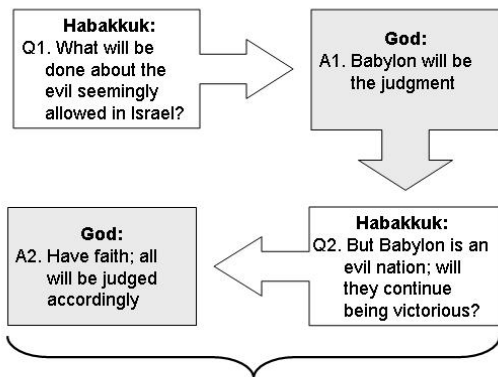


## HABAKKUK

- Habakkuk (“The embraced one”) was not only a prophet, but probably a singer in the Levitical choirs (Habakkuk 3:1, 19). Habakkuk was urged “to embrace” God’s will in faith.
- This book is dated during the first siege of Nebuchadnezzar or just before ~607 BC in Jehoiakim’s reign. Babylon was becoming the dominant world power, and Judah would soon feel Babylon’s destructive force.
- Unlike the other prophets, the book of Habakkuk consists of discussions between him and the Lord – not between him and the people. Instead of talking to the people about God, Habakkuk talks to God about the people. Some scholars believe that the “target audience” of Habakkuk is clergy and worship leaders.
- A national poll found that most people would ask God a similar question as Hezekiah if given the chance: Why do you allow evil in the world?
- The book of Habakkuk shows that God is still in control of the world despite of the apparent triumph of evil in this world.
- Themes of the Book of Habakkuk include:
  - The struggle and doubt of God’s people looking at the world
  - God’s sovereignty beyond the present worldly events
  - Hope in God’s plan, wisdom and sovereignty

### Habakkuk’s Questions to God



God is Sovereign.  
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!

| Outline of Habakkuk |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Chapter 1           | Habakkuk’s Initial Question & God’s Response |
| Chapter 2           | Habakkuk’s Second Question & God’s Response  |
| Chapter 3           | Habakkuk’s Poetic Prayer of Praise           |

**Read Habakkuk 1:1-4 ... Habakkuk’s Initial Complaint**

1:1 Habakkuk has conversations with the Lord that provide him spiritual sight as in an oracle (Hebrew word Massa' meaning burden or tribute).

- The word “oracle” means “a burden” (maśśā מַסָּא) communicated by God and is usually used in the sense of judgment. An “oracle” can also infer lifting of a burden – as in lifting one’s voice in prayer. Nahum will also receive an oracle.

1:2 Habakkuk had been beckoning the Lord for some time – for intervention and assistance. He did not question whether the Lord heard his prayer or could act, but instead, he believed God was calling him to witness the injustice.

1:3 Of course, if the Lord judged all unrighteousness immediately, no being could survive an instant.

- Violence always seems to accompany evil; violence (Hebrew word “*hamas*”) occurs six times in this book (1:2, 3, 9; 2:8, 17).

1:4 The Mosaic Law was described with the Hebrew word “*lāpūg*” (לָפֹגַת) which means “wearied” or “ignored;” it is related to the Hebrew term “*pug*” (פֹּגַת) which means “to grow numb.”

- As in America, the law had become a game with criminals being released on irrelevant technicalities while innocent people are convicted due to prejudice and bias.

**Read Habakkuk 1:5-11 ... The Lord’s Answer of the Coming Chaldeans**

1:5 When speaking to the people of Antioch (Acts 13:40-41), Paul closes his sermon with this warning of being astounded followed by unbelief. In his case, it would be Rome (instead of Babylon) as the judgment.

- Th Hebrew words for “you” and “your” are plural, so the Lord is calling for the prophet and the people to watch.

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| <b>God’s Call to Pay Attention<br/>(Habakkuk 1:5)</b> |
| Look  |
| See   |
| Wonder  |
| Be Astounded  |

1:6 Although the Lord will use the Chaldeans/Babylonians (Isaiah 39:6), God understands the wickedness of Babylon. Babylonians were as interested in torture as they were conquest.

1:7 In listing the horrors of the Babylonians, one characteristic is that their views on justice stem from their reason and societal tolerances (Judges 21:25; Deuteronomy 6:18, 12:8, 13:8; Isaiah 65:2) instead of accepting God’s Word as absolute truth.

1:8 Throughout the Old Testament, the horse equates to the military might of a nation (Joel 2:4-6).

- Three characteristics of the Babylonian horses are defined: 1.quick as leopards 2.fierce as wolves 3.suddenly aggressive as an eagle

1:9 The ambition of the Babylonian army is to execute violence, and their prisoners were numerous.

- “*All their faces forward*” might infer a focus on greed and conquest.
- 1:10 The Babylonians respected no authority or defense. They built up siege ramps (dirt mounds) from this world to attack/overcome.
- 1:11 & 16 It is twice commented that Babylon worships their own skills and tools; therefore, Babylon is proclaimed guilty.
- Their “*own might is their god!*” (Isaiah 10:12-14)
  - Be careful not to make a false god out of one’s own abilities and talents (2 Cor 12:10).

**Read Habakkuk 1:12-17 ... Habakkuk’s Second Complaint About the Wicked Babylonians**

- 1:12 Although the Lord is eternal and is in no danger of dying, Habakkuk might be killed by these Babylonians. But he claims that the Lord is his “rock” and protection.
- This reveals that Habakkuk does not fully understand the entire plan of the Lord because God did die on the cross for His people (Rev 1:18).
  - Habakkuk uses a personal pronoun (“My”) for his intimate relationship with the LORD (“Yahweh”).
  - The Hebrew term for “rock” (šūr :רֹקֵץ) speaks of the unchanging strength and protection of the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31; Psalm 18:1-2, 31; Isaiah 26:4, 30:29)
    - “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.” Augustus Montague Toplady, the writer of “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me,” was born in England in 1740 and died from tuberculosis in 1778.
- 1:13 “*Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing.*”
- Israel had rejected the Mosaic Law while Babylon did not have access to God’s law, so Israel may have been judged as more wicked than Babylon (Luke 12:48; Matthew 10:15; Jeremiah 3:6-11)
- 1:14 Man is likened to fish who have no ruler as each does what is right in his own eyes (Mt 4:19, 13:47-50; Mk 1:17)
- 1:15 After God’s answer, Habakkuk is really concerned – not only do the wicked prosper in Israel, but a more wicked people (Babylon) will be used by God to punish His people.
- Habakkuk uses the imagery of fishing as Babylon captures nations as fish to be caught and consumed.
- 1:16 Mankind worships their own skills and tools. Frequently, man idolizes his job as the provider instead of the Lord who is the source.
- 1:17 Babylon showed no mercy as they slaughtered the helpless insatiably. Habakkuk’s second question was around God’s mercy on a merciless nation.

**Read Habakkuk 2:1-5 ... Habakkuk Waits and is Directed to Document the Response**

- 2:1 After Habakkuk’s second prayer, he says that he will stand back and watch what God answers. Habakkuk did not want to figure it out on his own, but instead, Habakkuk waited for revelation from the Lord.
- 2:2 As God had directed Moses (Ex 17:14, 34:27, 31:19), Jeremiah (30:2), Ezekiel (24:2, 43:11), and John (Rev 1:11), God also tells Habakkuk to record this vision in large letters, so that anyone running by would be able to read it (similar to a road sign of warning).

- 2:3 The Lord directs Habakkuk to be patient for the Lord to respond in His own time.
- 2:4 The phrase “puffed up” is used several times in Scripture as hemorrhoids (Deuteronomy 28:27; 1 Samuel 5:6, 9, 12). The soul of the wicked man is not upright according to God’s standard, but instead it is deviated (sin – missing the mark).
- The Hebrew word for “faith” is “amen” (’ēmūnāh אֱמוּנָה) which means to be firm, certain and sure. God gives faith to believers (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 12:3) who then walk with God to become increasingly faithful.

| <b>Habakkuk 2:4 Inspires Three Pauline Epistles</b> |                                 |                |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>The Righteous</i></b>                         | Romans is about being righteous | Romans 1:17    |
| <b><i>Will Live</i></b>                             | Galatians is about how to live  | Galatians 3:11 |
| <b><i>By Faith</i></b>                              | Hebrews is about having faith   | Hebrews 10:38  |

- 2:5 Successful, powerful men are consumers (like locusts); they are never satisfied. Victory and success can become an intoxicant to driving behavior to an irrational, irrevocable degree.
- Sheol is the grave and the holding place for the dead until Judgment Day (Hades in the New Testament). Rabbi’s believed that Sheol was divided into Paradise (for the righteous - Luke 16:19-31) and Tartarus (for the wicked – 2 Peter 2:4)

### **Read Habakkuk 2:6-20 ... Prophecy of Chaldean Judgment**

- 2:6 The nations that were conquered by Babylon will thoroughly enjoy the downfall and judgment on the Babylonian empire.
- 2:7 As Babylon’s enemies “arise” and “awake,” as they make Babylon their spoil.
- 2:8 Babylon will be treated in the same aggressive fashion that they treated others (Galatians 6:7).
- 2:9 Babylon’s greed caused them to torture, loot and steal for their own self-indulgence.
- 2:10 The act of “cutting off nations” is equivalent to exile and deportation of the conquered foes.
- 2:11 The stone and wood construction of Babylon would fall as even Babylon’s edifices cry out.
- 2:12 Although Nebuchadnezzar was known for his building projects, his foundation was conquest and slave labor.
- 2:13 “*Peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?*” All of the strife and work of mankind is vanity that leads to judgment.
- 2:14 Everyone on earth will have deep knowledge of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11)
- The deepest part of the ocean is in the Mariana(s) Trench located in the western Pacific Ocean. It is just under 7 miles (6.831 miles) deep at its deepest where the pressure reaches over 15,000 pounds per square inch.
- 2:15 God is against taking advantage of others for self-gratification.
- 2:16 The cup of wrath represents God’s judgment (Matthew 26:39; Jeremiah 25:15-16; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Lamentations 4:21; Ezekiel 23:28-34; Habakkuk 2:16)
- 2:17 Lebanon was known for amazing forests and wildlife which had been destroyed by the aggressions of the Babylonian army.
- 2:18 Man trusted the work of his own hands instead of relying on God.
- 2:19 Man’s attempts to give life to inanimate objects would be his vanity and downfall.

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|---|
| <b>Five (number of judgment) Woes to Societal Characteristics</b> |
|---|

| Verse | Sin                | Outcome  |
|-------|--------------------|--|
| 2:6   | Pillage            | Creditors and others will plunder you                                  |
| 2:9   | Plotters/Schemers  | Your own household will turn on you                                    |
| 2:12  | Violent Achievers  | Man's effort is only vanity and tiresome activity without productivity |
| 2:15  | Debauchery & Shame | The transparent candor will be your disgrace                           |
| 2:19  | Idolatry           | Compels false knowledge and does not return communication              |

2:20 At times, believers should come before God in silence to listen to Him (Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13)

### Read Habakkuk 3:1-16 ... Habakkuk In Awe of God's Majesty

3:1 Habakkuk's third prayer is a psalm to the Lord (Psalm 7:1); Habakkuk is putting words to a Shigionoth which was a well-known melody.

3:2 Now Habakkuk has come to understand the power of God's wrath.

- Although Habakkuk cried for judgment on Israel (in his first prayer) and judgment on Babylon (in his second prayer), now Habakkuk prays for mercy.
- Habakkuk is fearful of the testimonies of Scripture, but he prays that God send a revival on Israel, but also have mercy on them.

3:3 Teman is synonymous with Edom and a location that was known for its wise men (Jer 49:7; Obadiah 1:8); Mt. Paran is synonymous with Mt. Sinai, so this passage points to God's glory when He gave His law at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19 & 24).

- "SELAH" which is a musical term meaning to accentuate or pause.
  - The term "Selah" is also used to "lift up" or "exalt"
  - Another use of the term "Selah" is as a connector to reflect on what has just been said and then tie it to consequent teaching in the next verse.
- The term "Selah" is repeated 71 times in Psalms and 3 times in chapter 3 of Habakkuk.

3:4 God appeared in His shekinah glory on Mt. Sinai; however, the people were not even allowed on the base of the mountain (Exodus 19:12).

- When Moses would talk with the Lord, Moses would pull a veil over his face (Exodus 34:32-35).

3:5-6 The following are descriptions of the Lord God Almighty. Evil is cleared before and after Him through plagues and pestilence; it is interesting how suffering often brings closer walks with God.

3:7 The nations around Mt. Sinai (where the law was given) were fearful. Moses' wife, Zipporah was defined as both Midianite and Cushite (Exod. 2:16-22; 18:1-5; Num. 12:1).

3:8 Habakkuk questions how broad the Lord's anger is and how far reaching the Lord's wrath will be felt; could creation feel it?

- God repeatedly used creation and natural means to bring about supernatural salvation as He did with the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21) as well as Jordan River (Joshua 3:15-17).
- God incarnate (Jesus Christ) would become man to bring about man's salvation (John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5-11).

- The seas represent whole nations and cultures while the rivers represent a subset (a group of people or an individual sinner).
- 3:9 The assault (arrows) of the Lord would be as certain as His oath/purpose – they would not miss their mark. Mankind, the earth, is made into islands of men as the Lord uses these individual groups (rivers) to divide and isolate them.
- 3:10 Even the leaders and authorities (represented by mountains) are fearful of the wrath of the Lord.
- 3:11 Nature responds to God as He defeats His enemies (Joshua 10:12-13); the Sun and moon (lights of this world) respond to God’s action (Joel 2:10, 31, 3:15).
- Assyria and Babylon worshipped false astral powers in the heavenlies instead of worshipping the Creator God Who made heaven and earth (Genesis 1:14-19).
- 3:12 The Lord’s wrath is personified by the approaching army marching out from Babylon.
- The Hebrew word for “gleaming/glittering” (בִּרְקָא bəraq) is only used twice when dealing with the Exodus (Deuteronomy 32:40-42).
- 3:13 Although the swath of destruction is broad, the Lord would intervene to save His people as the wicked are punished for their sin.
- 3:14 Eventually, God used the poor character of Assyria and Babylon to weaken themselves from within as they were pierced with their own spears.
- 3:15 The Lord rides above all of the nations of the world with the ability to wash away the evil.
- 3:16 Habakkuk was physically shaken by the oracle that God had given (Daniel 8:17, 17, 27; 10:7-10, 15-19).
- While Habakkuk watched the Babylonian, tormenters carry out the judgment of the Lord, he is now ready to quietly wait until the Lord brings retribution on the tool of His judgment.

**Read Habakkuk 3:17-19 ... Habakkuk Rejoices in the LORD**

- 3:17 Habakkuk must patiently rejoice in God’s future victory. Israel (vine-past; fig-now; olive-millennium) has not produced fruit; the fields of this world (Gal 5:22; Jn 4:35) do not harvest believers; the sheep (His church) are not yet in God’s care (Luke 15:4-7).
- 3:18 *“I will triumph in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”*
- 3:19 In conclusion, God is to be the focus – not one’s own strength or one’s circumstances.
- As with a deer jumping along high cliffs, God’s faithfulness and protection makes Habakkuk safe in what appears to be extremely dangerous and dire conditions.