

# Habakkuk's Complaint

Habakkuk

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**Purpose of Writing:** Written between 610 and 605 BC, the prophet Habakkuk decries the sins of Judah but grapples with the fact that God's chosen people will suffer at the hands of enemies even more wicked than they.

- God answers Habakkuk's questions, resulting in continuing faith in God's wisdom, sovereignty, and salvation.

**Brief Summary:** The Book of Habakkuk begins with Habakkuk crying out to God as to why God's chosen people are allowed to suffer in their captivity.

- The Lord gives His answer to Habakkuk, essentially stating, "You wouldn't believe it if I told you."
- Habakkuk then follows up by saying, "OK, you are God, but, still, tell me more about why this is happening."
- God then gives him more information, then tells the earth to be silent before Him.
- Then Habakkuk writes a prayer expressing his strong faith in God even through these trials.

**Practical Application:** The application to the reader of Habakkuk is that it is permissible to question what God is doing, although with respect and reverence.

## Why should we question God?

Sometimes it is not evident to us what is going on, especially if we are thrown into suffering for a time or if it seems our enemies are prospering while we are just barely getting by.

- The Book of Habakkuk affirms that God is sovereign and omnipotent, and He has all things under control.
- We just need to be still and know He is at work.

Sometimes the way before us is full of suffering and sorrow, but, if we trust the Lord, we will come safely to where He wants us to be.

## Habakkuk 1:1-2 – Habakkuk's Complaint (NIV)

*The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.*

<sup>2</sup> *How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?*

<sup>3</sup> *Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. <sup>4</sup> Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.*

## v1 – What do we know about the prophet Habakkuk?

We don't know much about the prophet Habakkuk from any other book in the Bible. Since he prophesied the coming Babylonian army and its destruction of Judah, he prophesied some time before that invasion.

- Many think that Habakkuk ministered sometime during the reign of King Jehoiakim.
- It is likely that he lived during the time of godly king Josiah (640 to 609 B.C.) and then gave this prophecy during the reign of one of Josiah's successors.
- Habakkuk knew what it was like to live during a time of revival, and then to see God's people and the nation slip into lethargy and sin.

The name Habakkuk is derived from the Hebrew verb "embrace." His name probably means, "He Who Embraces" or "He Who Clings."

- It is an appropriate name for the prophet because Habakkuk comes to a firm faith through grappling with tough questions.

## What is the burden (NKJV) which the prophet saw?

Habakkuk's **burden** was not just a message from God, but also in the sense of a heavy weight.

- It was heavy in its *content*, because Habakkuk announced coming judgment on Judah.
- It was also heavy in its *source*, because Habakkuk deals with tough questions he brings to God and God's answer to those questions.

## v2 – What was Habakkuk crying to the Lord about?

Habakkuk looked at the **violence** and injustice around him in the nation of Judah. He wondered where God was, and why God did not set things right.

## v3 – What was God showing Habakkuk?

*Injustice and wrongdoing (NIV), iniquity and trouble (NKJV).* Habakkuk saw trouble and sin everywhere, from personal relationships to the courts of law. This distressed him so much that he cried out to God and asked God why He didn't bring judgment and immediately correct things.

- Habakkuk dealt with the questions that come up when someone really believes God, yet looks around and sees that the world doesn't seem to match up with how God wants it.

## Why does God allow us to see iniquity and trouble, in our self or in others?

In our self:

- To keep us humble.
- To keep us submissive to Him in the hour of trouble.
- To make us value salvation all the more.

In others:

- To show us what we might have been ourselves.
- To make us see the wickedness of sin, that we might pass by it and hate it, and not indulge in it ourselves.
- To make us admire the grace of God when He saves sinners.
- To set us more earnestly to work that God can use us to save others and extend God's kingdom.

## Habakkuk 1:5-11 –

### The Lord's answer to the first problem

<sup>5</sup> “Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. <sup>6</sup> I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own. <sup>7</sup> They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. <sup>8</sup> Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; <sup>9</sup> they all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. <sup>10</sup> They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. <sup>11</sup> Then they sweep past like the wind and go on— guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”

### v5 – About what should Habakkuk be utterly amazed?

God told the troubled prophet, “Don't worry about you concern... I've got this. Look at the surrounding nations and from them will come a nation that will be My instrument of judgment on sinful Judah.”

### What would God do that Habakkuk would not believe?

We understand the idea of something “too good to be true,” but that isn't what God meant here.

- This was something “too bad to be true,” a work of judgment so astounding that Habakkuk would have a hard time believing it.

### v6 – Who would God use to pour out judgment on Judah?

*I am raising up the Chaldeans:* When the Babylonians (*the Chaldeans*) eventually came against Judah, they came as sent by the LORD. It wasn't that they themselves did not

want to come, but God allowed their sinful desire to conquer Judah to come to fruition.

- If God had not allowed them to do it, they never could have conquered Judah and exiled God's people out of the Promised Land.

### Is there a principle here that might apply to us today?

God will judge those nations that were once faithful to Him and fell away. That does not bode well for the USA. God uses wicked nations to discipline His apostate people.

- The objective is to get His backslidden people to return to Him.

### What makes the USA especially vulnerable as we near the end of the Church Age?

- The principle of God disciplining His backslidden people.
- The nationalist sentiment of many in the USA stands in the way of globalist ambitions.

### v7 – How are the Babylonians described?

*They are terrible and dreadful:* Habakkuk wondered where God's judgment was against sinful Judah. The LORD told him that the judgment would indeed come, and when it came through the Babylonians it would be **terrible and dreadful**.

### What does it tell us they are a law to themselves?

They have no respect for God and His Law, they make up their own laws... kind of like what we see trending in the USA and the rest of the world today.

### v8 – What is the significance of pointing out the prowess of their cavalry?

This speaks to the invincibility of their military. Cavalry is fast moving and has shock effect showing up where unexpected and suddenly changing the outcome of a battle.

### v9 – What does it tell us that the Babylonian army would advance like a desert wind?

Their success against Judah would be like a force of nature.

- Their violence would terrorize their subjects and they would take uncountable prisoners.

### v10 – How would the Babylonians show confidence in their success?

Mocking the leadership of their conquests and laughing fortified cities. They apparently had the wherewithal to thwart fortified cities by building earthen ramps to get over their walls.

### v11 – What would the Babylonians do after they conquered a city?

Move on to the next conquest.

### **To what would the Babylonians credit with their success?**

They would give the credit to their false gods. But little did they know that it was the Creator-God of Israel that enabled their success.

### **So, what does the success of the Babylonians tell us about the prospering of the wicked?**

God allowed it to serve His purposes... but it is only for a season, He also raised up the Medes and Persians to punish the Babylonians.

- What appears to be worldly success is not necessarily a good thing particularly if it drives you further from God.

### **Habakkuk 1:12-17 – Habakkuk’s Second Complaint**

<sup>12</sup> *Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish.* <sup>13</sup> *Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?* <sup>14</sup> *You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler.* <sup>15</sup> *The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad.* <sup>16</sup> *Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food.* <sup>17</sup> *Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?*

### **v12 – What is Habakkuk’s next complaint?**

Habakkuk was first troubled that there was no judgment against Judah; God answered by telling him judgment was on the way. Then Habakkuk was troubled by the *agent* of judgment, the Babylonians — who were an even more wicked people than the people of Judah.

- Habakkuk knew the problem with Judah was bad but thought that God’s cure was worse than the disease!

### **What does this tell us about the wrong way to respond to a crisis of faith?**

This sort of thing may cause some people to withdraw from the church and from fellowship pulling back into a little spiritual corner. Others may give up on God altogether.

### **What is a better way to respond to crises that shakes your faith?**

- *Stop to think* — before talking about it, think about it.
- *Consider basic principles* — As you think about the problem, don’t begin with the problem. Go back

further to basic principles about God and His dealing with people.

- *Apply the principles to the problem* — now, think about your problem in light of these basic principles.
- *Commit the matter to God in faith* — whether you know what to do or not.

### **v13 – What astonished Habakkuk about God raising up a much more wicked nation to judge Judah?**

*You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness:* This was problematic to Habakkuk because he knew the character of God. Since he understood the holy character of God, he was more troubled than ever as to why God would judge wicked Judah by exalting even more wicked Babylon.

### **v14 – What analogy did Habakkuk use to show the unfairness of using the wicked to punish God’s people?**

He likened the nations to nature where it is dog eat dog, or in this case, the bigger fish eating the smaller fish with no regard at all to God.

### **v15 – Who is the fisherman in Habakkuk’s analogy?**

The fisherman is like Babylon who also gives no credit to God but has success in catching a bounty of nations.

- Easily we are taken and destroyed. We have no leader to guide us, and no power to defend ourselves.

### **v16 – Who gets the credit for the fisherman’s success?**

The fisherman (Babylon) gives credit to the man-made tools of his trade and even worships them. Babylon was a bigger idolator than Judah.

### **How are we seeing this dynamic playing out in Western Culture today?**

We have great technology but credit is given to men, not God.

### **v17 – What did this situation cause Habakkuk to wonder about to God?**

Habakkuk wondered how long God would allow the Babylonians to continue their cruel conquest of nations.

- It was as if God’s people were conquered as easily as fish in a net.

### **What applications come to mind from this passage?**

- It is sometimes appropriate to question God; it is part of our relationship with Him.
- God uses the wickedness in our midst to bring us closer to Him.
- God disciplines His backslidden people & nations.
- The wicked may prosper for a season but God will ensure that justice is done.