

Habakkuk 1:1-1:11

(Q&A with God – Part 1)

Introduction-

- Who or What is Habakkuk?
 - Name means “to clasp” – it is actually a Babylonian name for some sort of plant, shows his dependence upon the Lord
 - Nothing else is known about who he was
 - He was a prophet, and Habakkuk is a book in a category known as the “Minor Prophets”
 - The major prophets are long (Jeremiah, Isaiah...), and the minor prophets are short
 - Has nothing to do with importance
 - What is a prophet?
 - Primary job was “to speak forth the message which God had revealed unto him”¹
 - Ex- Moses’ job as a prophet was spelled out clearly in leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt before there was even the Nation of Israel in the Promised Land²
 - Primary Roles:
 - To make known to men the laws of God
 - To call the people back to obedience to God’s laws
 - To exhort the people to sincerity in worship
 - To warn them of divine judgment upon sin, both personal and national
 - To foretell future events which God had willed
 - To record the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures³
 - So we know he was a prophet, but when was he a prophet? Is he still alive? Does he live in Rosamond?
 - He most likely wrote during the reign of Jehoiakim⁴
 - Who is Jehoiakim? Review...
- Old Testament Review-
 - Saul, David, Solomon
 - Solomon’s forced labor on the temple to the Lord was heavy (1 Kings 5:13-18)

¹ Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 40.

² Technically Abraham was the first prophet though.

³ <http://www.bible.org> (4/18/09).

⁴ Years of Jehoiakim’s reign: 609-597 BC

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- Jeroboam and Rehoboam – divided the Kingdom of Israel because Rehoboam (Solomon's son wanted to force the people to do even more physical labor than they had done under Solomon and they resented this – 1 Kings 12:4-15)
- Jeroboam took the 10 northern tribes and Rehoboam took Judah and Levi (sometimes Benjamin too)
- Then there were many bad kings and a few good kings – one of the good kings was Josiah...
- Josiah:
 - 2 Kings 22:3-4, 8-13)
 - Led the nation in a revival because they found the law in the Temple and responded to it
 - Josiah was killed by the Pharaoh of Egypt (Neco was going to help Assyria against the king of Babylon and Josiah wanted to stop him)
- What happened after Josiah? –This gives us the immediate historical context of Habakkuk
- Historical Context-
 - Jehoahaz reigned for three months before the Pharaoh of Egypt put him in prison (2 Kings 23:31-33)
 - Jehoiakim was put in power by the Pharaoh – he was a bad king and Judah was in bad shape at this time – this brought about the need for God to punish them (2 Kings 23:34-24:7)
 - All of this was going on while Assyria was losing its power and dominance to the Babylonians
 - This is the historical context of when Habakkuk was written – during this shift in power from Assyria to Babylon, and during the reign of Jehoiakim
 - Habakkuk has this conversation with God while this is all going on
- General Outline of Habakkuk-
 - Prologue (1:1)
 - Question #1 – Habakkuk (1:2-4)
 - Answer #1 – God (1:5-11)
 - Question #2 – Habakkuk (1:12 – 2:1)
 - Answer #2 – God (2:2-20)
 - Habakkuk's Psalm (3:1-19)
 - My personal evaluation: simple, profound, relevant

Prologue (Hab. 1:1)

Habakkuk 1:1 – “*The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.*”

- Oracle: “A source of wisdom or prophecy”⁵
- Used elsewhere in Scripture, especially in the prophetic books and in this same way

⁵ Encarta Dictionary

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Question #1 – Habakkuk (Hab. 1:2-4)

Habakkuk 1:2-4 – “How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld for the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.”

- Summary: Why is God allowing sin in Judah to go on unpunished?
- Habakkuk expected Judah to be punished for their wickedness. Why?
 - Deuteronomy 28:15 – “But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.”
 - The verses following Deuteronomy 28:15 spell out what bad things He would do to them if they disobeyed
- Ask: what sin was mentioned in 1:2-4?
 - Violence
 - Iniquity
 - Wickedness
 - Destruction
 - Violence (Hebrew emphasis)
 - Strife
 - Contention
 - Therefore...The law is ignored – because these things are going on, it is evident that no one is paying attention to the law of God
 - Justice is never upheld – because the wicked surround the righteous (those who care about the right things are outnumbered)
 - Therefore...Justice comes out perverted! (the end result)
 - Violence and Justice are mentioned twice!
- Wait! Can Habakkuk question God? What right does he have to do this?
 - Ask: Is it wrong to question God?
 - He questions God like Job questioned God – both knew God was sovereign, and that is why they are questioning God
 - There is a difference between questioning God and doubting God
 - Explain – if you don't believe He is sovereign, why would you ask Him?
 - Ex- Dad video taping Kyle and me in the bathtub, Mom watching later asking if Dad was going to spank Kyle – she knew Dad was capable of spanking him, and she knew he deserved it
 - Job knew God was sovereign over his suffering
 - Habakkuk knew God was sovereign over the fate of Judah

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- Habakkuk's questioning is a testimony of his faith in God, and his knowledge of the Scriptures
- So, what does God say?

Answer #1 – God (Hab. 1:5-11)

Habakkuk 1:5-11 – “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days—you would not believe if you were told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour. All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand. They mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress and heap up rubble to capture it. Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.”

- Look, observe, be astonished, and wonder! “Pay attention!”
 - Makes sense, God is about to talk to him.
 - God was doing something that was unbelievable
- He was sending the Chaldeans. Who were the Chaldeans?
 - A Semitic people who became dominant in the Babylonian empire
 - They were from the Babylonian frontier
 - They assimilated into the Babylonian empire so much that “Babylonian” and “Chaldean” became synonymous
 - Daniel's life – corresponding events
 - What does the text say about them?
 - Fierce
 - Impetuous (impulsive)
 - Conquering people
 - Dreadful
 - Fearful
 - Their justice and authority are based on themselves (cf. Hab. 1:4)
 - Violent (cf. Hab. 1:2,3)
 - Wait a minute! Read on below...

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- Habakkuk pointed to injustice and violence being problems in Judah – now God is sending people who were even more unjust and more violent to solve this problem – does that make sense?
 - This is an obvious question that Habakkuk asks God about next. It is answered later.
 - Wrap this up quickly and mention that it will be referred to later.
 - Hab. 1:8-11a – describe how Babylon conquers and is ruthless
 - Read through and explain briefly
 - 1:10 – Cal City joke – “We’re gonna cream these ladies”
 - Big picture: they are ruthless, Judah is going to pay
 - How would you like it if God sent a Viking/Orc to chop a limb off of your body every time you fell into sin? – This is scary stuff!
 - 1:11a – you are nothing but a stepping stone along their path of destruction
 - This testifies to how powerful and sovereign God is
 - Hab. 1:11b – “BUT they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.”
 - These words make God's answer make more sense
 - Without these words, it might seem as if God condones the evil of the Chaldeans
 - “God sometimes uses evil people to accomplish His larger purposes in life. But He never condones evil, and those who do evil, he holds accountable for their actions.”⁶

Conclusion-

1. What is the difference between questioning and doubting God?
2. If we question God in fear and reverence, it ultimately shows that we want to know more about God.
3. When we question God, we should do it with faith in His sovereignty.
4. If we are not questioning God, do we really believe He is sovereign?
5. If we are not questioning God in fear and reverence what does that say about our relationship with Him?
6. Are there things in your life which seem to be creating more evil, but are obviously a part of God's sovereign will? How should you respond?
7. Is your relationship with the Lord at a place where you could confidently approach God with your concerns?

⁶ Nelson's Old Testament Survey, 806.