

“Journey through the Bible”

“Habakkuk: When God Doesn’t”

Habakkuk ministered during the death throes of the nation of Judah. After the last righteous king (Josiah), the nation of Judah went down a spiritual spiral rapidly. We hardly know anything about this prophet; he is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Jewish tradition says that Habakkuk was the Shunammite’s son (2 Kings 4). Most scholars believed that he lived during the time of King Josiah. This would explain his understanding of spiritual renewal. He lived during a time of revival (Josiah), and also a time of spiritual decline. The prophets lack of dates or mentioning of kings makes predicting his era difficult. However, his message clearly predates the Babylonians.

Habakkuk the Man & Timeline:

- Habakkuk likely prophesied when Josiah was king – 641 – 610

612 Nineveh (Assyria) falls

- Jehoahaz 609 – killed by an Egyptian Pharaoh after 3 months

606 first invasion of Babylon – Daniel & captives carried away to Babylon

- Jehoiakim 609 – 598 – reigned for 11 years
- Jehoiachin – 598 – reigned 3 months – grandson of Josiah – died in Babylon

597 Second deportation from Judah to Babylon

- Zedekiah – 597 – 586 – 11 years- youngest son of Josiah – captured / blinded / died in Babylon

586 Final collapse of Judah

Three enemies cruel to Israel:

1. Assyrians - Jonah & Nahum
2. Edomites - Obadiah
3. Babylon - Jeremiah & Habakkuk

Habakkuk was the last of the writing prophets before the destruction of Jerusalem, in the same manner that Micah was the last writing prophet before the destruction of Israel.

We are not sure if Habakkuk was called from a prior occupation like Amos (shepherd), to be a prophet, or if he was trained as a prophet? However, we can conclude that he was connected to Levitical temple worship.

1. Shigionoth – this spoke to the way a certain piece of music was to be played (3:1) ...

2. Selah – a musical sign that called for a pause in the music (3:3) ...

Habakkuk chapter three is written as psalm of praise.

Habakkuk's name tells it all! His name comes from the Hebrew verb **“embrace.”** Habakkuk was **“He who embraces”** – or **“He who clings.”** Not in the context of one who “embraces” in love, but one who “embraces” and holds onto, one who wrestles, one who refuses to let go... The idea of Habakkuk being a “wrestler” with God and man aligns nicely with his message of FAITH. **Outline of Habakkuk:**

- I. The Prophet's Dialogue with Jehovah. 1:1–2:20
 - A. The First Cycle. 1:1–11
 1. The prophet's question. 1:1–4
 2. Jehovah's response. 1:5–11
 - B. The Second Cycle. 1:12–2:20
 1. The prophet's question. 1:12–17
 2. Jehovah's response. 2:1–20
- II. The Prophet's Deference to Jehovah. 3:1–19
 - A. His Prayer to God. 3:1–2
 1. Its description. 3:1
 2. Its content. 3:2
 - B. His Praise of God. 3:3–15
 1. For His majesty. 3:3–7
 2. For His power. 3:8–15
 - C. His Trust in God. 3:16–19
 1. In spite of His work in bringing the Chaldeans 3:16–17
 2. Because of His work in bringing salvation (deliverance). 3:18–19¹

Habakkuk is carrying a **“burden”** (1:1); the content of what he is about to say was heavy. Although only 56 verses, Habakkuk unfolds to us as a conversation he has with God.

Lessons from Habakkuk:

1. **Waiting on Justice:** Chapter 1

¹ Hindson, E. E., & Kroll, W. M. (Eds.). (1994). *KJV Bible Commentary* (p. 1762). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The prophet was asking God, “Why aren’t You doing something about this?” This question is birthed out of a series of deprecations:

- Violence - 1:2
- Iniquity - 1:3
- Plundering - 1:3
- Strife - 1:3
- Contention - 1:3
- Injustice - 1:4
- Perverse Judgement - 1:4

God answers the prophet’s complaint (1:5-11). First Habakkuk complains about God’s **inactivity**, when he learns that God is going to use the Babylonian’s to punish Judah for her sins, he begins to complain about God’s **activity**.

Habakkuk wants **justice**. He cannot fathom the idea of God using the Babylonians, a more wicked people than Judah to execute justice (1:13b)! In fact, he calls God’s ways into question:

- ❖ God’s Nature – He is eternal (1:12a)
- ❖ God’s Sovereignty – He is in control (1:12b)
- ❖ God’s Holiness – (1:13)

-Psalms 89:14, “**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.**”

- **Habakkuk was simply asking God where is JUSTICE, and how could the involvement of the Babylonians be JUSTIFIABLE?**

What is a believer supposed to do in this circumstance? What does the prophet do?

“I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.” (2:1)

1. Habakkuk WATCHES
2. Habakkuk WAITS
 - *God is working even when we cannot see it!*

2. Woe to the unrighteous: Chapter 2

A dialogue has taken place between God and the prophet.

1. Prayer One (1:2-4)
2. Answer to prayer one (1:5-11)
3. Prayer Two (1:12-17)
 - Prophets Word of Confidence (2:1)
4. Answer to prayer two (2:2-5)
 - Prophets Word of Condemnation (2:6-19)

Notice the prophet's *attitude* described for us in verse 2:

1. He expects to hear from God.
2. He expects that the Lord's answer will bring correction in his life.

God answers the prophet's question of "justice?" ***Don't focus on what I am doing or not doing among others; focus on what I am asking you to do.***

What God was asking of the prophet and of us today is found in verse 2, "**...the just shall live by his faith.**" This phrase is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11, & Hebrews 10:38). It became Martin Luther's motivation for the "Reformation."

- Romans defines the term "**JUST.**"
- Galatians describes the term "**LIVE.**"
- Hebrews deepens the term **FAITH.**"

The 5 Woe's:

1. Woe # 1 – 2:6-8
2. Woe # 2 – 2:8-11
3. Woe # 3 – 2:12-14
4. Woe # 4 – 2:15-18
5. Woe # 5 – 2:19-20

3. **Worshipping by Faith:** Chapter 3

Habakkuk learned that he could rejoice no matter what his situation might be. His joy was not rooted in the circumstance of his day nor his own personal struggle; his joy was rooted in God.

Habakkuk went from:

1. Weeping - Chapter 1
2. Waiting - Chapter 2
3. Worshipping- Chapter 3

Notice the prophet went from, *God I don't understand Your work, it doesn't seem right (1:13b)*, to God "**...revive Your work in the midst of the years...**" (3:2). The prophet is praying for God to do a reviving work (1:5); a work that would testify of Him. As Israel experienced in years past. Habakkuk reminds himself and Judah of God's faithful dealings with their forefathers as He lead them out of Egypt to Canaan.

Habakkuk closes with a confession of FAITH, perhaps the greatest in Scripture (3:17-18).