**Silence**

Habakkuk prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah not long before they were taken away into Babylonian captivity. God had sent the prophet to warn them because of their mistreatment of one another and their unfaithfulness to Jehovah. After rebuking the people for making and worshipping idols, he told them, “The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him” (Habakkuk 1:20). This is lovely poetry, but what does it really mean to be silent before Jehovah God? If we consider passages that deal with this concept of silence before God, the Scriptures will serve as its own best commentary.

In a broad sense, Habakkuk’s admonition to God’s people emphasizes His divine power and sovereignty. He is contrasting the true and living God with the lifeless, impotent idols of which they were so fond. In verse 18, Habakkuk said, “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood?” He continued in verses 19 and 20, “Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. But the LORD is in His holy temple.” Yes there were times when God made His presence known in the temple that Solomon had built, but Paul taught in Acts 17:24 that “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.” The Scriptures often depict the Father’s throne in heaven, His holy temple. These people were guilty of abandoning the Lord of heaven and earth to fall down before lifeless pieces of wood and stone and metal.

As we consider some “silence” passages, we will find God’s power and sovereignty manifested in a number of ways. When we pull it all together, we will have fuller understanding of what it means to be silent before Him.

**Silence means reverence and trust.** Job had been through a lot. Satan had taken everything from him but his life; his family, his possessions, even his health. Job was understandably upset and confused and had plainly expressed his frustration to God. While the LORD defended Job’s righteousness to his “friends”, He did offer a mild rebuke in Job 40. “Then the LORD said to Job, ‘Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.’ Then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.’” God wants us to lay our problems at His feet and make our petitions to Him. But as I do, I must remember that God has both the will and the power to make all things work together for my good and trust Him to do as He has promised (Romans 8:28).

**Silence means reverence toward His judgments.** In the 76th Psalm, Asaph observed, “You, even You, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry? You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still when God arose to judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. Selah” (vs. 7-9). God alone is our ultimate authority and has the sovereign right and power to judge us when we rebel. “The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:9) and so we bow in silent reverence as He punishes the wicked and saves the humble. “Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near” (Zephaniah 1:7).

**Silence means reverence toward His grace.** Zechariah prophesied of the coming kingdom, the church, when he wrote, “’Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ declares the LORD. ‘Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.’” (Zechariah 2:10-11) It is in the context of blessing us with the Messiah that he continued, “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation” (v. 13). We bow in humble silence for His great love and mercy He has chosen to extend to those who choose to love and honor Him.

**Silence means reverence toward His word.** Back to Habakkuk 2, the prophet emphasizes the greatest contrast between dumb idols and the one true God:  *Jehovah teaches us.* Notice verses 19 and 20: “Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.” Get the point? You’re not going to receive spiritual guidance from a rock! No matter the skill of the silversmith, a metal statue will teach you nothing!

The one who created all things has, through His divine power, “granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (2 Peter 1:3-4). “If any may speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Beyond what God has revealed, there must be silence.

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