

23.06 The Prophet Habakkuk; Rechabites; Strong Drink (Habakkuk 1–3; Jeremiah 35:1–19; 25:15–38)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional materials needed. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *nomads*: people who live in tents and move from place to place because of the season of the year and the availability of food for them and their animals
- *father-in-law*: the father of a spouse (husband or wife; *e.g.*, my husband’s father is my father-in-law—not my real birth father but my father-in-law.
- *to sojourn*: to live in a country not your own
- *strong drink*: beer, wine, or liquor; also called *alcohol* but not the same as rubbing alcohol that is used on infections, *etc.* Drinking beer, wine, or other liquor affects different people in different ways. Some people feel more talkative or free or happy for a while. Others get mean and hurt others. If someone drinks strong drink, his or her brain slows down and thinking skills are changed; he or she can get very sick and vomit. Over time, too much strong drink causes damage to all organs of the body.

People become addicted to alcohol. This means they want to drink it so much they can’t leave it alone. People who get addicted to drinking sometimes love it more than they love their families. Strong drink has destroyed many homes and brought great sorrow to innocent children affected by a drunken parent.

The Bible has quite a bit to say about strong drink. Here are some verses:

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Proverbs 31:4 It is not for kings . . . to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink;

Isaiah 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening till wine inflames them!

Isaiah 5:22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink,

Isaiah 28:7 These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in giving judgment.

Habakkuk 2:15, 16 “Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink of the cup of his wrath, and makes them drunk, to gaze on their shame! You will be filled with contempt instead of glory.

Drink, yourself, and stagger! The cup in the LORD’s right hand will come around to you, and shame will come upon your glory!”

Sometimes when people imitate the effects of strong drink, others laugh. But drunkenness is not a laughing matter. I would urge you to try not to laugh at people pretending to be drunk, even though it may look funny, because you know the destruction it brings.)

One of the reasons God took Israel away into exile was their drinking strong drink (Isaiah 5:11–13, 22, 24; 28:1, 2).

God’s wrath being poured out on the wicked is often pictured in the Bible as wine’s being poured out. When the Lord will pour out His wrath, it will be terrible.

- *vineyard*: a place to grow grapes from which wine is made

Scripture: (The Habakkuk 1–3 passage is too long to print here; please read it from your Bible)

Jeremiah 35:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: 2 “Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak with them and bring them to the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink.” 3 So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites. 4 I brought them to the house of the Lord into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. 5 Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, “Drink wine.” 6 But they answered, “We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, ‘You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons forever. 7 You shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.’ 8 We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9 and not to build houses to dwell in. We have no vineyard or field or seed, 10 but we have lived in tents and have obeyed and done all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11 But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Syrians.’ So we are living in Jerusalem.”

12 Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 13 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction and listen to my words? declares the Lord. 14 The command that Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept, and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. 15 I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, ‘Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.’ But you did not incline your ear or listen to me. 16 The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but this people has not obeyed me. 17 Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.”

18 But to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father and kept all his precepts and done all that he commanded you, 19 therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me.”

Introduction/Review: [Teacher, if you did not present the information and Bible verses on strong drink while teaching the “Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach,” do so here.]

Habakkuk

Habakkuk lived at the same time as Jeremiah. Habakkuk’s book has only three chapters, but he has many good things to say. Here is one of his prayers: O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2).

Here is a good thing for believers to promise God: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength” (Habakkuk 3:17–19).

Rechabites

Before we tell today’s Bible story, I want us to recall two people we barely mentioned so long ago that you probably don’t remember them. The first one is about Moses. Well, it’s not about Moses so much as it is about his father-in-law. About 800 years before today’s story, when Moses was taking care of sheep in the wilderness before he led the people of Israel out of Egypt, he married his boss’s daughter, who was not an Israelite. His father-in-law, named Jethro (he had several other names too) was a priest of the Midianite

people. When Israel went into the Promised Land, the family of Moses' father-in-law also went into the land. These people, called Kenites, kept pretty much to themselves; many of them were nomads. One family of the Kenites was named Rechabites because their forefather was named Rechab. The Rechabites will be in our story today.

Jonadab

The second person I want to remind you about is Jonadab. He lived about 240–300 years before today's story during the time of Jehu, king of Israel, the northern nation. Jehu was the king who destroyed all of wicked King Ahab's family. While he was going around finding and slaying all of these people, a Rechabite named Jonadab went with him. Jonadab just watched while Jehu executed Ahab's family. ✓I wonder if Jonadab saw the terrible effects of drunkenness as he rode with Jehu in his chariot.

Story:

Jonadab's command

Jonadab gave a special command to his children and grandchildren: "You shall not ever drink wine, neither you nor your sons for ever. Neither shall you build [a] house, sow seed, or plant a vineyard or have a vineyard. You shall live in tents so that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn."

What was Jonadab's command? [Not to drink wine; not to build a house, sow seed, or plant a vineyard.] Why would Jonadab command such things? It was because the Rechabites were not Israelites themselves; therefore, they had no inheritance in Israel. They were living as if they were visitors in Israel.

Tents are not very strong, big, or attractive places to live; this can teach us to be humble. Tents are cold in winter; this can teach us to be strong in the Lord and not give in to everything our bodies want. Tents are moveable; this can teach us to not to be too rooted in this world. [Matthew Henry's commentary].

Rechabites' obedience

Those Rechabites, descendants of Jonadab, kept the commandments of their forefather. For about 300 years, they did not ever drink wine or strong drink, and they lived in tents in the land of Israel. I am so pleased to read about people's living generation after generation and still keeping their forefather's commandments.

God's command

Knowing this, it is hard, at first, for us to imagine why God told Jeremiah to do what I will tell you next. God commanded Jeremiah, "Go to the Rechabites. Tell them to go with you into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers. When they get there, give them wine to drink."

What!? "Give them wine to drink"? Is God telling them to disobey the good commandment of their forefather, Jonadab? Listen to find out.

Jeremiah did as God said. He gathered several Rechabites. He brought them into ✓one of the rooms that was on the second floor around the outside of the Temple. He set pots full of wine and cups on a table so that they could drink. Then he said, "Drink the wine."

Wait a minute! Here are the Rechabites in God's house being told by God's prophet at God's command to drink what their fathers told them not to drink. What will they do? If Jeremiah is telling them to drink, should they drink?

Rechabites' refusal

These Rechabites, having obeyed their father's commandment for generations, said, [Teacher, draw out this sentence to add suspense.] "We will drink—no wine because Jonadab commanded us not to. We—men, wives, sons, daughters—have kept his commandment. We have lived in tents all these years until Nebuchadnezzar came. For fear of his armies, we now live in Jerusalem. But we will not drink this wine."

Judah's disaster

Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again. “Go,” God said, “tell the men of Judah, ‘Won’t you listen to my instruction? Jonadab’s children have obeyed him, even to this day. However, Judah has not kept My commandments even though I reminded them time and again. I sent many faithful prophets. They said over and over, “Return from your evil way; repent; don’t go after other gods to serve them, and you will live in this land which I have given to you.” But you haven’t listened to me, nor have you done what I commanded. Therefore, this is what the Lord God of armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘I will bring upon you all the evil and destruction that I have promised because you did not listen and obey.’”

Oh, it sounds as if God’s mercy and patience has run out. Jerusalem and Judah will soon be destroyed for sure. Why? [Because they did not stop worshiping idols and did not pay attention to God’s commandments.]

Rechabites’ reward

But what about the Rechabites? God had a message for them too. Jeremiah announced, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, therefore, thus says the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never be totally destroyed. There shall always be a Rechabite to stand before Me forever.’”

What a wonderful promise! God is merciful to the righteous. How He blesses them! But God is angry with the wicked every day. They will surely be punished.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus always obeyed His Father. He was tempted in all points as we are but did not sin.
- In a sense, like the Rechabites who didn’t belong to Israel, we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are really not citizens of this world. We belong to a heavenly kingdom.
- Jesus tells us not to get too comfortable in this world, for it and everything in it will pass away. It’s as if we are living in tents here while we wait for our Jesus-built mansion in the eternal kingdom.
- “Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging.” Do not ever be deceived by it. My suggestion is that you never drink it.
- Obey godly parents, even when you think you are old enough to make choices different from their wishes.
- It is good for us to live by rules and to be disciplined.

Activities:

- Play dough: pots or goblets
- Snack: Make sandwiches with two slices of bread and lunch meat. Cut in triangles (cutting the sandwich diagonally) to resemble tents.
- Place a sheet or blanket over a table to make a tent. Younger students may eat their snack or sing some songs or learn a memory verse in the tent.
- Sing “This World Is Not My Home” (words are found below).
- Review questions: (Game: Print on card stock the eight tents found below. Back with flannel or paper towel, and cut apart. For each correct answer a student may place a tent on a flannel board.)
 1. The Rechabites were descendants of what man? Hint: He is found in the book of Exodus and is sort of related to Moses. [Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro.]
 2. Which ancestor of the Rechabites had commanded them not to drink wine? [Jonadab.]
 3. What else had Jonadab commanded his children to do forever? [Live in tents; not sow seeds; not

have vineyards.]

4. How long had the Rechabites obeyed their forefather's command? [240–300 years, or ever since Jonadab had made his command.]
5. What did Jeremiah tell the Rechabites to do? [Drink wine.]
6. God used the Rechabites' obedience to their forefather as an opposite example of what? [Israel's disobedience to God's commands.]
7. What did God say would happen to Judah because they continued to disobey? [God would bring disaster upon them.]
8. What did God say would happen to the Rechabites because they had obeyed the command of their forefather all those years? [They would always have descendants.]

Memory Verse[s]:

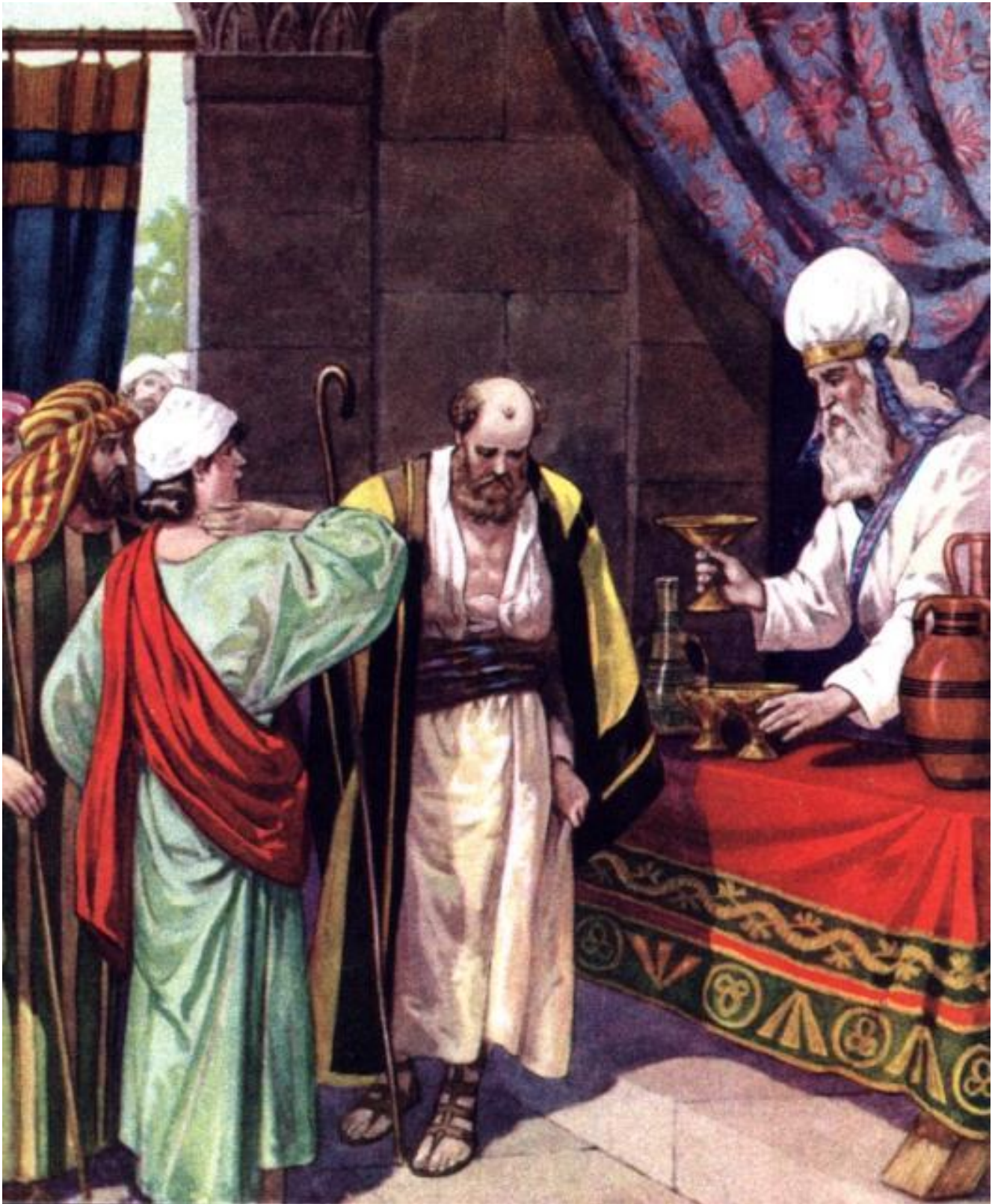
- Habakkuk 3:17–19: Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength.
- Or Habakkuk 3:2: O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

Handwork:

- Cut a piece of paper or fabric in a 6-inch triangle. Cut a slit from the base of the triangle to within one inch of the opposite corner to make the tent flap. Fold back each flap for an opening. (See the picture at [Pinterest](#) if a visual is needed.) Glue tent to a paper with the printed words found below.



“ I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine.”—*Jer.* xxxv. 5, 6.



Background to Jeremiah 35

- The Rechabites' loyalty is set forth as an example to disloyal Judah (vv. 12-17)
- Disloyal Judah will be punished, but the loyal Rechabites will be rewarded (vv. 18-19)



"This World Is Not My Home"

This world is not my home
I'm just a-passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me
From heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home
In this world anymore.

Refrain:

Oh Lord, you know
I have no friend like you
If heaven's not my home
Then Lord what will I do.
The angels beckon me
From heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home
In this world anymore.

...

Just over in Gloryland
We'll live eternally
The saints on every hand
Are shouting victory.
Their songs of sweetest praise
Drift back from heaven's shore
And I can't feel at home
In this world anymore.



The Rechabites Obeyed Their Forefather, Jonadab

(Jeremiah 25:1-19).