

Bible Reading and Words of Encouragement

Elder Carvel Bennett

Interim Director, Christian Education and
The Center For Afrikan Biblical Studies @ First Afrikan Church



May 27, 2020

“God The Protector”

Habakkuk 3:1-16

- I found this week’s text to be both thought provoking and worrisome but a rather interesting book that I never paid attention to ‘til now. Habbakuk is one of the 12 minor prophets and from what we gather, lived during the pre-exilic period in Judah’s history. His name means “to embrace” (Heb. *Habaq*) and some biblical scholars thought it signified that he embraced his people to comfort and uphold them or, he embraced the problem of “divine justice in the world”. Not much is known about him, but from the content of this short book (only 3 chapters) we know he was both a poet/psalmist and prophet.
- We find Habakkuk doing what some of us ponder sometimes, asking why is God allowing all this injustice and suffering to continue? Why aren’t we being punished for our transgressions? God’s response was yes we will be punished, and in this case, by the Babylonians (the Chaldeans). But the Chaldeans are worse than the people of Judah, how can God use a more unrighteous people to punish his people? God is our protector and sometimes to protect us from outside forces, Yaweh has to start by protecting us from ourselves.
- This narrative speaks volumes to us as Afrikan people across the diaspora. We want God to protect us from the Babylonians (i.e. this current administration, the Chinese in Afrika, corrupt Multi-National Organization’s and international financial institutions) but first God has to punish us for our iniquities (mistreating and killing each other, corrupt Afrikan and Caribbean leaders abusing their leadership powers, etc.) This pandemic could be seen as God protecting us from ourselves, in the midst of all the suffering. Like the ancient people of Judah, this is our punishment.
- Maybe the lesson here is for us to use this pandemic (our modern-day Babylonian captivity) to humble ourselves; to re-evaluate our economic, health, educational and spiritual practices; to correct our wicked and selfish ways; to examine our relationships with each other; to “live” and not just “celebrate” the principles of Ma’at and Kwanzaa; and to move forward as the people Yahweh chose us to be. For in due time, the Lord our God will deal with the “Babylonians”, those who continue to heap misery on people of color, the poor, the marginalized.
- This text calls for us to be like the Prophet Habbakuk, recommitting ourselves to faith during these hard times, looking to the future with optimism, waiting for the destruction of our enemies, and keep marching on ‘til victory is won’, assured that God our Provider, is also God our Protector.