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Sermon Notes

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A Tale of Two Empires, Part 2

Habakkuk 2:2-17

I. Wreckage of a World of Empires

- A. Military Empires: Mayan conquered by Aztec, Aztec conquered by Spanish, Spanish conquered by English

Aztec ruins testify to the glory of Mexico's past

- B. Financial Empires: Standard Oil

John Davison Rockefeller's "Octopus"... controlling 90% of the oil industry... personal wealth of over \$400 million in an era when a factory laborer made \$2.50 a day or maybe \$40,000 in a lifetime

- C. Ruthless Men Sweeping the Earth... one empire rises on the ashes on another

- D. God's Four-fold Answer to Habakkuk's Anguished Questions

1. Habakkuk's Anguished Question:

How can you use the godless Babylonians to destroy your chosen people?

2. God's Four-fold Answer: Habakkuk 2

- a. Babylon will be destroyed in turn
- b. Babylon's destruction is just a part of God's overall plan... nations will rise and fall just as Babylon did... in the end the very spirit of Babylon itself will be crushed
- c. the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God's glory... God's glory will conquer this sin-cursed world
- d. individual people will live by faith... they will enter God's Kingdom and live forever basking in God's glory

II. The Law of the Boomerang: Babylon Will Be Destroyed in Turn

A. The Law of the Boomerang

1. Australian Weapon
2. Moral Principle
 - a. the Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12 "So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you."

Matthew 7:2 "...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

- b. the Consistent Warning

Psalm 7:15-16 He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head.

Proverbs 26:27 If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

- c. applied to military empire builders

Matthew 26:52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

- d. common-sense wisdom

"What goes around comes around!"

B. Babylon Will Get Theirs Too

1. Got ambitious, greedy, seeking their own glory
2. Gathered in a powerful horde and swept over peaceful lands
3. Built an empire to their own glory
4. Settled in in luxurious comfort

Habakkuk 2:7-8 Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

Habakkuk 2:15-17 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them."

C. Habakkuk Waits Patiently For It (3:16)

Habakkuk 3:16 I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

D. Fulfilled in Daniel 5

1. Belshazzar's Feast
2. Darius the Mede's Waiting Army
3. Mysterious Writing on the Wall
4. Death Sentence... for an Emperor and an Empire

Daniel 5:26-31 "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN "This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

III. All Human Empires Are Fuel for the Fire

A. Habakkuk 2 Echoes Through Human History

Habakkuk 2:2-3 Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. 3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

B. Habakkuk 2: General Language, Universal Condemnation

1. “Woe to him who...” = “Woe to anyone who...”

2. Consistent pattern of military conquerors

a. wicked motives

- pride
- unrighteous desires
- discontent
- covetousness
- greed
- evil plotting
- love of ease
- power
- perversion
- self glorification

b. wicked actions

- violence
- extortion
- plunder (theft)
- murder
- destruction
- cruelty

3. Result: constant cycle of human history

a. conquerors make many enemies

b. conquerors get fat, lazy, comfortable

c. conquerors get conquered

4. General language on Habakkuk 2:13

Habakkuk 2:13 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

a. general principle in the world... human striving for their own glory results in emptiness

- Human business empires built for self-glory is fuel for the fire... every dollar, yen, pound, deutchmark will burn

- Human artwork done for self-glory is fuel for the fire: every painting, sculpture, tapestry, fresco
- Human literature done for self-glory is fuel for the fire: every play, novel, magnum opus
- Human science done for self-glory is fuel for the fire: every invention, advancement, Nobel prize, and discovery is temporal and fuel for the fire

b. this is not an accident... it is from the Lord

Habakkuk 2:13 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?c. God accepts no rival empires

5. Universal condemnation on godless human glory... even though they exhaust themselves

Napoleon exhausted himself to establish a world-wide empire... a dynamo of energy, dictating letters, making laws, setting policy, planning invasions... slept very little

God has determined that Napoleon's vast labors and exhaustion amount to NOTHING eternally

In the Scripture... one name symbolizes this human thirst for empires of personal glory: BABYLON

C. The Past and Future of Babylon

1. Ancient pedigree of rebellion

a. Nimrod

Noah had a son named Ham, Ham a son named Cush, Cush a son named Nimrod

Genesis 10:8-12 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah 12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

"Shinar" = Chaldea... he founded the city of Babylon

Empire builder... the first "centers of his kingdom were"... monstrous cities of great power, including Nineveh, the ultimate capital of the Assyrian empire

Nimrod was the prototype empire builder: a mighty warrior, building cities to his own glory

b. Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

The Tower of Babel represented the Babylonian spirit: rebellious against God, building mighty structures to make a name for themselves in defiance of God

God saw to it that they would fail... but the spirit of Babel has driven human history ever since

God's sentence on the spirit of Babylon rings for all time:

Vs. 13-14 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? 14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

2. New Testament: ROME

a. Peter's cryptic greeting

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

b. church tradition: Peter executed in Rome

3. Babylon's Future: Revelation

a. Babylon the Great... making nations drunk

Revelation 14:8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

Revelation 18:1-2 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. 2 With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

Revelation 18:6-7 Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. 7 Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself

The great world system of human glory and perversion... making the nations drunk with lust, power, greed, self-worship

So God pours out the wine of his wrath on Babylon

b. Babylon the Great: drunk with God's wrath

Revelation 16:19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.

Note: the "great city" broken apart... the center of the world empire in opposition to God; "the cities of the nations collapsed"... worldwide empire falls too

Drunk with God's wrath... God's "day of Judgment" on the very spirit of Babylon will come

c. Babylon the Great: drunk with the blood of saints

Revelation 17:3-6 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. 5 This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Babylon the Great persecutes God's chosen people... throughout history empire builders have crushed God's peaceful people; she is drunk with the blood of the saints

d. Babylon the Great: final judgment

Revelation 18:9-13 "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' 11 "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more-

- 12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.

D. Summary: Babylon Represents All Human Striving After Personal Glory

1. The name “Babylon” Represents Human Glory
2. The Name “Babylon” Represents Tall Towers of Power and Greed
3. The Name “Babylon” is Under a Curse

But... is all empire building wicked? NO!! Not at all! For God is building an empire through Spirit-empowered men and women that will last for an eternity!!

Vs. 13-14 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? 14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

IV. God’s Eternal Empire

A. Prophecy: Certainty When God Speaks

1. Habakkuk sees the future

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD

2. Absolutely impossible not to occur!!

B. Clearing the Building Site

1. NOTE: First word: “For...”
2. People’s labor is fuel for the fire BECAUSE God’s glory will swallow them up
3. God allows no rivals... He clears His building site

Illus. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: statue representing a series of human empires; rock cut out destroys them

Daniel 2:35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer.

The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

Consistent lesson from human history: empires rise and fall, leaving barely a trace that they ever existed... but God's empire continues to grow and fill the world with the knowledge of His glory

C. Past Mandate Failed

1. A Glorious World

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

"Glory" = bright, clear, shining displays of the nature of God

Creation declares the glory of God

2. Our Role: Fill the Earth With God's Image

Genesis 1:27-28 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."

The world was already filled with God's glory... it was our job to KNOW that glory, to understand it, to revel in it, to enjoy it forever

3. Sin Twisted the Commission

Our minds became perverted and twisted... instead of seeing God's glory everywhere, we became idolators

Romans 1:20-23 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

4. Blind Eyes and a Diminished Glory

Our eyes became blind to the obvious... the Creator's glory

The world itself was cursed and became far less glorious

D. Present Mandate Being Fulfilled

1. God is building an empire now... the Kingdom of God!!

Christ entered the world to redeem us from sin... and to announce the Kingdom of God

Mark 1:14-15 Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

2. Christ's death on the cross and resurrection the clearest displays of God's glory ever
3. The Gospel is sweeping around the world... advancing the Kingdom of God ever further
4. The Scope is WORLD-WIDE
5. Conversion results in partial fulfillment

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Every time someone comes to faith in Christ, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord has just filled another corner of the world! That man, that woman will never see the world the same again! They see God's glory in the sunrise, in the wind, in their daily labors, in their children's faces

They also know that they now live for one purpose only: the glory of God!!!

E. Future Perfection: A Full Knowledge of God's Glory

1. A New and Perfect World

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

A perfect world, in which creation is remade absolutely glorious... and God's glory will shine everywhere

2. Full Revelation of God's Glory

3. Perfect Eyes to See It
4. Perfect Hearts to Know God's Glory

V. Review and Application

A. Review God's Answer to Habakkuk

1. Habakkuk's Anguished Question:

How can you use the godless Babylonians to destroy your chosen people?

2. God's Four-fold Answer

- a. Babylon will be destroyed in turn
- b. Babylon's destruction is just a part of God's overall plan... nations will rise and fall just as Babylon did... in the end the very spirit of Babylon itself will be crushed
- c. the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God's glory... God's glory will conquer this sin-cursed world
- d. individual people will live by faith... they will enter God's Kingdom and live forever basking in God's glory

B. Come Out of Babylon!!

Revelation 18:4-5 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; 5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."

1. Babylon represents a world arrogantly at war with God
2. The world system surrounds us daily... purveying lusts, pleasures, luxuries, sin
3. Even worse, the spirit of Babylon threatens us to build a name for ourselves

to use your God-given talents to build a name for your own glory

if you are a musician, to use your talent for your own glory

if you are a businessman, to build an ever-growing empire for your own glory, pleasure, and comfort

if you are a student, to plan a career for your own glory and name

if you are a laborer, to do your labor for yourself

God is going to destroy everything not built for His glory and His name

Judgment day is coming

C. Enter and Live by Faith in Christ

Habakkuk 2:4 The righteous will live by faith

1. The world is coming down... God is coming to roll up this universe like a ball and throw it away
2. All of us have sinned and cannot survive that Day without Christ
3. Simple faith in Christ ensures our salvation on that Day... there is no other place of refuge
4. Live daily by faith in Christ... surrounded by the Spirit of Babylon, trust Christ to keep your heart pure

Habakkuk 2:4 The righteous will live by faith

D. Build God's Kingdom With God-Glorifying Ambition

1. Be ruthlessly ambitious for God's glory

Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

The forceful advance of the Kingdom of God has been the story of twenty centuries of church history... nothing has been able to stop it. An forceful men are those who, boldly empowered by the spirit are willing to bear any burden and pay any price to take the gospel to the ends of the earth

2. You were called to be more than a conqueror for Christ
3. Church history shines with the stories of men and women ruthlessly ambitious for Christ

Hudson Taylor: "Give me China or I die!!"

"Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God!"

Jonathan Edwards: "Resolved: to [be ambitious for the Kingdom...]"

John Wesley: "The world is my parish!"

4. Ruthlessly conquer yourself for the glory of God

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

5. Move out, and ruthlessly squeeze every moment of every day for as much glory as God will reveal to you

Ephesians 5:15-16 Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

6. Share the Gospel... the Kingdom grows not by sword but by the Truth

John 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Romans 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

7. Dream HUGE for Christ!! Look at your whole life and the whole world... die with no regrets!