



## "Persevering In Faith When Life Doesn't Make Sense" (Habakkuk) 2013

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Intro: We know very little about the prophet Habakkuk. But from the last verse in this book, we think he may have been a musician priest prior to his calling as a prophet. His name means “to wrestle” or “to embrace.” Both meanings are interesting, because he starts out wrestling with God, and in the end embracing God's plan and purpose. Some suggest that his ministry was during the reign of Manasseh or Amon, both wicked kings. The reason for this is because of the sins listed in the book, sins that were being practiced during their reign. But Babylon had not become a world power during the reigns of these men. Assyria was the superpower at that time. Josiah ruled after these wicked kings, but he brought about tremendous moral and spiritual reform, so the sins listed do not fit with his reign. After Josiah, his son Jehoahaz ruled for three months, and then was dethroned by the king of Egypt. The king of Egypt made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king, changing his name to Jehoiakim. He led Judah right back down the path of idolatry, the path that would finally lead them to destruction. Jehoiakim showed incredible disdain for the Word of God (see Jeremiah 36). In the time of his reign, Babylon was the uncontested world power. In 612 B.C., Babylon, under the leadership of Nabopolassar, destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Nabopolassar's successor, Nebuchadnezzar, then advanced west into Palestine and Egypt. During the first year of his reign he invaded Judah, deporting 10,000 Jewish leaders to Babylon. See II Kings 24:1-4; II Chron.36:5-6.

Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah were contemporaries of Habakkuk.

As Habakkuk ministers, the threat of the Babylonian invasion is imminent. And when God tells this prophet what he is planning, he has a little bit of a problem with God's plan.

### I. THE TEXT

vv.1-4 Lord, why don't you do something about all the sin in this place? The righteous are suffering and the wicked are prospering.

- Ever complained to the Lord?
- See Rev.6:9-11; Psalm 73:1-5, 12-17, 27-28; Jeremiah 12:1-5.

vv.5-11 Look at "the nations." God uses nations to right wrongs, to bring judgment, even destruction to other nations filled with sin and idolatry. And he tells Habakkuk that he is going to

use the Babylonians to deal with the sin and injustice that he sees all around him. But that is not what Habakkuk wanted to hear!

1:12 Habakkuk now has to try and come to terms with the Lord using a people more wicked than the people of Judah to deal with their sin.

1:13 In other words, I realize Judah is deserving of judgment, but what about the Babylonians?

1:14-17 He's referring to the Babylonians, who had ruthlessly devoured peoples by their military might, rejoicing in their own strength (v.11), and living in luxury from the spoils of their victories. Habakkuk's question is simply, "Are you going to let them keep on doing this?"

2:1 Remember Habakkuk's first complaint? "Lord, why don't you do something about the sin and idolatry all around me?" And when the Lord reveals His plan, Habakkuk complains about the plan. Now he anxiously awaits the Lord's answer to his second complaint.

2:2-3 There's more to my plan than you can now see. Write down my entire plan, so that the message may be proclaimed far and wide. I'm extremely thankful that God wrote down the entire plan for us!

2:4a Habakkuk, I'm well aware of the pride and unrighteousness of the Babylonians. Nevertheless, I am going to use them for my divine purpose.

2:4b Habakkuk, you're going to have to learn to live by faith. You're going to have to learn to trust me. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, each time referring to the fact that we are saved by faith, but the specific context in Habakkuk is living by faith in the midst of sin, idolatry, injustice, and perplexing questions about God's ways in light of all these things. See Hebrews 10:32-39.

2:5-13 Though I use even wicked nations like Babylon for my divine purpose, not only Babylon, but all nations will one day answer to me.

2:14 This is without question a reference to the 1,000 year reign of Christ, and perhaps even beyond; See Micah 4:2; This is what you must believe Habakkuk, and this is the revelation you must proclaim. This is the end of the story!

2:15-16 The Babylonians were famous for their drunken pagan parties (Daniel 5).

2:17 Violence, brutality; Nebuchadnezzar was impressed with the cedars of Lebanon, so he felled many of them and had them imported to Babylon for his many building projects.

2:18-19 The utter foolishness of idolatry.

2:20 Habakkuk, as you see all the sin and idolatry around you, don't forget, God is still on His throne. And the knowledge of a day of reckoning should cause a holy hush to come upon a wicked world. And it should also cause Habakkuk to experience a holy hush. And that is exactly what happens.

3:1 We are not certain what “shigionoth” means. It is a musical term, and it may mean to pause. It also may mean to “crescendo.” This would be where the music would begin to pick up, the drums get louder...

3:2 God is merciful in wrath. First of all, He warns us of coming wrath. He provides a way to be saved. In the Great Tribulation, the time of the ultimate outpouring of God's wrath on the world, he increases the intensity of His wrath gradually, not desiring that men perish, but rather repent...

3:3a Teman was a large city in Edom, and a mountainous area; Paran was another mountainous region west of Teman.

- This is the area where God appeared to Moses on behalf of the people of Israel. It was in this area that the Lord performed many wonders in leading his people from Egypt to the Promised Land.
- Deut.33:1 This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death. 2 He said: "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from *Seir* (a poetic name for the mountainous region of Teman); he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes. 3 Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction...
- Note: Selah. This word occurs 71 times in the Psalms. It may mean a pause, or to elevate the song to a higher key or increase the volume, or to add more instruments...

3:3b-7 During this "selah" (pause), Habakkuk's mind goes back to God's working on behalf of His people in the past. He is reminded that, in the end, God always delivers people of faith from their enemies.

3:8-9a Another pause, and the music builds once again...

3:9b-11 Verse 11 probably refers to Joshua 10: 12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." 13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jasher. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. 14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!

3:12-15 This seems to look beyond God one day dealing with the Babylonians (which he did), but to the day of ultimate victory still yet future. Again there is a pause (and the music builds once more). See Ezekiel 38:18-23; 39:12; Rev.19:11-20:3, 7-10.

3:16-19 When God revealed His plan concerning the Babylonians, Habakkuk was greatly disturbed. And he should have been disturbed. It is incredible to realize how bad things got when the Babylonians came (See Lam.2:12, 20; 4:4, 9-10; 5:11-18). But after hearing the full story, he paused, he prayed, and God took him in his mind back to the Lord's past victories on behalf of His people, then to a day when God would give them victory over the Babylonians, and finally to

a future final victory when the whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord! Habakkuk, though thoroughly shaken at the thought of how awful the Babylonian invasion would be, determined that no matter how bad things would get *in his lifetime*, he would not lose hope. Not only that, by faith he would rejoice in the Lord, because he knew the Lord would strengthen and enable him to live above his circumstances (on the heights), because in the end, he would experience ultimate eternal victory!

"What began in despair now ends in elation. Knowing that God is in complete control of all the world's activities, the prophet determines that he will not let the worries of this world dismay him any longer. Because God is on His throne and watches over those who live by faith, Habakkuk decides to make a change in his attitude and in the way he will approach life from that point on." (Zion's Fire article on Habakkuk).

"Habakkuk moves from burden to blessing, from wondering to worship, from restlessness to rest, from a problem to God's person, and from complaint to consolation." (Talk Thru The Bible, p.275).

## II. LESSONS

### A. God Will Sometimes Use Ungodly "Agents" To Accomplish His Divine Purpose

- Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan.
- The physical infirmities that some Christians must endure baffle me, and I find it difficult to understand God's purpose in allowing them, especially allowing them for their entire Christian life!

### B. Whenever I Do Not Understand, I Need To Inquire Of The Lord

- Through prayer.
- Through written revelation (Rom.8:28; Isa.55:9; Deut.29:29; I Cor.13:12).

### C. Once I Have Heard From The Lord, I Must Make A Choice To Trust Him, Despite My Circumstances

- I must learn to live by faith.
- Deut.8: 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.
- Abraham/Isaac; Gideon; cast your nets on the other side; you give them something to eat; to Peter, "come" (walked on water).

## CONCLUSION

- II Cor.4:7-5:7