

Habakkuk

By Vision or Faith

The book of Habakkuk, a prophet of Judah, opens with, **The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw, verse 1:1.** The use of "burden" here comes from the word *massâ'*, *mas-saw'*; from H5375; = Embrace, was also the name of one of Ishmael's sons. Used here, it reveals the revelation of the punishment to soon befall on God's people for the sin they have committed.

Verse 1:3-4, 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. Habakkuk sounds somewhat like Job, by the attacks Satan was allowed to do upon him. However, there is a difference between the two, we know Job was a righteous man who was used as a symbol of strong faith. He saw the attacks on his life as his fault even to the point of regretting his birth. Yes, there were times he believe God was punishing him unfairly. **Job chapter 21:4; "My complaint is with God, not with people. I have good reason to be so impatient.** Job is wondering why the evil man prospers and the poor or righteous man suffers. Job wondered much about all that was taking place, however even with all he endured he would never curse God.

Look here in chapter 2:6-10, at the attack to begin by Satan.

And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

We do not find that Habakkuk cursed God either but his attitude resembles one who challenges God as to say, "How could you?" Habakkuk is more like we are today, "it's not my fault." Job live a holy life and had reason to question and curse God, question he did, curse he did not.

Job had great faith and lived by faith, until chapter 3 we find Habakkuk live by site, why do you show me,

Verse 4; Therefore, the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. One should perhaps be a bit more careful concerning their approach to God, "Therefore perverse judgment proceeds." What was Habakkuk expecting? What would have seemed fair to him?

Habakkuk is different in his relationship with God than his contemporary prophets. Instead of hearing from the Lord and then informing the people, as God says to Jeremiah, see chapter 25, and Zephaniah, Chapters 1 and 2. Habakkuk returns to the conversation by questioning God's answers and actions. Like so many throughout time, the question of how, regarding the severe punishment to be brought by the Chaldean nation and why bad things happen to good people, man's understanding of good is the prophet's challenge to God. He presents an attitude that seems to be almost defiant toward a righteous God's judgment. However, are good people always good? Do they sin and expect to go "unpunished?"

No sin goes unpunished,

Jeremiah 25:29; I have begun to punish Jerusalem, the city that bears my name. Now should I let you go unpunished? No, you will not escape disaster. I will call for war against all the nations of the earth. I, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!

30:11; I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you, but with justice; I cannot let you go unpunished."

49:12; And this is what the LORD says: "If the innocent must suffer, how much more must you! You will not go unpunished! You must drink this cup of judgment!

Amos 2:4: Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment,

2:6; This is what the LORD says: "The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and I will not let them go unpunished! They sell honorable people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals.

When you look up the word "unpunished," you will find it used anywhere from 12 –18 times, depending on the version you are reading. However, the meaning remains the same regarding the judgment in all versions.

Habakkuk again asks God how He could use such a wicked nation to punish His people. It seems from Habakkuk's perspective that Judah may simply need a slap on the hand, but to use the Chaldeans to conquer them is too much. They are wicked people, and you will use them to punish us, your righteous people? If I had been present when he spoke back to God in such a manner, I would have quickly moved away.

However, isn't his attitude reflective of all of the nations on our earth today? Do they seem to be the same? All commit atrocities in one form or another, and as individuals, do we live up to God's standards every minute of every day? Salvation has been earned for us on the cross, but sanctification will continue until we leave this earth.

The term "the Lord says," is used 4,488 times in 854 verses, 10 of which are exact, from Numbers 24:14 to Micah 6:1; then it may be "says the Lord," and various changes, but the impact and intent remain the same. Not once in Habakkuk is there any form of this term used. If

we are to understand what God is demonstrating to us in this book, it would be how much like Habakkuk we are as a society today; it is not difficult to walk away without thinking of what Habakkuk was feeling and thinking. How did he expect the Lord to correct the wrong? How do we as a once strong Christian nation expect God to deal with us?

God answers Habakkuk's questions

Verse 5 ; “Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. Here God speaks of Habakkuk's lack of faith, “Which you would not believe,” I know we all have our questions for God and often things do not appear right, but when faith is present we have more patience to wait on God the Father. It is the lack of faith that makes us wobble, to be insecure, Job never doubted God's hand, wisdom and power, Habakkuk does.

Verse 6; For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.

Jeremiah 27:6; And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

Listen here Habakkuk, I am a sovereign God, now the sins of my people must be punished and for this reason I have raised up the Chaldeans, as I raised up Pharaoh. They are an evil people but the sins of my people who I have chosen out of all the nations to be my people have sinned against me and must be punished.

Verses 8-11; Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves.

Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. 9 “They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. 10 They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. 11 Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.”

The reputation of the Chaldeans was known throughout the land, they came and conquered, they swept across the land like locust taking everything and anything they so desired. God how could you do this? Their faces are set like the east wind. This would be as the hot winds coming in as a heat wave dries up life and those things which were but are now withered away, weak against the strong wind that move rapidly across the land. Fly like eagles that hastens to eat. How fast they destroy and conquer, as the eagle sets its sights on its prey, it is focused on that one thing, so are the armies of Nebuchadnezzar

David Guzik writes, “It would be like crying out to God about the state of the church in America, and hearing God respond by saying, “I’ll fix the problem by an enemy invasion of America.” We might say, “Wait a minute LORD — the problem is bad, but Your cure is worse than the disease!”

Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.”

We look around our world today and we find many leaders who do and think as Nebuchadnezzars does here. God is the force behind the soon to be captured people of Judah, then his mind changes. Who’s mind changes? He commits offense, it would be Nebuchadnezzar who later pays the price for his changed mind. Ascribing the power to his god and even to himself. How many of today’s leaders strut around like a rooster amongst the brood, peacocks showing off their colors. The King says to himself, look at what all I have done. These men easily see themselves above all others including their gods.

As we dig into this we find a prophet resistant to God’s plan, challenging God’s decisions, challenging His wisdom. I see here two opponents of God, a prophet and a king and yet from the Scripture we will find both men made to bow in respect toward the only true God. Man’s pride is often man’s ruin. How blessed are we that our Lord has given us such good instruction and foresight these men did not have. The affirmation God gives to those who study is the most important part of faith there is. We can read and see, but even better we know we can place our trust and faith in an all powerful God.