

Habakkuk Lesson 01

Habakkuk Chapter 01

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: KjvBibleStudies.net

e-mail: mail@KjvBibleStudies2.net

Introduction: We begin a new study on the book of Habakkuk this week. The Book of Habakkuk in some ways might be considered a condensed version of the Book of Jeremiah. Both men were contemporaries, and both wrote of warning of the impending Babylonian captivity and dispersion. Habakkuk's ministry was during the reign of King Josiah.

The focus of the book is the sin of Judah and the impending judgment of God. The book is comprised of five sections:

- (1) The bewilderment of the prophet over God's silence regarding Judah's sin, 1:1-4.
- (2) God's answer to the prophet's bewilderment. 1:5-11.
- (3) The prophet's testimony of God, 1:12- 2:1.
- (4) God's reply to the prophet's testimony in chapter 2.
- (5) A fervent prayer of faith by the prophet Habakkuk to God, 3:1-19.

The first three sections of the book are found in the first chapter. Habakkuk is perplexed and somewhat bewildered at why God was silent regarding the sin of Judah. God in turn announced to the prophet the judgment planned against His people. The prophet in turn lifts up his voice in praise to God for His holiness yet remains perplexed at how God could use an unholy nation to do His work.

I. The Burden of Habakkuk

Hab 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. Little is known of this prophet other than that he prophesied in Judah and against Judah during what evidently was the reign of Josiah. The foretold Babylonian captivity had not yet begun. That, of course, would take place not long after the death of Josiah during the reign of his son Jehoiakim.

The word translated as burden (asm massa') means just that. What the prophet Habakkuk had to write was a burdensome message of impending judgment

against the rebellious nation of Judah. God enabled the prophet to see what he wrote and foretold. Thus, prophets were at times called 'seers.'

Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

Hab 1:3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

The prophet cried out to God from his heart. His question was why God did not hearken to his prayer. Habakkuk knew all too well the sin of Judah and he had prayed to God for Him to do something about it. He knew that God was holy and wondered why God seemingly tolerated the sin of the land.

He had cried out to God over the violence and wickedness all about him, yet God seemed to be silent. It should be recalled that Habakkuk wrote during the latter years of Josiah. God had told King Josiah that he would in fact bring harsh judgment upon Judah, but not in his days.

2Ki 22:18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

2Ki 22:19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

2Ki 22:20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

Because of the repentance of Josiah, God promised to delay His chastening judgment until after Josiah had died. Habakkuk's perspective was during the years before Josiah died and when the judgment came by means of Babylon.

It may be the prophet was not aware of the promise which God made to Josiah in promising to put off judgment until after his demise. In any event, the prophet cried out to God perplexed at why God did not deliver the oppressed of the land from the violence and wickedness all about.

Jeremiah focused particularly upon the idolatry of Judah. Habakkuk will touch upon the same in a lesser degree. His focus was more upon the violence, crime, and sin in general which prevailed in Judah in his day. He could not understand why God allowed such depravity to continue. Notice the progression of sin described here: iniquity, grievance, spoiling, violence, strife, and contention. It all was wickedness. Habakkuk asked God

why He forced him to witness such sin. Why would God not do something about it?

Hab 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

Hab 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

As Habakkuk saw it, there was no enforcement of the Law of God in his day. There was no righteous judgment in the nation. The wicked outnumbered and surrounded the righteous. As a result, wrong judgment proliferated in the land. The word translated as wrong (lqe 'aqal) has the sense of being 'bent,' 'twisted,' 'distorted,' or 'crooked.'

The greater thought is that whatever 'justice' existed in Judah, it was crooked (i.e., corrupt). Habakkuk lived in a nation which outwardly claimed to be religious but in fact was corrupt, crooked, criminal, and violent. He thus cried out to God, why do you allow this to continue?

In verse 5 we see God answering Habakkuk's plaintive plea. What is about to be introduced is the invasion by Babylon, the captivity of Judah, and their dispersion abroad. God announced that He was about to work a work even in Habakkuk's days which the rebellious Jews would not believe even though they were told so. Rebellious Judah absolutely refused to believe that God would destroy them as a nation.

Habakkuk had asked why God did not do something. To that, God replied that it would happen in his lifetime (i.e., "in your days"). The invasion of Babylon took place only several years after the death of King Josiah who was the sitting king in Habakkuk's day. God essentially told Habakkuk to stand by. It is also noteworthy that the Apostle Paul quoted this verse in Acts 13:41 when he preached at the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia.

Act 13:40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

Act 13:41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

The point there was a warning toward hostile Jews even in Paul's day of rebelling against the grace of God and the gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul certainly validated the ministry of Habakkuk.

II. God Would Raise Up The Chaldeans Against Them

Hab 1:6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.

Hab 1:7 They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

Hab 1:8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

Though the Babylonian empire would come to encompass a large area of the Middle East, Chaldea was their home base. The reference to the Chaldeans refers to Babylon. It was the region along the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers where the city of Babylon was located. (The distinction would be similar to that of England versus Great Britain.) The greater point is how that the Chaldeans (i.e., the Babylonians) would invade Judah and march through the breadth of their land, conquering and possessing that which they pleased.

Implicit is utter defeat and conquest of Judah by Babylon. Though Judah refused to think that could ever happen, God said it was about to come to pass. The Babylonian armies were powerful, fierce, and terrifying. They would do whatever they desired. In short, they would be overpowering. The speed and overwhelming military power of Babylon is described. Ancient armies often were slow and cumbersome. That would not be the case with Babylon.

(1) Their mounted Calvary would sweep into Judah with a vengeance.

(2) Their ferocity as warriors would be like wolves.

(3) They would swoop down upon Judah like an eagle.

Hab 1:9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

Hab 1:10 And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

Hab 1:11 Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

The Babylonian armies, particularly in their final incursion against Judah, would come with vengeance. After having rebelled against Babylonian rule, the third and final incursion by Babylon against Judah would be violent and destructive.

John Gill wrote, “their countenances will appear so stern and fierce, that their very looks will so frighten, as to cause men to sink and die through terror; just as herbs and plants shrivel up and wither away, when blasted by a nipping east wind.”

When the Babylonian force rolled into Judah, they would scoff at whatever meager resistance Judah could throw against them. They would hold kings such as Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah in contempt, taking two of them captive to Babylon. Other princes of the royal family of Judah would be treated with contempt.

No military opposition would withstand their onslaught. All would be utterly crushed as if they were piles of dust. As Nebuchadnezzar rolled over Judah in his three incursions, his mind changed from simple conquest to utter destruction. His plans shifted from simply conquering Judah to destroying it. Furthermore, he would ascribe his victory to help from his own pagan god.

One of the major gods of Babylon was Bel. However, as was often the case with pagan kings, they came to think of themselves as deity. In Daniel Chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image of himself of which his entire kingdom was to worship. That may be in view here. In any event, the greater point is that a pagan god would receive glory for the destruction of Jerusalem. To even a rebellious Jew, that must have been an utterly galling thought.

III. Habakkuk Declares God to be From Everlasting to Everlasting

Hab 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

Hab 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

As the prophet begins a new section of the chapter and book, one of the great biblical passages of direct theology is at hand. Though Nebuchadnezzar might give glory to his pagan idol for his victories, the fact is that The Jehovah God is eternal. He is from everlasting. As the psalmist wrote, “even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2b).

Psa 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Moreover, God is holy. The only attribute of God which is ascribed with triple appellation is holiness. See Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Rev 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Holiness is the defining attribute of God's character and the primary attribute thereof. Habakkuk embraced God and His holiness personally. The comment, "we shall not die" likely refers to spiritual death. Though many a Jew, some even God-fearing ones, no doubt perished in the Babylonian incursions. Habakkuk certainly knew that it is appointed unto man once to die. Rather, there appears to be a clear hint at his realization of eternal life for those redeemed by God.

God is eternal and because of His eternality, they too would enjoy eternal life. Thus, eternal life is predicated upon the eternality of God Himself. The phrase O mighty God (rwu tsuwr) literally means 'O rock' as the rock and refuge of His people. Frequently in the Psalms, David referred to God as his rock. (See Psalm 18:2, 31, 46, 28:1, 42:9, 62:2, et al.)

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Psa 62:2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

Habakkuk acknowledges that God had ordained Babylon to judge His people. The Almighty God had raised up the fierce Babylonian armies as a rod of correction against His rebellious people, Judah.

The holiness of God is further described in verse 13. Habakkuk reminded God that because of His holiness, He could not and would not look upon evil or sin. A lesson remains there for God's people today. If we have been called to holiness, which we have, we therefore have no business looking upon evil whether it be the corruption of Hollywood, or the enticing advertisements to sinful activities, or any other corrupt sight.

Psa 5:4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

Psa 5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

The holiness of God is to such an extent, that He can have nothing to do with that which is unholy. In looking about at the endless sin and wickedness all about him in Judah, the prophet therefore again protested to God. His question was how could a holy God tolerate the sin of His people. Even more, the prophet could not understand how God could use a treacherous and unrighteous nation such as Babylon as His instrument.

Though the focus of Habakkuk's attention here could be either the sin of Judah or the cruelty of Babylon, verse 17 well indicates that Babylon is the subject. Habakkuk could not understand how that God would use a wicked nation (i.e., Babylonians) to judge Jews more righteous than them.

Hab 1:14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?

Hab 1:15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

Hab 1:16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.

The thought continues from the preceding verse. God was using a pagan nation (Babylon) to catch men like fish or like insects. Habakkuk could not understand that. The Babylonians would catch men (i.e., of Judah) like fishermen with a hook and line, or with cast net, or the more extensive drag net. The Babylonians therefore rejoiced and were glad in their catch (i.e., the men of Judah). Again, the greater point is that Habakkuk could not understand how God could use a wicked nation to so catch His people.

As Babylon swept through Judah and captured it with ease, they in turn made sacrifices unto their pagan idols. They thanked their supposed gods for their victory. They had made a good catch of the men of Judah. Accordingly, multitudes of Jews were deported back to Babylon as displaced persons and prisoners of war. In a form of reverse ethnic cleansing, Babylon sent captive Jews back to their homeland. They had made a good haul of it and therefore sacrificed to their gods.

Hab 1:17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

The analogy of fishing is completed. Habakkuk therefore asked God in effect, 'Would not Babylon simply empty their nets and go on to mercilessly capture other nations?' Indeed they would. But the prophet remained perplexed at how and why a holy God would use an unholy nation to do His bidding. The answer to that is a sovereign God can use any means He so chooses to accomplish His will.

Albert Barnes made these comments about verse 17

Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations? - The prophet, like Isaiah [Isa 18:4-5](#), stands at the very last point, before the fury and desire of the enemy was fulfilled. People, like fish, were gathered together for a prey; he who had taken them was rejoicing and exulting beforehand in his booty; his portion and meat were the choice of the earth; the prophet looks on, as it were, and beholds the net full; there is but one step more; "Shall he empty it? Shall he then devour those whom he has caught? and so cast his emptied net again unceasingly, pitilessly, to slay the nations?" This question he answers in the next chapter - A Deliverer will come!

Internet Bible Studies are prepared and distributed free of charge. The lessons may not be sold without consent. If you have questions or wish to discuss the lessons, or possibly need help in finding Jesus Christ as your Personal Lord and Savior, contact us at email below..

Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

e-mail at: mail@KjvBibleStudies2.net

Website: http://KjvBibleStudies.net

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.