

# Habakkuk 2:15-17

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hab/hab-2/habakkuk-215-17/>

*The LORD pictures Chaldea as someone who uses liquor to manipulate his neighbors to expose them to shame.*

God continues to answer Habakkuk's question, how a righteous God could judge the wickedness of Judah through the Babylonians/Chaldeans, who were even more wicked than Judah (Habakkuk 1:12-15). In Habakkuk 2:6-20, God is making clear that He will judge the Chaldeans in due time.

The fourth woe in Habakkuk 2:6-20 condemns the Chaldeans who mistreated the conquered nations and peoples. The LORD stated, *Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk.* The term *neighbor* is in the plural to refer to the surrounding nations whom the Chaldeans conquered.

Not only did the Chaldeans make the nations drink, but they also *mixed in their venom even to make them drunk.* That means that they poured out a cup of wrath on them. Since those nations became vassals to Chaldea, Chaldea took advantage of them and forced them to obey its stipulations. The implication is that these stipulations were oppressive.

The LORD compared Babylon's action to one who forces others to drink alcohol until they become *drunk*, in order to exploit them. Chaldea's purpose in leading the nations into drunkenness was *to look on their nakedness.* The expression "look on someone's nakedness" is a euphemism for sexual exploitation. The idea is that Babylon is like someone who deceives a woman into being intoxicated in order to sexually exploit them. The level of exploitation engaged by the Chaldeans was akin to rape.

God was displeased with Chaldea because of its exploitation. He would punish it severely, and the punishment would fit the crime. As He declared, *You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor.* The disgrace Babylon/Chaldea imposed on the nations it subjugated would be visited upon its own head.

The term *disgrace* ("qālôn" in Hebrew) is the opposite of *honor*. It refers to a loss of reputation or respect. Since Chaldea was powerful, the other nations honored it, as a matter of necessity. As a result, it became proud and arrogant. But the all-powerful God would reverse its *honor*. He would bring Chaldea low to cause it to experience shame. As the book of Proverbs states, "When pride comes, then comes dishonor" (Proverbs 11:2).

The all-powerful God would do to the Chaldeans what they had done to the other nations. They had forced the nations to drink to expose their nakedness, now it was their turn: *Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness.* The Chaldeans worked for their self-destruction. They pulled humiliation and malediction on their heads. It happened because they were under the mighty hand of the LORD. As He said, *The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to*

*you*. The Chaldeans will do to themselves what they did to others. They will be the instrument of their own destruction.

In the Bible, a *cup* often symbolizes judgment (Isaiah 51:17). The *right hand* of God symbolizes His strength and power (Exodus 15:6). God always abases the wicked and exalts the righteous. “He puts down one and exalts another. For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; It is well mixed, and He pours out of this; Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs” (Psalm 75:7–8). Thus, the Chaldeans would drink from God’s cup and *utter disgrace will come upon your glory*. That means that their glory and fame would change into shame. The nations would no longer respect them since they would lose their power.

Interestingly, the Bible describes a scene from the final demise of Babylon. The night the city fell to the Persians, the royalty and nobles were drinking and partying. They even drank from the cups that were taken from the temple of Solomon (Daniel 5:1-4). They were so arrogant, they did not worry themselves that their city was surrounded by the Persian army. But they fell that very night, as the Persian army diverted the Euphrates River, and Babylon was conquered easily.

The reason the LORD would abase the Chaldeans is stated in the next verse: *For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them*. The term used here for *violence* ranges from murder and rape to wickedness (Obadiah 1:10).

The place called *Lebanon* was a beautiful region located north of Israel. It was known for its trees and mountain range (Jeremiah 18:14). The LORD would judge the Chaldeans because they had damaged *Lebanon*, cutting down its forests and destroying its *beasts*. History tells us that Nebuchadnezzar ordered his army to build a road to transport the cedars of *Lebanon*. They cut through steep mountains, split rocks, and opened passages to build this commercial logging road. He used the trees cut in *Lebanon* to build his palace and enhance the temple of Marduk, the protector god of Babylon. God would judge the people of Chaldea for such *violence* done to *Lebanon*.

Additionally, the LORD would judge the Chaldeans *because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, the town, and all its inhabitants*. The word *blood* is plural in the Hebrew language, suggesting abundant bloodshed that consistently flows (Hosea 4:2). The Chaldeans had killed many people from many nations and destroyed their cities and towns. God would act against them because they murdered men created in the image of God and destroyed animals and even the earth itself.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>15</sup> “Woe to you who make your neighbors drink,  
Who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk  
So as to look on their nakedness!**

**<sup>16</sup> “You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor.  
Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness.  
The cup in the Lord’s right hand will come around to you,**

**And utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory.**

**<sup>17</sup>“For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,  
And the devastation of *its* beasts by which you terrified them,  
Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,  
To the town and all its inhabitants.**