

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVII

May 18, 2008

No.20

Keep Silence Before Him

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God spoke these words through his prophet Habakkuk between 612 and 605 B.C. He said, “*But God is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him*” (Habakkuk 2:20). We have these words contained in our hymnal under the category of “worship”. It is usually used to open our worship service, emphasizing reverence and respect for the one to whom we offer worship. Have you ever examined the context of this statement? Why did God utter these words?

God’s statement of keeping silence before Him closes a five-fold pronouncement of “woe” to the Kingdom of the Chaldeans. Judgment is being pronounced on the Chaldeans for the conquest of lands that do not belong to them, using cruel and unjust means to build their empire. They are like one causing another to become drunk and then looking upon their nakedness. Such shame is what the Chaldeans are doing to nations stripping them of their possessions (Hab. 2:6-17)

The fifth pronouncement leading up to the keeping silent statement is not introduced with a

woe, but this probing question: “What profiteth the graven image...?”. Though the one who gravens the molten image trusts in the idol, it is a lie (Hab. 2:18). It is a dumb idol. “Woe unto him that saith to the wood ‘Awake’; to the dumb stone, ‘Arise’ Shall this teach?” (Hab. 2:19). The idol overlaid with gold and silver has no breath in it, and cannot profit anyone, but instead brings woe upon the worshippers.

It is at this point that the Chaldeans and all the earth need to understand the true and living God is in His holy temple. This temple should be connected in our minds with His throne as it is in *Psalm 11:4*: “*Jehovah is in His holy temple; Jehovah, his throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men*”. God is sitting on his throne seeing the abominable, unjust and cruel ways of the Chaldeans and will bring his authoritative judgment upon them.

Therefore, “*Let all the earth keep silence before Him.*” Judgment is coming, and what one needs to do is silently submit to God’s authority and judgment. As Zechariah warns, God has been awakened. “*Be silent, all flesh,*

before Jehovah; for He is waked up out of his holy habitation” (Zechariah 2:13).

The Chaldeans were being used as an instrument of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem (Hab. 1:6). Yes, they may appear more evil than the nation they conquer, but their evil ways are not being overlooked by God from His temple and throne in heaven. God will raise up the Medes and Persians to punish the Chaldeans, thus creating “woe” among the recipients of God’s judgment.

God’s statement is a “taunting proverb” ringing with the demand to submit to God and His judgment. It was pronounced as a “woe” upon the Chaldeans, not as an invitation for God’s people to begin worship. However, it is an invitation to reverence God, which should be manifested in worship and will be acknowledged in judgment. Maybe, the next time we sing this song, we should make sure we have no idols in our hearts. Lifeless idols will not profit anyone. Such lies awake God as he dwells in His temple and throne in Heaven. Before the living God, we must humbly submit to His rule and judgment—keep silence!