the World, but now you have Christ *in you* the hope of glory. You used to be an unclean thing, but now you are the very righteousness of God.

Beloved God's Word will certainly come to pass, wait for it with all confidence. It cannot fail, no matter what perplexities you face in this life. God has already given in the greatest proof of His Word in send His Son for you.

### **A call to unbelievers**

If you are here this morning, and you have never trusted what God has said in His Word about His Son, then you can be certain about this: God is holy and you are a sinner. It is certain, that when you stand before Him on that last day, that you will be judged for what you have done in your life. And it is

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<sup>34</sup> cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12

certain, that God will condemn you. The Bible is absolutely certain on this point: "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 1 John 5:12.