

Four Woes

Habakkuk 2:9-20

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⁹ *“Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin! ¹⁰ You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. ¹¹ The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. ¹² “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice! 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? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁵ “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! ¹⁶ You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed! The cup from the Lord’s right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. ¹⁷ The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. ¹⁸ “Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. ¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’ Or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’ Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.” ²⁰ The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.*

v9 – What is a woe?

Woe means “grief, anguish, affliction, wretchedness, calamity, or trouble.”

- Woe as an exclamation of judgment on others, misfortune on oneself, or sadness over others.

To whom is the first woe directed?

God addressed the greedy man, and told him that he was ripe for judgment. The greedy man did his best to protect himself (**set his nest on high**), yet all his best defense would come to nothing.

v10 – What is the problem with greed?

Greed is a selfish desire to have more of something, most often money or power. There are many warnings in the Bible about giving in to greed and longing for riches...

Luke 12:15 – *Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*

God wants us to have an eternal perspective, not a worldly one...

Matthew 6:19, 24b – *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal... You cannot serve both God and money.*

Did Jesus pursue the acquisition of money?

No. On the contrary, He became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9) and had “*no place to lay his head*” (Matthew 8:20). Neither did Jesus pursue power...

Mark 10:43–45 – *Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

How is greed and a desire for riches traps that bring ruin and destruction?

1 Timothy 6:10 – *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*

It is evil to covet and money can easily become the object of craving. The principle is to be content...

Hebrews 13:5 – *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’*

What is the problem with money?

It is the love of money, and not money itself, that is the problem. The love of money is a sin because it can become an idol that gets in the way of worshiping God.

- Jesus said it was very hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God.
- When the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor (Matthew 19:16-22).

- Jesus pointed out the young man's main problem: greed or a love of money. His love of this world interfered with his love for God.

Is greed a problem with free market capitalism?

Free market capitalism actually recognizes greed as a realistic aspect of the human condition. In a truly a free market, capitalism is self-correcting weeding out the greedy because transactions must be win-win to continue and grow.

- Greed becomes a bigger factor when it ceases to be a free market accommodating monopolistic entities.
- Socialism puts power in the hands of the few who regulate it... greed is not just about money; it is ultimately about power.
- Socialism also covets the success of the productive, stealing from them to spread the wealth around.
- Socialism results in a mediocrity instead of a meritocracy.

What are the greedy doing per verse 10?

Plotting the ruin of others to their shame &... *You... sin against your own soul* (NIV: *forfeit your life*): The greedy man thinks in terms of nothing but gain, but ends up losing his own soul. Jesus' parable of the rich man building bigger barns (Luke 12:16-21) is the perfect example of the greedy man who sinned against his **own soul**.

Luke 12:20 – *God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

v11 – How will the greedy man be found out?

For the stone will cry out from the wall: Habakkuk pictured a beautiful house built by a greedy man, and the very stones of the house would **cry out from the wall** against the man's greed. The principle:

Mark 4:22 – *For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.*

v12 – To whom is the second woe directed?

Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed: The LORD was not only displeased with the greedy, He also pronounced a woe against the violent and those being unjust to others.

What does God think of violence to get one's way?

It is one of the things God hates...

Proverbs 6:16-19 – *These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.*

Shedding innocent blood is an abomination to God, a thing that causes disgust or hatred.

What is the trend for violence in our day?

Violent crime is certainly increasing in the face of soft-on-crime prosecutors who think systemic societal issues are the cause of crime rather than personal choices.

- The shedding of innocent blood is increasing due to abortion being considered a basic right.
- We are on the cusp of WWII in multiple places.
- Luciferians seek to cull the population due to finite resources & for the sake of curbing climate change.
- The unstated real reason for the depopulation agenda is to make it easier to control the masses.

How is an increase in violence a sign of the times?

Jesus said that among the birth-pangs of His return would be *as the days of Noah were* (Matthew 24:37):

Genesis 6:11 – *The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.*

v13 – When is labor only fuel for the fire?

When people are laboring contrary to the will of God... it is of no eternal value.

How do the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

Similarly, when nations act contrary to the will of God, their objectives will ultimately fail.

- The nations want peace but there will be no peace until the Prince of Peace rules.

v14 – When will the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord?

During the Millennial Kingdom.

- The violent man thinks that *his* might makes right, so he feels free to abuse others for his gain.
- As a correction and a rebuke, the LORD reminded the violent man of *His* ultimate triumph.

What will it be like to live when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord?

It will be almost like heaven; *His will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10). The Millennial Kingdom will be an amazing time where no one will be able to claim systemic factors for people's bad decisions.

- What will be even more astonishing that people will still reject Jesus as Savior even in this idyllic environment.

v15 – To whom is the third woe directed?

To those who get drunk and especially those promoting drunkenness in order to take advantage of others.

What is the problem with drunkenness?

Ephesians 5:18 – *do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit*

Dissipation means the squandering of money, energy, or resources... it is not being a good steward of God's blessings.

- The damage of drunkenness goes beyond the act itself and into what it effects in lives and families.
- Drunkenness is an escape from reality with serious consequences.

In the 1990s it was recorded that yearly in the United States alcohol was responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

v16 – With what will the drunks be filled?

Though they think alcohol made them feel good, God says they were **filled with shame instead of glory**.

How will God give drunks a taste of their own medicine?

The cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you: The drunk and those who promote drunkenness loved their own cup full of drink; now God promises a **cup** for them, a cup of judgment and just recompense for their sin.

- Their disgrace will eclipse whatever glory they thought they had.

v17 – For what did God specifically condemn Babylon?

Their violence in Lebanon, the wanton destruction of animals, and the people they killed would mark them for destruction by the Lord.

v18-19 – To whom is the fourth woe directed?

To the idol worshiper and those who enable idol worship.

- Having dealt with the greedy man, the violent man, and the drunk then God spoke to the idolater — who treated inanimate objects as if they had life and intelligence.

v20 – Why is idol worship so offensive to God?

In contrast to lifeless idols, the LORD was alive and well in His holy temple (v20). The folly of the idolater will be exposed by the majesty of the living God.

What is an Idol?

Because we think of idolatry as an ancient way of worshiping gods we tend to miss the idols in our own life. Idolatry isn't confined to worshipping a golden statue or praying to trinkets. It's much broader than that.

- An idol is when something or someone becomes more important to us than God.

- Even good things can become idols when we make them the ultimate things in our lives. Anything, or anyone, can become an idol if we place the value for that thing/person above our value for God.

What kinds of idols are a problem in America today?

All the various forms of modern idolatry have one thing at their core: the god of self.

- we worship at the altar of materialism which feeds our need to build our egos through the acquisition of more "stuff."
- we worship at the altar of our own pride and ego. This often takes the form of obsession with careers and jobs.
- we idolize mankind through naturalism and the power of science. We cling to the illusion that we are lords of our world and build our self-esteem to godlike proportions.
- we worship at the altar of self-aggrandizement to the exclusion of all others. This manifests itself in self-indulgence through alcohol, drugs, sexual sins, and food.

How do we overcome our natural inclination for idol worship?

Be obedient to the greatest commandment...

Matthew 22:37 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind

When we love the Lord and others with everything that is in us, there will be no room in our hearts for idolatry.

Why did God highlight these four woes in particular?

Habakkuk couldn't understand why God would judge a sinful nation (Judah) by an even *more* sinful nation (Babylon).

- God reminds Habakkuk of His own wisdom and strength, and of His ultimate triumph over the wicked.
- God knew that Babylon was filled with the proud, the greedy, the violent, the drunk, and the idolater — and the LORD knew how to deal with them all.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

It is human nature to be proud often resulting in greed, violence, drunkenness, and idolatry; be like Jesus instead.