

## **Easy-to-Read Version**

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## Habakkuk

At the beginning of this book is a prayer from Habakkuk. The prophet complains to God about what was happening in Judah. He does not understand why God would allow such evil things to happen. God's own people were mistreating each other. People were hurting others and not being punished. Then God answers Habakkuk. God says that he plans to punish his people. And he explains that he will use another nation to do this. He plans to use the Babylonians to punish the people of Judah. But Habakkuk wonders how God could use such a nation to punish his own people. They did not even believe in the God of Israel! Was God breaking his promises to his people?

God later tells Habakkuk that those who do evil will die, and those who follow God will live. But what did this mean for all the people of Judah? They had all been unfaithful. So how could any of them escape death? The answer to this question comes centuries later. In the New Testament book of Romans, Paul uses words from Habakkuk to describe Jesus. He is the one who is faithful to follow God. He is also the one who will provide the way for God to save his people.

The book of Habakkuk closes with a song of praise to God. The prophet thanks God for saving his people. Habakkuk can sing this prayer because of his trust in God. Even though he knows he will be taken

into captivity, still this faithful servant of God can sing.

In this book, the prophet Habakkuk...  
Cries out to God about violence, and God answers (1:1-11)

Cries out to God about what seems unfair, and God answers (1:12 – 2:5)

Cries out about five bad things that deserve God's judgement (2:6-20)

Sings a prayer to the God who saves (3:1-19)

**1** This is the message that was given to Habakkuk the prophet.

### Habakkuk Complains to God

<sup>2</sup> LORD, I continue to ask for help.  
When will you listen to me?

I cried to you about the violence,  
but you did nothing!

<sup>3</sup> Why do you make me look at all this evil?

Why don't you do something about it?  
People are stealing things and hurting each other.

They are arguing and fighting.

<sup>4</sup> The law is weak

and not fair to people.

Evil people win their fights against good people.

So the law is no longer fair,  
and justice does not win any more.

### The Lord Answers Habakkuk

<sup>5</sup> "Look at the other nations!

Watch them, and you will be amazed.

I will do something in your lifetime that will amaze you.

You would not believe it even if you were told about it.

<sup>6</sup> I will make the Babylonians\* a strong nation.

They are cruel and powerful fighters.

They will march across the earth.

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\***1:6 Babylonians** Literally, "Chaldeans", a tribe of Arameans who gained control in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar was from this tribe.

They will take houses and cities that don't belong to them.

<sup>7</sup>The Babylonians will scare the other people.

They will do what they want to do and go where they want to go.

<sup>8</sup>Their horses will be faster than leopards

and more dangerous than wolves at sunset.

Their horsemen will come from faraway places.

They will attack their enemies quickly, like a hungry eagle swooping down from the sky.

<sup>9</sup>The one thing they all want to do is fight.

Their armies will march fast like the wind in the desert.

And the Babylonian soldiers will take prisoners

as easily as scooping up sand.

<sup>10</sup>The Babylonian soldiers will laugh at the kings of other nations.

Foreign rulers will be like jokes to them.

The Babylonian soldiers will laugh at the cities with tall, strong walls.

They will simply build ramps up against the walls to attack them.

<sup>11</sup>Then they will leave like the wind and go on to fight against other places.

The only thing the Babylonians worship is their own strength."

### Habakkuk's Second Complaint

<sup>12</sup>LORD, you are the one who lives forever!

You are my holy God who never dies!<sup>†</sup>

LORD, have you chosen the Babylonians to make things right?

Have you, our Rock, prepared them to punish your people?

<sup>13</sup>But your eyes are too good to look at evil.

You cannot stand to see people doing wrong.

So why do you permit such evil?

How can you watch while the wicked destroy people who are so much better?

<sup>14</sup>You made people like fish in the sea. They are like little sea animals without a leader.

<sup>15</sup>The enemy catches all of them with hooks and nets.

The enemy catches them in his net and drags them in,

and the enemy is very happy with what he has caught.

<sup>16</sup>His net helps him live like the rich and enjoy the best food.

So the enemy worships his net.

He makes sacrifices and burns incense to honour his net.

<sup>17</sup>Will he keep drawing his sword to destroy whole nations without showing mercy?

**2** I will stand like a guard and watch. I will wait to see what the LORD will say to me.

I will see if he has an answer to my complaint.

### God Answers Habakkuk

<sup>2</sup>The LORD answered me:

"Write down what I show you.

Write it clearly on clay tablets

so that the message will be easy to read.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This message is about a special time in the future.

It is about the end, and it will come true. If it seems to take a long time,

just be patient and wait for it.

All that it promises will happen.

<sup>†</sup>1:12 **LORD, you are ... never dies** Or "LORD, you have been my holy God forever! Surely we will not die."

<sup>‡</sup>2:2 **Write down ... easy to read** Or "Write the vision clearly on tablets so that the person who reads it can run and tell others."

It will not be late.

<sup>4</sup>The one who gives up hope in the promise will not be able to go on, but the one who does what is right will find new life in its faithfulness.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>5</sup>“It is also true that wealth tricks the one who is proud.

The proud person opens his mouth wide enough to swallow whole nations, but he will not succeed.

He is like death—always wanting more and more.

And, like death, he will never be satisfied.

He continues to defeat the other nations and to make those people his captives.

<sup>6</sup>But soon enough, they will make fun of him.

They will laugh at him and say,

‘Look at you, you thief!

You have made yourself rich by forcing others to pay their debts to you.

But this has gone on long enough!’

<sup>7</sup>“Strong man, you have taken money from other people.

One day they will wake up and realize what is happening,

and they will stand against you.

Then they will take things from you,

and you will be very afraid.

<sup>8</sup>You have taken things by force from many nations.

Now those who survived will take all you have.

You have murdered so many people.

You have destroyed lands, cities and everyone in them.

<sup>9</sup>“Look at you, who get rich by cheating others!

You have hurt your own family.

You put your house high on a cliff

so that danger cannot reach it.

<sup>10</sup>You have planned ways to bring ruin to many, and this will bring shame to your own family and cost you your life.

<sup>11</sup>The stones of your walls will cry out against you, and the wooden beams of your house will agree you are wrong.

<sup>12</sup>“Look at you, who kill people to build a city and depend on crime to support it!

<sup>13</sup>The LORD All-Powerful will send a fire

to destroy everything you have worked to build.

All your work will be for nothing.

<sup>14</sup>Then people everywhere will know about the glory of the LORD.

This news will spread just as water spreads out into the sea.

<sup>15</sup>“Look at you, who pour out your anger on the countries around you!

You are like a host who forces wine on his neighbours,

making them drunk to see them naked.

<sup>16</sup>But you have filled yourself with shame,

not the glory you wanted.

So you will drink from the cup in the LORD’s right hand,

filled with his anger.

Drink, and let everyone see your nakedness!

Your glory will be replaced with shame.

<sup>17</sup>You hurt many people in Lebanon

and stole many animals there.

So you will be afraid because of the people who died

and because of the bad things you did to that country.

You will be afraid because of what you did to those cities

<sup>†</sup>2:4 The ancient Greek version has “If anyone turns back, I will not be pleased with him. But the righteous one will live by my faithfulness.”

and to the people who lived there.

### The Message About Idols

<sup>18</sup>“What good is an idol that a skilled worker has made?

It is nothing but a piece of metal that deceives you.

Does its maker trust in his own creation? It's just an idol that cannot even speak!

<sup>19</sup>Look at you, who say to a piece of wood, ‘Wake up!’

You tell a speechless stone, ‘Get up and help me!’

Don't you know an idol cannot help you? It may be covered with gold and silver, but it has no life.

<sup>20</sup>But the LORD is in his holy temple, so the whole earth should be silent in his presence and show him respect.”

### Habakkuk's Prayer

**3** This is the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk:<sup>§</sup>

<sup>2</sup>LORD, I have heard all about you.

I am amazed, LORD, at the powerful things you did in the past.

Now, as the promised time comes near, do those same things again.

Show your power in this time.

But even in your anger, remember to show mercy to us. *Selah*

<sup>3</sup>I saw\*\* God coming from Teman, the Holy One coming from Mount Paran.

*Selah*

His majesty covered the heavens, and his glory filled the earth!

<sup>4</sup>He appeared as bright as lightning,

holding in his hand a double lightning bolt.

<sup>5</sup>He came marching with deadly forces, disease in front and fever following behind.

<sup>6</sup>When he got ready for battle, the earth shook.

With just a glance he frightened the nations.

I saw the ancient mountains crumble before him,

the hills that have been there forever.

This is the same route he followed so long ago.

<sup>7</sup>I saw the desert tribes of Cushan in trouble

and the people of Midian†† shake with fear.

<sup>8</sup>LORD, what is the meaning of this?

Are you angry at the rivers?

Are you upset at the sea?

Is that why you are driving your horses and chariots to victory?

<sup>9</sup>I saw you pull your bow from its case and send its arrows to feast on blood.

*Selah*

You made rivers divide the land.

<sup>10</sup>The mountains saw you and shook.

The clouds poured down water.

The deep sea roared

and raised its waves as if shaking its fists.

<sup>11</sup>The light of the sun was covered up, and the moon never came out.

The only light was from lightning flashes that came from your arrows and spear.

<sup>12</sup>In anger you trampled the earth and crushed the nations.

<sup>13</sup>You came to save your people

§3:1 The Hebrew text adds “according to *shigyonoth*”, which may be a musical instruction that this prayer is to be sung.

\*\*3:3 *I saw* In verses 3-15 Habakkuk describes a vision he receives in answer to his prayer in verse 2. He sees God coming from the south (Teman) in great power and glory.

††3:7 *Cushan, Midian* Tribes of nomads who lived on the route followed by God's army marching from the south in Habakkuk's vision. They were terrified by what they saw.

and to lead your chosen king<sup>‡</sup> to  
victory.

You smashed the head of the evil nation  
and stripped him from the neck down.

*Selah*

<sup>14</sup> You filled his head with arrows  
and stopped all his defenders,  
who came like a storm against us.

They thought they could defeat us easily,  
as if robbing the poor who have no  
defence.

<sup>15</sup> You marched your horses through the  
sea,  
stirring up the mud.

<sup>16</sup> My whole body shook when I heard all  
this.

My lips trembled.

I felt weak deep down in my bones  
and stood there shaking.

But I will wait patiently for that day  
when this destruction will come on those  
who attack us.

### Always Trust in the Lord

<sup>17</sup> There may be times when the fig trees  
have no fruit

and there are no grapes on the vines.

The olive trees may fail to produce,  
and there is nothing to harvest from the  
fields.

There may not be any sheep in the pens  
or cattle in the barns.

<sup>18</sup> But I will still be glad because I have  
the LORD;

I will rejoice because I have God to pro-  
tect me.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord GOD gives me my strength.

He helps me run fast like a deer.

He leads me safely on the mountains.

*To the music director.*

*On my stringed instruments.*

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<sup>‡</sup>3:13 *chosen king* Literally, “anointed one”.