

The Revelation of God

A commentary on current events via Habakkuk. Remember we have already seen Paul quote from Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 2:4 “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.”

Jump to the beginning of Habakkuk for comments on current events.

Habakkuk 1:1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

Habakkuk 1:2 How long, O Lord (Yahweh), will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save.

Habakkuk is calling God to act. Hearing is used not just in the sense does God hear, but is he going to take what Habakkuk to heart and do something about it? He sees a world that is upside down. The evil people are prospering and the righteous are suffering. But notice something. He has a relationship with God (Yahweh). He can talk to Him. You have the same capability to pray and talk to God your Father in heaven.

Habakkuk 1:3 Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises.

Believers are called to be witnesses. We are to provide gospel information to unbelievers. We are to provide good news about walking

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in faith dependence on the Holy Spirit to believers. We are also witnesses to the evil in the world. In the Millennium and beyond, we will be witnesses to the evil that exists in the “Devil’s world.” Have you ever said, “When I get to heaven I want to ask so and so about a particular incident?” Have you ever realized that angels are learning from us now. They are observers. Do you ever think that when you get to heaven an angel may come up to you and ask you about a particular incident. Maybe they will say, “What were you thinking?” :)

**Habakkuk 1:4 Therefore the law is ignored
And justice is never upheld. For the wicked
surround the righteous; Therefore justice
comes out perverted.**

In verses 2-4, Habakkuk is lamenting the state of affairs in ancient Israel prior to the defeat of Israel and eventual exile. At that point, God has not yet taken action. Today, in America, there are terrible things happening. They will only get worse in spite of those who say everything is great. Even the “man on the street” acknowledges that the world is falling apart. Very bad things are on the way.

People, unbelievers, are asking questions. There is a recent fiction book titled, “Are you there God? It’s me Margaret.” It is the Christian’s task to answer the questions people have. Another Christian pastor once asked, “If there were a fire sale at a store like Target or Walmart, wouldn’t you want to tell a friend?” Salvation is free. No strings attached. All you need is to trust God for the salvation He has already prepared for everyone.

Starting in verse 5, God responds. Indeed, very bad things are going to happen in Israel. Be careful what you ask for. But remember. Believers belong to God. He will provide everything we need. Not necessarily what we want. And sometimes what we need is suffering. God does not always

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act swiftly. It gives time for some to change their thinking and trust God. Repent = change your mind.

**Habakkuk 1:5 “Look among the nations!
Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I
am doing something in your days—You would
not believe if you were told.**

There is a string of imperatives: Look (imperative), Observe (imperative), be astonished (imperative), wonder (imperative from the same root as the previous word). They all have to do with observation. There are many situations in life in which the observer doesn't believe what he sees. As an engineer testing software, I remember writing up errant software. The programmer would protest that the software behavior I witnessed was not possible. Yet I saw what I saw. And when I could duplicate the errant behavior for the programmer, he would be astonished and amazed.

You would not believe if you were told. There are things about to happen that we would not guess would happen. Terrible things.

This phrase reminds me of one of the closing scenes in the movie Blade Runner when the “replicant” Roy says, “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe.” And so history goes marching on into things we wouldn’t believe. World War 1 was labeled as the war to end all wars. But it led to another war, an even greater war. Yet, believers who have studied the Bible will have an opportunity to understand what is happening.

**Habakkuk 1:6 “For behold, I am raising up the
Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people
Who march throughout the earth To seize
dwelling places which are not theirs.**

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You could replace “Chaldeans” with “Chinese” today. Nixon and Kissinger were instrumental in starting relations with China. Perhaps God was working through them to “raise up” China as a future challenge to the United States. We know that several countries in the Pacific accuse China of seizing islands that do not belong to China. Take a for instance, the Paracel Islands. From Wikipedia:

“The ownership of the islands remains hotly contested. The People's Republic of China (PRC) on Mainland China, Vietnam, and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan all claim *de jure* sovereignty, although the PRC has had *de facto* control of the archipelago since the Battle of the Paracel Islands in January 1974.¹” Are the Chinese the new Chaldeans?

A more recent episode reported by CNN:

“China is facing a growing international backlash after one of its coast guard vessels used a water cannon against a Philippine boat in the South China Sea on Saturday, an incident analysts say escalates an already tense situation and could see the United States and its allies speed up plans for joint patrols in the waterway.

“Video from the Philippines showed a large Chinese Coast Guard ship spraying a much smaller Philippine boat that was attempting to deliver supplies to a garrison of Philippine marines on Second Thomas Shoal, a South China Sea feature in Manila’s exclusive economic zone that China calls Renai Reef and also claims as its sovereign territory.” By Brad Lendon and Kathleen Magramo, CNN Updated 4:13 AM EDT, Mon August 7, 2023²

A book could be written about China’s efforts to dominate the Pacific.

So much for current events through Habakkuk’s eyes.

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paracel_Islands

2 <https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/07/asia/china-philippines-coast-guard-confrontation-south-china-sea-intl-hnk/index.html>

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Now we return from our detours through eternal security and related topics back to the book of Romans.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

We already covered this verse, but not in as much detail as I would have liked. In particular, I didn't cover "to the Jew first." Currently, I am not prepared to delve into that topic. It would be at least an hour long lesson, probably longer.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

This was part of a previous lesson. It includes the quote from Habakkuk 2:4. In some cases, Herman has already covered pertinent topics.

Now for new material:

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

In the Greek, the first word in the text of verse 18 is "revealed." This word is used three times in the book of Romans. Twice in this chapter: verse 17 and verse 18. The last time is in chapter 8. Repetition. Although verse 18 starts a new thought, the word "revelation" links them together. We should follow that link if we can.

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In verse 17 revelation is given from “Scripture,” i.e. “as it is written.” According to Unger’s Bible Dictionary, “The word Scripture is derived from the Lat. *scriptum* or *scriptura*, and has for its Greek equivalent *graphē*, and Heb. *mīqrā’* (Neh 8:8). In its English use in the Bible it means “the writings,” as in Exod. 32:16; Dan 10:21.³”

In verse 18 and following revelation is given from creation.

Theologians provide two classifications of revelation: general and special.

L. S. Chafer says it succinctly. “It is the common practice of theologians to subdivide revelation into two principle divisions, namely, that which is *general* and that which is *specific*, or that which is *natural* and that which is *supernatural*, or that which is *original* and that which is *soteriological*. The former of each of these twofold categories incorporates that revelation which is communicated through nature and history, while the latter incorporates all that which comes from an intervention into the natural course of things, and which is supernatural both as to source and mode.⁴”

So, in verse 17 Paul uses “special” revelation, “Scripture.” Paul uses a Greek word that means “it is written.” In verses 18 and following, he is using general revelation. Paul uses a Greek word that can mean “evident” or “manifest.” As Chafer puts it, this revelation is communicated through nature and history.

This may cause one to see links between verses 16-17 and 18-31. Perhaps there is a correspondence that leads to a comparison/contrast.

First look at verses 16-17 for important words. Maybe there is a pattern.

Revelation → written → gospel → faith → righteousness → salvation

³ Unger, M.F. (1971). Unger’s Bible Dictionary, etc. (Seventeenth printing.). Chicago: Moody Press., p 983

⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer (1948). Systematic Theology . Volume 1 pages 52-53.

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The revelation in verses 16-17 is “special” given by prophets and apostles in written form. It contains the gospel which is faith leading to righteousness and salvation.

The revelation in verses 18 and following is “general” given through creation and known inherently by an unbeliever in his soul.

Revelation → evident → truth → suppress → wrath → darkness

Here is both the good news to salvation and the alternative, rejection of truth evident in creation.

Revelation (verses)	Type of Revelation	Type of Information	Response	Status	Result
Revelation (16-17)	Special: “Written”	Gospel	Faith	Righteousness	Salvation
Revelation (18+)	General: “Evident” (Manifest)	Truth	Suppress	Wrath	Darkness

Atheists reject God’s general revelation. Yet, they find parts of it difficult to reject.

Let us take a journey through general revelation. Atheists are aware of general revelation even if in a begrudging way. One of the concepts that atheists struggle with is called the “fine-tuned argument.” So what is the fine-tuned argument? From the book “Is Atheism Dead?”

“It is simply that there are certain things about our universe—and about our planet—that seem to be so extremely perfectly calibrated that they can hardly be coincidental. If these things were even slightly different,

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life would not even be possible. One classic example has to do with the size of Earth, which just happens to be exactly what it needs to be in order for life to exist here. Of course most of us cannot imagine that the size of our planet would have any bearing on whether life could exist here, but as it happens, we are perfectly mistaken. One rarely hears about this, but it is established fact: If our planet were smaller or larger by even the smallest of margins, life here could not exist. When we see how many things must be just so—and then just happen to be just so—we cannot help but wonder if perhaps mere coincidence isn't enough to account for it.⁵

So, it is not just the sun and stars and planets that speak of God's creation, but even the size and shape which make life possible. Human beings must be free to choose. There are some in society who want to force others to believe what they believe. From the Bible, it is imperative that each person have free will to choose...either to believe in Jesus as Savior or to reject Him. It must be their uncoerced will.

Of course, from our perspective, rejection of God leads to darkened thinking.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

I am getting ahead of myself here.

Romans 1:19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Evident. First the noun and then the verb. This is how God reveals Himself to His creation. In special revelation, God provides written information. In general revelation, God makes it evident.

⁵ Metaxas, E. (2023). *Is Atheism Dead?* Salem Books.

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In a way, this reminds me of my own journey from unbeliever to believer. From an early age, I was fascinated with nature, with living creatures, from insects to frogs to birds. Life. As I progressed in school, I learned that life is dependent on chemistry. And eventually I learned that chemistry is based upon physics. But, physics is based upon math. In each step of this journey, this knowledge took me further from life. When I was presented with the gospel by someone from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), the light was made evident through God's word. God made life. Not chemistry or physics or mathematics.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

How many times as a child did you look up to the sky in awe. God placed in each person the knowledge of an infinite God. This reaches our minds in a phase called "God consciousness." At that point, you either want to more about God or you reject God. If you are positive toward God, He finds a way to provide the gospel. In some cases, missionaries journey to the ends of the earth. In other cases, a person might be taken on a journey to a place where the gospel is presented. From general revelation to special revelation. God provides.

Romans 1:21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

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Many scientists today reject knowledge of God. They claim there is no God because they cannot see Him. But general revelation is all around us. Their foolish hearts have been darkened.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Scientists claim Christians are fools because they believe in something they cannot see. Of course, we could ask scientists about the “invisible” dark energy that they claim exists. Let us not call anyone a fool. Pray for those who reject God that they may eventually open their eyes and have God revealed to them.

Romans 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

One of the problems with rejection of God is that people run towards “nihilism.” There is a fascinating lecture on this called “Escape from Nihilism.” Early on in his life the author of that lesson said, “Two things. The first was that we human beings just make up the difference between good and evil; the second was that we aren't responsible for what we do anyway.”⁶ I highly recommend reading the lecture. It is seven pages long. It is written in ordinary language, not in philosophical doublespeak.

We can take the general versus special revelation all the way back to Genesis. The creation is a demonstration of God. Adam and Eve were given special revelation. And with each following dispensation, God provides additional special revelation to document any “new rules” for the dispensation.

⁶ <https://undergroundthomist.org/sites/default/files/EscapeFromNihilism.pdf>

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Each one of the words that is repeated in Romans is a bread crumb worthy to be followed. Paul is telling us something using the Fabric of Scripture. Each of the words, revelation, gospel/truth, faith/suppress and righteousness/wrath has a story to tell. But we must move on.

When God's righteousness is continually violated by one of His creation, God's wrath becomes evident. This is an anthropathism. It means a word like wrath, a human emotion, is used to characterize God's attitude. It explains God in human terms so we have a chance at understanding why He acts the way He does. As a result of God's wrath, He will act. He can act against unbelievers as well as against believers. Many of His acts are documented in the Old Testament. Prophecy says that God will act decisively during the Tribulation against the Devil's unrighteousness.

There is another word that shows up repeatedly throughout Romans chapter 1: "all." Verses 5, 7, 8, 16, 18, 29. The book of Romans is inclusive of the whole of humanity. It has special revelation for believers and unbelievers.

Verse 5: "...obedience of faith among all the Gentiles..." All gentiles can be saved through faith. All

Verse 7: "...to all who are beloved of God in Rome..." The letter of Romans is to all beloved (believers) in Rome. All.

Verse 8: "... I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all..." Again, Paul is addressing all believers in Rome at a more personal level. All.

Verse 16: "...salvation to everyone who believes..." Salvation is not exclusive to one group. It is for everyone who believes. Faith. All.

Verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness..." The alternative to faith applies to all who reject it. All.

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Verse 29: “...being filled with all unrighteousness...” The result of rejection of God’s plan of salvation is being filled with all unrighteousness and other terrible things. All.

All is a small word. But when combined with others, the effect can be tremendous.

From several perspectives, Paul is identifying a world that is dichotomous. There are those who have faith and are saved. And there are those who reject faith and are filled with unrighteousness. Believers can delve into continuous unrighteousness. They then stand in the corner with the unbelievers in time. There is righteousness and there is unrighteousness. There is nothing in between. It reminds me of something the Apostle John said.

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

John often says the same things as Paul, just using very simple language. In the Bible, light is often used to characterize righteousness, truth...all things that come from God. Darkness is often used to characterize unrighteousness. I remember Herman saying something like that when teaching the Gospel of John. One passage comes to mind.

John 13:30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

When Judas Iscariot takes the morsel from Jesus, he leaves to betray Jesus to the people who eventually succeed in putting Him on the cross. “And it was night.” Darkness.