



A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF  
**HABAKKUK**

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COURSES

## A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

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# A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF : **HABAKKUK**

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# Preface

## HOW TO FACE PERPLEXITY

God is the creator of the universe. He is the Master and Lord of everything. Things in heaven, things on earth, all things that live and everything that has ever lived are under Him. It is all His and subject to him in every way.

Habakkuk is a hard-hitting book. It explains that all things in the world are working according to the will and purpose of God. Knowing this about God creates some deep questions and raises some valid concerns. The prophecy in Habakkuk covers perplexing and often controversial issues:

- Evil in society that seems to go unpunished
- Good people suffering
- God using wicked instruments to fulfil His purposes
- The wicked seem to prosper unhindered

It provides us with answers that the Lord has decided is sufficient for us. It's a unique prophecy in that it's not a message from God to Israel but a discussion between Habakkuk and the Lord. He speaks on behalf of Israel to the Lord.

There is seldom a pulpit that is graced with the teaching of Habakkuk. It is a neglected book. There are undoubtedly reasons for this:

- Evangelicals tend to skip over books with few 'positive' quotable phrases in them
- Prophecy is difficult material to deal with
- Habakkuk deals with deep issues of human existence and darkness in the world. People don't generally choose to hear about it.

The book comes alive when we realise how Habakkuk's world ties together with ours. What does the world in 609-598BC have in common with Facebook and cell phones? Well, nothing! At least on the surface. But actually, as we proceed through the prophecy of Habakkuk we will see how similar our worlds are.

We will see how people are all plagued by the same questions and concerns. People are people after all. Modernisation doesn't change the essence of man. Habakkuk's

questions and the Lord's answers are as relevant then as they are now.

How will understanding this prophecy help us?

- It will teach us about the God of the Bible
- It will give us answers to some important questions
- It will teach us about how to behave when we become utterly bewildered with life

Before we get into the book don't forget your basic outline for interpretation:

We will follow basic hermeneutical rules and guidelines as we journey through the letter. Get familiar with how to interpret Scripture. Make this procedure natural and let it flow.

## THINK OF THESE THINGS:

### 1. What type of book am I reading?

- Prophecy / letter / wisdom / apocalyptic?
- The type (genre) means that there is a certain way to read it
- There are certain things to remember and keep in mind when trying to understand it. For example, apocalyptic is a style that explains truths in rich picture language. We should not take things too literally when reading it.

### 2. What was going on *there* and *then*?

#### **Ask contextual questions**

- These are questions like: why, how, to whom and to what situation was this written.
- What were the problems the letter seeks to resolve, if any?
- What's the context with regards to world history? And with regards to Israel's history?

#### **Ask textual questions**

- Is this written for everyone or only one person?
- How was this to be used? Worship songs? A letter to be read when everyone is listening?

**Read the text asking questions:**

- What is the main thought here?
- Do I understand all the words?
- What are the arguments presented?

**3. Pray and ask God for help to understand**

**4. What is the teaching here and now?**

What the Scripture was teaching then is what it is teaching *now*. It *cannot* say two different things.

**The teaching often comes to us as principles:**

- There will be things we are to *know*
- There will be things we are to *do*

**5. What does this mean to today's life and world?**

Apply it to you or other situations





# Part One

## SETTING THE SCENE

### HABAKKUK 1:1

#### The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw

Habakkuk writes his prophecy from what he received from the Lord. His style is poetic and nearer to the Psalms than any other Old Testament prophet. He penned what he was given some time in the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BC). He doesn't actually tell us which king was reigning at the time as the other Old Testament Minor Prophets do.

#### **There are internal and historical clues:**

- Habakkuk predicts the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 596 BC
- The Babylonians are pictured as fearsome enemies. This could only be after Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC.

Jehoakim was a poor king. Pagan practises abounded in Judah. He was notorious for building himself a lavish palace while the people were physically and morally crumbling. These were dire times for the people of Judah. Injustice is prevalent, evil people prosper and wickedness goes unabated. The average person had turned away from God and was seriously backslidden. How are God's people to respond?

Meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar was building his kingdom (Babylon) into an exceptionally known world dominating power. Habakkuk lived at the same time as Jeremiah.

Habakkuk writes down a series of alternating conversations between himself and God, between God's people and God, between God's church and God, or between you and God. He will help us with how to face perplexity and problems.

There is at least one observation to be made from verse 1:

#### **God has not left the world alone**

##### **Acts 14 : 16 - 17**

<sup>16</sup> *In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.*

<sup>17</sup> *Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you*

*rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*

While Judah is in dire times, God acts. He sends Habakkuk. Habakkuk is not the first or the last prophet to speak God's Word into a situation. (After, all, God sends Jesus - Hebrews 1:1-2). At many points in history God has sent people in the midst of rampant wickedness and godlessness. He sends His Holy Spirit, His Word and His Gospel today. God acts in world history. He does act - although, sometimes we may not understand why he acted as He did or why He waited so long to act. But Let no-one accuse God of passivity and carelessness, because He acts.

## **HABAKKUK 1:1-11**

### **The strangeness of God's ways**

An overview of Habakkuk's complaint and God's first answer gives us a teaching about God's ways within world history.

Before we approach Habakkuk's perplexing questions we should realise one thing: Habakkuk is a believer. He loves God and serves Him. These are *not* the questions of a cynic. This is *not* Habakkuk 'pointing the finger at God'. Habakkuk has sincere and genuine questions that at some point come to all who passionately follow God. His writing are not gossip or intended to rouse suspicion or unbelief in God. God will answer us, as He answered Habakkuk, if we seek him in honesty and openness.

### **God acts in ways that are often mysterious**

#### **Sometimes God seems inactive**

Habakkuk cannot understand what is going on and his first problem was why God allowed evil things to happen. To him, God seems to be quiet and does not intervene in many situations. He allows such travesty and wrongdoing to go on. People are even wicked in his name! God seems to leave right or good prayers unanswered. Even sincere and zealous prayers seem unheard at times.

## **Sometimes He acts unexpectedly**

Many times we find that when God does act or answer prayer His answers are just as mysterious and puzzling as the questions. He says to Habakkuk that He will raise up Babylon to deal with Judah. Who would have thought that?

*“It is a fundamental principle in the life and walk of faith that we must always be prepared for the unexpected when we are dealing with God.”*

- M. Lloyd-Jones.

Oftentimes we will say, “God, you did surely answer my prayer, I just never thought you would do it like that!”

## **Sometimes He uses things we would consider unusual**

God uses Cyrus, covering Gideon, and vicious Babylon to fulfil His purposes in the world. He will do the same with the Church and with us. Communism in China has caused the gospel to spread rampantly underground - who would have thought?

## **People often misunderstand God's actions**

These people can include:

### **Those close to Him**

Of all people, we would have expected Habakkuk to have understood God's actions, but he is totally perplexed.

### **Religious types**

The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day totally misunderstood God's salvation plan centred in Jesus. They misunderstood Him being a humble servant.

### **The non-Christian**

The unbeliever will often ask a thousand questions around God's ways. Why does he allow sickness, murder, and (in the case of this book) order the Canaanites to be killed? They often point fingers at God and this is almost understandable, because they don't know Him, so how could they know how he acts. People often say, “Wait until I see God, then I will give Him a piece of my mind.” Once can sympathise but it's probably not how it's going to pan out.

In the end, God will be God whether we understand Him or not.

## **There is an answer in the mystery**

### **God has never lost control of history**

v6 He is raising up the Chaldeans

### **God's plan has never suffered defeat**

The events and timing are all as they should be

### **The history of the world is the panning out of the Kingdom of God**

- There is meaning to world events.
- There is meaning in personal events.
- They all relate to God establishing His purposes on the earth.

God's ways are by no means random and powerless acts. He is also not figuring out history and responding to it as it pans out. Yes, people make their own free decisions but overriding all of that complexity is the God of the Bible.

He is in control, with a plan, and He is working out His plan to perfection. Mystery should not cause us to shy away from Him. Does mystery always drive people apart? Even though the opposite sex is often mysterious, that often even draws us together!

# Part Two

## HABAKKUK 1: 2 - 4

### HABAKKUK'S FIRST COMPLAINT

Pope Benedict once visited the Auschwitz concentration camp. His words were:

*"In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can be only a dread silence, a silence which itself is a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent?"*

Elie Wiesel writes in his book *Night* about the hanging of two Jews in front of all the inmates:

*"'Where is God? Where is He?' someone said behind me asked... 'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him: 'Where is He? Here He is - He is hanging here on this gallows...'"*

Habakkuk makes such a cry: *"Is there an explanation for your actions in the face of evil and suffering, God?"*

### Christians may come into times when they are utterly bewildered

Habakkuk begins his lament with *"how long Lord?"* Habakkuk is talking to the covenant Lord, Yahweh, the affectionate Hebrew name for God in the Old Testament. Habakkuk is not pointing a critical finger. At times people have the same lament, but for the wrong reasons.

Habakkuk has a problem with the trouble that seems to continue in Judah. But firstly His problem is that it seems God is doing nothing about it. *"How long"* is also an Old Testament question God had for His people, asking *"How long will they continue in sin?"*

## **Habakkuk 1 : 2**

*O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not hear? - ["hear" contains the thought of 'help']  
Or cry to you "Violence!"  
and you will not save?*

Habakkuk is not found to be prayerless. Sometimes people make Habakkuk's lament but they don't pray, as he did. Habakkuk has learned to persevere in prayer, he has prayed many times, and for long periods of time.

Despite seemingly doing all the right things, Habakkuk is in a perplexing situation. His belief about God is being tested.

## **The perplexity can come from God's inactivity**

Habakkuk believes in the powerful, just God of Israel. He believes God acts and delivers. He believes God judges the wicked and deals with wrongdoing here and now.

## **Habakkuk 1 : 3**

*Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.*

But now God is not acting like Habakkuk thinks He should, and God isn't acting in a way that Habakkuk would. Habakkuk sees the problems, the iniquity, the sin, the brutal treatment people are giving each other and he is disgusted. If he were powerful enough he would act - now.

## **Habakkuk 1 : 4**

*So the law is paralysed,  
and justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.*

Habakkuk is also jealous for God and His ways. The word he uses is 'paralysed'. People's hearts have grown cold, they don't care about the Bible. Oh how this has happened in Western Society! God is also the 'God of the underdog'. He is a God of justice, He stands up for the helpless, but Habakkuk laments that He is not doing that now. He is perplexed with God's inactivity. It matters to Habakkuk - doesn't it matter to God?

## **CHRISTIANS ARE NOT REBUKED FOR HAVING THESE TYPES OF QUESTIONS**

God is actually listening to Habakkuk. But God is simply doing something that Habakkuk doesn't understand. The Lord will help him. We too may come into these types of situations and as long as the heart attitude is right, questions are not wrong. Habakkuk is issuing a cry of faith; he is trying to understand the character and ways of God. He is not condemning God or drawing judgemental conclusions and ascribing wickedness to God.





# Part Three

## Habakkuk 1 : 5 - 11

### THE LORD'S ANSWER

Habakkuk has been honest before God about his concerns. He has done all that he knew was the right way to approach God. He has persisted in prayer. He had godly jealousy and compassion for others. But he is now confused. God is slow to act, if He is acting at all.

Habakkuk has spoken to God on behalf of righteous people and has essentially asked two things: Why has there been such a delay in God's response and how long will we wait until God acts?

Now God answers Habakkuk and all those who are righteous. His answers are a little mysterious yet rousing and securing.

### God is in control at all times

#### Habakkuk 1 : 5

*Look among the nations, and see;  
wonder and be astounded.*

*For I am doing a work in your days  
that you would not believe if told.*

God invites Habakkuk and us to take a bigger view of the immediate details. He invites us to consider history and the sheer scale on which He works. He invites us to read between the lines gently. In Job God answers in almost the same way, but is less gentle. He basically says in Job, "If you think you are more capable than me at running the universe, then go for it, lets see how you do. Take a bigger view, you don't get all that is involved." God is acting in world history. He is not inactive.

He is acting 'in our days'. People are turning to Him in vast amounts in various places. Some are experiencing revival. If we had eyes to see we would see He is in control. His plans are masterful and worthy of praise. If only we could see.

## God is about to give the world yet another surprise

### Habakkuk 1 : 6

*For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans*

God's work is not limited to His covenant people alone. Sometimes we forget this; Habakkuk had. God is the God of everyone. While He is being gracious to one, He is judging another. One person's trial is another's blessing, and is another's punishment for not listening. God is so wonderfully complex and holds and uses it all together all at once! He is the God over all.

He was going to use Babylon. They were barbaric pagans who God was going to bring to power. They would totally destroy Assyria (at the time, no one would have thought about that!) and while Babylon thought they were doing their work, they were actually working for God. God made use of their hunger for power. By the time Habakkuk prophesies they have already taken the major Assyrian cities (Assur, Nimrod and Nineveh). In the future God would deal with Babylon too (called *guilty* in verse 11) but for now He would use them.

## God is not rushed in unveiling His plan

He takes his time in dealing with sin. Judah and Israel had gone on sinning for years before God sent them both into exile. God gives people many chances to change their mind and behaviour. God is longsuffering and slow to anger.

But when He acts, He acts decisively and His discipline can be severe. He will certainly fulfil His plan. He will rid His people of sin, one way or another.

God describes in detail whom he will use to rid Judah of its wickedness.

He will use Babylon. They are particularly cruel, bitter and wait on no man or nation (v6). They are feared and dreaded by all who hear of them. They make their own rules; they glory in their own cruelty (v7). Their cavalry is a sight to behold. They are well trained and can quickly 'kill and eat' (v8). They are arrogant and love violence for the sake of violence. They take what they want and no one can stop them (v9-10). They don't fear any god or higher power, their own pride is their god (v11).

## God does at times use despicable acts of people to bring about His purposes

It is God's world, God's people and God's plan. He is working it out masterfully. He knows what will bring about the desired result for every nation and every individual. Since their exile under Babylon, the Jewish people have never turned to foreign gods again. God may use one sin to deal with another.

### **Genesis 50 : 20**

*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*

Knowing this, our questions may need to change to:

- God, what do you want me to learn in this situation?
- Have I done anything obvious to bring this about?
- What in me needs to be corrected?

And so God answers Habakkuk's first question. He is the God of every person in every nation. He knows what He is doing. If we could see with His vision we would understand more. God will act in a way that sees His kingdom come to fulfilment.



# Part Four

## Habakkuk 1 : 12 - 2: 1

### HABAKKUK'S SECOND COMPLAINT

God has just announced His plan to Habakkuk. He will send the Babylonians to wreak havoc in the lives of His own people. This leads to Habakkuk having more questions!

Like Habakkuk, people regularly ask today:

- If God is holy, good, in control, loving and just how can he allow so much adversity and pain in the world?
- Why are so many people starving?
- If God is in control how can people be murdered and tortured?

Many people do believe that God is who He reveals himself to be, but at the same time evil seems so rampant, and these two realities are difficult to reconcile. Habakkuk has the same questions now. God's nature and character are brought into the light. Will the God Habakkuk knows really destroy His own people?

Habakkuk gives us a good lesson in how to go about handling a perplexing problem. It is certainly not a quick fix. He doesn't get everything sorted out in a second. His method is reliable for any situation.

### Affirm what is known to be true of God's character

God character doesn't change (Hebrews 13:8). Habakkuk affirms to himself and us what is true about God in the face of a perplexing situation.

#### **Habakkuk 1 : 12**

*Are you not from everlasting,*

*O LORD my God, my Holy One?*

*We shall not die.*

*O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgement,*

*and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.*

God is eternal. He has always been here. He knows everything about everything. He is at the end and the beginning all at the same time. He is everlasting. He will still be God tomorrow and forever. He is a God of covenant. He is the LORD – Yahweh - the covenant Father of Israel. He is their God. He is their Father. He is not abandoning them. He is Holy. He does things in His way. His way is perfect – always. There is no flaw in God; He never makes mistakes. Therefore Habakkuk is sure that they will not be exterminated at the hands of the Babylonians.

Habakkuk accepts God's plan. He doesn't complain or accuse God of treachery. He understands God has decided what He will do. He remains the Rock – the God His people can count on. They can count on Him to make them who He wants them to be, and who they actually want to be, but can't be on their own.

Habakkuk affirms God's character. That is the place to start. Too many people attack and accuse God and make judgements about His character. Affirm what is true about God, then proceed knowing that God remains who He is no matter how perplexing the situation seems.

## Apply your affirmation to the problem

Habakkuk knows God to a certain extent. What He knows of Him is right, he just can't figure out God's actions. So he still has questions.

### **Habbakuk 1 : 13 - 17**

<sup>13</sup> *You who are of purer eyes than to see evil  
and cannot look at wrong,  
why do you idly look at traitors  
and remain silent when the wicked swallows up  
the man more righteous than he?*

<sup>14</sup> *You make mankind like the fish of the sea,  
like crawling things that have no ruler.*

<sup>15</sup> *He brings all of them up with a hook;  
he drags them out with his net;  
he gathers them in his dragnet;  
so he rejoices and is glad.*

<sup>16</sup> *Therefore he sacrifices to his net*

*and makes offerings to his dragnet;  
for by them he lives in luxury,  
and his food is rich.*

*<sup>17</sup> Is he then to keep on emptying his net  
and mercilessly killing nations forever?*

He knows God is holy and just but then why is he happy to let Babylon remain wicked? Surely Judah is not as bad as Babylon? (v13). He also cannot understand that God is okay with Babylon treating Judah like fish caught by a fisherman. (Babylon will 'catch' Judah.) They will worship and praise their false god for the victory (v16). They will take over the world and the wicked will prosper, serve their own gods, enjoying total pagan revelry. How can that be fine with God? Habakkuk still has a problem although he is following the right method of finding answers.

## **Commit the unsolved problem to God**

Habakkuk is a wise man. He loves God dearly. He is not cynical or bitter towards God. He is seeking understanding.

God doesn't rebuke him for his seeking and, so far, he has provided an answer to Habakkuk's question of how long God will be idle. God has said that He will act in due time.

But the question of God's holiness seemingly being transgressed is unsolved. Habakkuk commits the problem to God again.

### **Habakkuk 2 : 1**

*I will take my stand at my watchpost  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look out to see what he will say to me,  
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*

He believes God will answer him at some point. He will be diligent to look for an answer; his ears are open.

Habakkuk handles his perplexity with maturity and order. Too many people fall into anxiety, cynicism or turn their back on God. In a modern world where things move



fast and answers come quickly; information is at the fingertips; this kind of slow steady approach is unpopular. But other approaches won't yield much fruit in the end.

# Part Five

## HABAKKUK 2 : 2 - 20

### THE LORD'S ANSWER

Habakkuk is concerned about history. He is particularly concerned with the history of Israel. Judah is in a state of chaos and ungodliness and strife are prevalent. Habakkuk is concerned and perplexed as to how God is dealing with the situation. He has repeatedly asked God to fix his nation and God in answer gives him a more concerning problem.

God tells him He will use notoriously wicked Babylon to correct Judah's problems. Habakkuk remains confused. But he left his concerns with God in prayer. He expected an answer and it did come!

### God gives us principles of how the future looks without minute detail

#### **Habbakuk 2 : 2 - 4**

<sup>2</sup> *And the LORD answered me:*

*“Write the vision;  
make it plain on tablets,  
so he may run who reads it.*

<sup>3</sup> *For still the vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.*

*If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.*

<sup>4</sup> *“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.”*

Habakkuk is told to record God's answer. God doesn't need to defend His actions, and doesn't. But He will help His people understand what they need to. He gives Habakkuk a vision of the future that will be like a neon signboard for those in the future. God doesn't have secrets, what He reveals is plain enough to understand.

The vision provides clear principles and tells us how God is in control of world history. History is moving to an end point. Every person will face God. God will vindicate His name and hold everyone to account. He is not lying (v3). God knows the best timing for events. It may seem slow but it actually isn't. It is just perfect timing (v3).

## We are to live in the light of what we are given

"It will not lie... wait for it" is God's way of saying that what He is telling us needs to be enough. Sometimes we want all the details because we think that will satisfy, only to find that is not the case. To Habakkuk it is the principles that are of concern - the principles where God seems to tolerate evil and seems to do nothing about it.

God answers the root questions: Live in the light you have, He says. He is not lying; it seems as though He is passive but this is not true. He will and does act. He acts as He knows is best. We are just to wait for Him. This is the light we are to live in - God is in control and working it out in His time.

## The believer is to live by faith

### Habakkuk 2 : 4

*Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

Next the Lord provides a staggering offer of help to perplexity. Only the mature can live up to it. God says to Habakkuk that Babylon is arrogant and self-sufficient, and that way of life will come under judgement - verse 5 - 20 talks of that life's end.

But God's people are to live by faith. God takes his answer from national to personal. Each person will live if they live by faith. Babylon will fail, they will chastise Judah, and the only way to live free from judgement is to live by faith.

Habakkuk and all the righteous will need to learn to trust God more than they have. They will have to believe Him on His word alone; take Him as He says He is. Pure trust in the God of Israel is life. Can Habakkuk trust that God does know what He is doing, that He is in charge of history, that His plan with Babylon is best? If Habakkuk and

anyone who hears can say, 'Yes I trust God on His Word alone' they have faith and by that they will live. They will come to experience real life.

In fact Judah will have to come to this point too. They will have to trust their God again. They have fallen into pagan ways because they stopped believing His way was best. Babylon will have to die if they do not believe in God.

People will only live by faith - by trusting God on His word alone. If we had eyes to see, we would notice that history proves His word is totally trustworthy.

## **GOD THEN PRONOUNCES JUDGEMENT ON THE BABYLONIANS**

To further answer Habakkuk's questions about Him using Babylon for His purposes, God reveals clearly that He will deal with Babylon as well. He is just delaying judgement for another purpose. He will pass sentence on Babylon, wickedness may seem to triumph, but it won't (and never does) in the end. God will not allow that, ever. Habakkuk has to trust God again.

### **The things God is judging**

Habakkuk's concern that the wicked prosper untouched (1:4) is actually short-sighted. God is a just judge. He is also patient. He will call every man to account (Romans 14:12). Babylon will be judged for certain things:

- Excessive drinking (2:5,15,16)
- Greedy / ambitious without care upon who or what they trample (2:5-11)
- Violence and brutality leading to indignity (2:12)
- Idol worship (2:18)

God does not approve of their behaviour at all. These things can be a problem to every believer.

## The way God judges them

God will deal with Babylon and it will seem almost 'natural'.

### **Habbakuk 2 : 6**

*Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him...*

God's judgement is often a withholding of mercy. God lets wickedness run its full extent and that becomes a judgement all of its own. This will happen to Babylon. God will not 'hem them in' and rescue them from themselves. He will leave them to themselves. They will bear the consequences. Their own wickedness will destroy them - they have lived by the sword, they will die by it:

- Their excessive drinking in of all debauchery will cause them to be found drunk at the wrong time. They will be overrun as though they are naked and exposed and drunk (2:16).
- Their greed will be delivered back upon themselves. They will not be a kingdom for long. They will be shortly overrun. They will also never reach satisfaction. Their appetite will never be settled; they will always live in discontent.
- Their violence will come back to haunt them. Cyrus of Persia will be brutal with Babylon 80 years later.
- Their trust in idols will be an utter embarrassment to them when they are proven dumb and powerless (2:18-19)

## The way God triumphs through judgement

### **Habbakuk 2 : 13 - 14**

*Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts  
that peoples labour merely for fire,  
and nations weary themselves for nothing?  
For the earth will be filled  
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.*

God tells Habakkuk what will happen in the future. Wickedness will not triumph.

People will labour and weary themselves with their worldly business but it will not succeed in doing very much. God will triumph by filling the world with His glory, covering every part of it with His character. We make disciples because that is where history is going. We are destined to win. We are to tell of the true God when the Living God exposes other gods as idols and powerless man-made rubbish.

### **Habakkuk 2:20**

*But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*

God is not in trouble because of Judah or Babylon. He will work it all out. He will show everyone who He is. He is still in authority; He is still the living God. He knows and He sees everything. Let no one point a finger at God, He is, after all, God - supreme knowledge and power are His.

God triumphs through judgement by a step-by-step exposing of all that is false and worthless. He leads people into emptiness so they may look for fullness from Him.



# Part Six

## Habakkuk 3 : 1 - 19

### HABAKKUK'S MANIFESTO OF TRUTH

Habakkuk hears God answer. His lament and mourning are turned to joy and confidence in God. His eyes are opened and He understands more now. God has dealt with Him gently.

Habakkuk now writes of what is going on in his heart. God has transformed Him. Habakkuk's speech and actions will now answer the question, "*What is the appropriate response in a perplexing trial?*" It is not resentment or grumbling; not endurance with gritted teeth, brushing it aside. We are to rejoice in who God is. That is where our joy and strength resides. He gets His joy from looking at God.

### **We are not to forget how great God is. We are to hold on to God.**

Habakkuk has been reminded of the greatness of God. The Lord has reminded him of all that He is doing and can do. Habakkuk begins to fear the greatness of God and realises what God is doing and now he wants what God wants. Habakkuk prays that God would revive them all!

#### **Habakkuk 3:2**

*O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear.  
In the midst of the years revive it;  
in the midst of the years make it known;  
in wrath remember mercy.*

Habakkuk prays for what we should all pray for - the reviving of His people. Judah had grown wicked, careless, and cold toward Scripture and God; they cared little for God's ways of living. Is the modern church not filled with a lot of the same? We need God to revive a passion, zeal and love for Him again. Living in a revived state is too wonderful for words. Having God's Spirit sensed so near is glorious.

Don't forget how great it will be to be thoroughly revived! We must remind ourselves



of what He has done and who He is. Habakkuk reminds us of this again in verse 3 - 16.

- God has done mighty things in history (v3)
- God is holy and good in all his dealings (v4)
- He is supreme over everything (v5-6)
- The God who can shake nations (v7)
- The God who is judge and saviour (v8)
- The God who will judge (v9)
- Again: He is the God over all creation. Everything is subject to Him (v9-12)
- He is also OUR GOD. (v?)
- He has chosen a people. Saved them for Himself (v12-13)
- He is the God who will come again to clear up and makes all things plain and right (v14-16)
- He is an awesome God (v16)

## **We are to remember that God does have a purpose in all that He is doing**

Even though we may not always know God's purpose, He always has one. Habakkuk doesn't know everything about the future, but He knows the God of the future. He has learnt a few things about trials and will now wait quietly (v3:16) knowing that God is at work. But he will do more than wait quietly... actually, he will rejoice.

## **We need to come to a resting place in God**

Habakkuk can rejoice in a trial. He is more sure of God than he was at his perplexing beginning. He can now say,

### **Habbakuk 3 : 17 - 19**

*<sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,*

<sup>18</sup> *yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

<sup>19</sup> *GOD, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the deer's;  
he makes me tread on my high places.  
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.*

Habakkuk has learnt to rest in who God is, what God has done and what He will do. He doesn't need to know everything; what He has learnt is now enough for him.

This can and should happen when our problems may not leave. The Lord needs to be the one we lean on for rest. We should be able to take anything that comes our way, because we know what Habakkuk now knows.

### **Think of other examples:**

#### **Romans 5:3**

*...rejoice in our sufferings...*

How? Because we know, Paul says. God is doing something and we know Him.

#### **James 1:2**

*Count it all joy when you face trials of many kinds.*

How? Because you know.

#### **Hebrews 12:2**

*Jesus, because of the joy set before Him, endured the cross.*

Resting in God shows great trust in the character of God. Unless we come to know God and put our faith in what He has done, is doing and will do, we will struggle to rest in Him. Habakkuk has been dealt with by God. He has taught us how to deal with a perplexing situation and confusing questions. The end result? Habakkuk has come out with joy, and so can we.

## Sources

This work has been prepared consulting a number of sources.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' from *Fear to Faith* is a good read.

John Currid writes a particularly insightful book, *The Expectant Prophet*.

Tim Shenton in *Exploring the Bible* is quite similar on some points to John Currid. (His thoughts on 2 : 4 aren't what we agree with, though.)

Michael Eaton has recorded sermons on his website ([michael-eaton.de](http://michael-eaton.de)) on Habakkuk which is brilliant. His exposition is world class.



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