



Empowering People to Change the World

Introduction to Habakkuk

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Habakkuk: A Pilgrimage to Higher Ground (graphic)

Introduction:

All of us have struggled with what God is doing. Or not doing. Does it ever seem like God is not around during our deepest pain? Have you ever been angry with God because He doesn't seem to answer your prayers?

Have you longed to overcome your fears with faith? Overcome your anxiety in the deep valleys and move to the higher ground of victory?

- If so, the book of Habakkuk is the book for you. We will grapple with just these types of questions.
- The Bible never promised that our lives as Jesus disciples will be easy.
- David, in his beloved Psalm said, “yea, even though I walk through the valley of death I will fear no evil.”
- Jesus even promised that “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
- The enemy, Satan comes to “steal kill and destroy” and he comes to discourage us in our dark times and if possible, to even cause us to deny our faith and give up.
- Habakkuk will question God like no other prophet. The book is a dialogue between God and His prophet. Habakkuk is asking some hard questions of God and God answers him, but not with the answers Habakkuk wants to hear.

We know nothing about Habakkuk except what we read about in this short book.

- He calls himself “the prophet Habakkuk” and because he concludes the book with a song of musical direction, he may have been a worship leader.
- This book opens with Habakkuk banging on God's door because he feels God will not answer his prayers. Habakkuk is very bold. With most prophets in the Bible, we observe them getting a word from God and delivering it. But with Habakkuk, the book begins with him openly complaining to God.

- Habakkuk is amazingly bold in his exchange with God. He has a personal intimate relationship with God and that's what gives him his boldness.
- What I love about this man, the prophet Habakkuk, is four things:

Four Character Qualities of Habakkuk

- 1. Habakkuk is utterly honest and vulnerable with God.**
- 2. Habakkuk is a man of faith and prayer.**
- 3. Habakkuk is a man who waits and listens for God to answer.**
- 4. Habakkuk is a man on a pilgrimage from the valley of fears and anxiety into the higher ground of faith and praise.**

Verse 1

“The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.”

The Context of Habakkuk: Moral Decay, Fear, and Violence

Habakkuk is given a vision of the rapid rise of the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar.

- It seems that Habakkuk is given insight from God of this coming Babylonian threat.
- Kingdoms and empires were in flux. The Assyrian Empire that had ruled the region for almost 150 years was beginning to collapse.
- This was the empire that had besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC, one hundred years before and God brought a miraculous deliverance (Isaiah 36-37), but despite the setback, the Assyrian Empire continued its invincible reign.
- But in 627 BC the great Assyrian king **Ashurbanipal died**. He was the last strong and great king of the empire. In that same year God called Jeremiah to be his prophet. Both things happened in the 13th year of the good King Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2).
- Tragically, **Josiah was killed** in 609 BC in the Battle of Megiddo. In 605 BC, at the Battle of Carchemish, **Nebuchadnezzar**, king of Babylon decisively defeated

the Egyptian-Assyrian coalition and established Babylonian power over the region.

- Nebuchadnezzar briefly besieged Jerusalem—probably as a warning to not rebel against him—and took some into exile, which included Daniel and his friends.
- **All of this was generating great fear and anxiety in Judah.** Small nations like Judah were getting caught up with the conflicts of great empires like Babylon. As the African saying goes “when elephants fight, the grass gets trampled.”

Not only was there fear and anxiety over the growing and menacing Babylonian Empire, but it was also a time of **moral and spiritual decay in Judah**. Habakkuk never mentioned a particular king in Israel or Judah. But his words seem to indicate he is in the closing decades of the kingdom of Judah under King Jehoiakim.

- Although King Josiah had made valiant efforts to bring about reformation in Judah, the country was still suffering the effects of Manasseh.

Turn to 2 Kings 21

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My name.” And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke *Him* to anger.”

Verse 16

“Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.”

- Manasseh introduced occult practices of Baal worship. He worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars.

- He murdered his own son in occult worship, practiced witchcraft, and channelled demonic spirits with spirit medium.
- He practiced child sacrifices.
- And even though Josiah tried to reverse these practices, he was followed by his son Jehoiakim, who followed more in the footsteps of Manasseh than his father Josiah.

It is a confusing time. A time of moral and spiritual decay, fear of the Babylonian Empire, and the frightening thought of descending violence.

Habakkuk lived in a Time (600 BC) very Similar to our Own (2024 AD)

- We also live in a nation of moral and spiritual decline. Never have we witnessed such corruption from our major institutions. Institutions we once thought we could trust.
- The Evangelical Church is the weakest it's been in fifty years, with many pastors acquiescing the truths of the Bible to accommodate the culture elite.
- Though Roe vs. Wade has been abolished we are seeing the rise of militant abortion legislation in individual states. The state of Colorado pushing for a complete funding of all abortions by taxpayers with Amendment 79.
- We have never seen such censorship of free speech by an American political party, ever in the history of our nation.
- With the open southern border, we have an existential crisis in our nation. The predictions are between 7-11 million illegal immigrants have entered our nation. There is a legitimate fear that the Soros directed Democrats and elites want to remake our nation into something completely unrecognizable to what we've known.
- The predictions are that over 600,000 young Ukrainian men and women have been killed with the invasion of Russia. The war in Israel is just getting heated up. With the involvement of Iran and China, many are fearful of World War III.
- For the first time in our nation's history, we have witnessed two assassination attempts on a person running for president.

- With the failure of our food industry, healthcare, and political leaders, we have become the sickest nation in the world.
- Many of our cities have decayed into cesspools of gang violence, crime, and homelessness never before seen in our nation

We need a Spiritual Revival and a Kingdom of God Revolution!

Habakkuk would have agreed. But before we make it to the higher ground, let's look at the valley Habakkuk is in.

Verse 2

**“O Lord, how long shall I cry,
And You will not hear?
Even cry out to You, “Violence!”
And You will not save.
Why do You show me iniquity,
And cause *me* to see trouble?
For plundering and violence *are* before me;
There is strife, and contention arises.
Therefore the law is powerless,
And justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.”**

- Habakkuk is unique among the prophets. Surprisingly he doesn't start out with a word from the Lord, but rather, begins with a word of his own. He is launching into a debate with God.
- Jeremiah in a similar way questions God.

**“Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You;
Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments.
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?” (Jeremiah 12:1).**

**“Why is my pain perpetual
And my wound incurable,
Which refuses to be healed?”**

**Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream,
As waters that fail?" (Jeremiah 15:18).**

One of the remarkable features of the Bible is that God allows His people to question Him.

Moses, Elijah, David, and many Psalmists question God at various occasions.

Habakkuk is asking two questions: How long? And why?

- He is raw and vulnerable with God.
- It seems Habakkuk has been crying out to God for a long time.
- He has been crying out and has no answer to his questions.
- These are the qualities of a decadent, dying culture: violence, iniquity, strife, plundering, no justice, wickedness, and perverse judgement.
- Many of us have questioned God during times of turmoil, in the valley of death or despair. Questions about the death of a child, a baby stillborn, or a baby with defects. The sudden death of someone we love. The inability to change the divorce of our parents. The loss of a job. A betrayal by a friend.

Bible scholar Christopher Wright comments: "So, if you find yourself sometimes wracked with questions, unable to see a way to sort them all out in your head, and perhaps questioning God Himself...then, quite frankly and quite biblically, you are in good company!"

Maybe you are here today with deep questions about God's power and His ability to come through for you. If so, you are not alone. All of us have gone through valleys of disappointment.

But Habakkuk would not have been crying out to God if he did not believe that God was doing something good, God was going to eventually show up in power. He remembered the stories of old.

"Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with

Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*" (Exodus 2:23-25).

Habakkuk would have known the Psalms, like Psalm 18:6.

**"In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even to His ears*" (Psalm 18:6).**

I vividly remember a difficult time in my life where it seemed God was very distant and uninterested. I cried out to God daily and it seemed that every door I knocked on was closed. But little did I know that God was preparing me for another door that would open. God was forming me into the disciple and leader He needed for the next assignment.

**The Pilgrimage of Discipleship—
God often Delays Deliverance in Order to Form Us for
His Deliverance**

Turn to Psalm 3 and may we all make it our prayer. Stand with me.