

## **Habakkuk 1:12-2:20**

(Q&A with God – Part 2)

### **Introduction-**

- Review-
  - Locally: Josiah is dead and Jehoiakim is king in Judah and there is much sin
  - World Wide: Assyria is in the process of being conquered by the Babylonians/Chaldeans
  - Habakkuk asked God why He allows sin to go unpunished in Judah, because God promised that He would punish sin and unfaithfulness in Deuteronomy 28 (blessings and curses)
  - God answered by saying that He was sending the Chaldeans to correct them – judgment
  - Now we come to Habakkuk 1:12 and Habakkuk asks another question
- In this second question it is evident that he is getting more frustrated with God.
  - Great how the Bible not only records good things people have done but also bad and unwise things, and when people struggle with the Lord.
  - Habakkuk even gets a little pushy with God and God puts him in his place – similar to Job.
  - Through it all, it is still evident that he is relying on the Lord.
- Devotional Focus: Life can be very confusing and difficult.
  - We can ignore the fact that God is in heaven and has the answers which will lead to more confusion and more difficulty.
  - Or we can acknowledge that God is in heaven, is in control, and has answers to life's tough stuff, and that the word is sufficient to give us the hope and strength and peace we need.
  - We will see how Habakkuk has a difficult time with how God is working, but he never gives up on God.
- So, what does Habakkuk ask God?

### **Question #2 – Habakkuk – Hab. 1:12-2:1**

Habakkuk 1:12-13a – *“Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor.”*

- Habakkuk is stating some truths of theology that he knows.
  - This is a great thing to do first when we are going through difficult times. It's the perfect foundation.
  - Philippians 4:8, 9 – *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything*

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worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

- Habakkuk is dwelling on the things which are true...and so on...
- Psalm 15:1, 2 – "O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart."
- Habakkuk is speaking truth in his heart.
- He then asks why it seemed God was going to do something that was contradictory to these truths.
- Habakkuk's theological statements:
  - 1.) He is eternal (*Are You not from everlasting?*)
  - 2.) He is holy (*O Lord, my God, my Holy One*)
  - 3.) He is the divine protector of His people (*we will not die*)
  - 4.) He is in sovereign control of the affairs of this world (*You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct.*)
  - 5.) He is intolerant of evil (*Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor.*)
- Q: Where in Habakkuk's "bible" would he have known these things to be true?
  - Context is the key to understanding the Bible.
  - Read from the author's perspective.
  - 1.) God's eternality-
    - Moses is the man. He was all about God's eternal state.
    - Exodus 3:14- "*I AM WHO I AM*" – Context: God telling Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, and Moses asks who he should say sent him to do this – it can be translated more clearly, "I shall continually be that which I have always been" – God was always the God of Israel
    - Deuteronomy 33:27- "*The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms;*" – Context: after the Exodus and the Wilderness, Moses is looking over the Promised Land (b/c he was prohibited from entering it) and blessing all the tribes of the Hebrews (Asher) – encouragement for them to dwell on God's eternal state – God is not done being your God!
    - Psalm 90:1, 2- "*Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*" – The oldest Psalm, written by Moses! He brought the Israelites back into existence and into true worship of God.
    - God's eternality was one of the most foundational truths He wanted His children to know, and Habakkuk knew it even during the reign of Jehoiakim (1446 – 609 = 837 years later!).
    - God's eternality is an everlasting truth.
  - 2.) God's holiness-
    - Familiar with other things being holy – "holy ground...keep the Shabbat holy...Israel was a holy people...priests were to worship in holy garb...Jerusalem is the holy city...Mt. Zion is the holy mountain..." – all the same purpose: to point to their holy God.

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- Isaiah 6- *"In the year of King Uzziah's death<sup>1</sup> I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted...Seraphim stood above Him...and one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.'"*
  - The word "holy" means "separate from all that is sinful and immoral."
  - The fact that it is repeated 3 times attests to the uniqueness of God's holiness.
  - Isaiah 6 is the quintessential passage that speaks of the holiness of God and Habakkuk is so blessed to have lived and served shortly after it was written.
  - We know it is important because of how it is quoted in Revelation 4:8.
- Holiness was a unique attribute for a divine being at this time in the world. Gods of this time were usually subject to the same vices as humans.
- Religion was used to explain the world they lived in, and they lived in a fallen and perverse world, so they created fallen and perverse gods to worship.
- 3.) God's divine protection-
  - We go to David and the Psalms on this one.
  - 2 Samuel 22:3 – *"My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my savior, You save me from violence."* – Set in the context of David finally being free from the oppression of his enemies (e.g. – Saul, Absalom, Sheba, Goliath's relatives...), David is singing this song of praise.
  - Psalm 46:1-3 – *"God is our refuge and strength and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."* – Psalm of the sons of Korah – the ancient world was all about fortresses, strongholds, and refuges.
  - Because God is eternal and holy, Habakkuk states that God would not eliminate His own people.
  - Habakkuk knew that the Lord would chastise His people, but that a remnant would remain.
- 4.) God's sovereign control over the affairs of this world-
  - Habakkuk knew that God was in control and that He would not allow the Chaldeans to completely wipe God's people off the face of the earth.
  - This is evident in how he refers to God – once as YHWH and once as Rock – implies that he trusts God to be Lord over all and steadfast in His ways and therefore His character as well.

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<sup>1</sup> King Uzziah's death was in the year 740 BC.

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- Psalm 103:19 – “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all” – A psalm of David. Pretty straight forward.

### ○ 5.) God's intolerance of evil-

- Joshua 7- “But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, ... took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel. ... The men of Ai struck down thirty-six of their men ... Joshua said, ‘Alas, O Lord God, why did you ever bring this people over the Jordan?’ ... So the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned ... therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand against their enemies ... It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord and, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.’ ... and they brought them up to the valley of Achor ... And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.” – God was setting a precedent with His people that sin would be punished severely.
- Psalm 11:4-6- “Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold his face.” – There is wind in the A.V. but I would not enjoy burning wind. I want to behold His face!
- These five statements point back to the fact that Habakkuk believed in God's sovereignty.
- There are times when I am experiencing trials, and I wonder in a similar way. If God is \_\_\_\_\_ why is \_\_\_\_\_ happening?
- “The Lament does not fundamentally deal with a situation in the outside world such as sickness or war for which the prophet can ask for a specific divine act. The heart of the problem is that the outside world of history contradicts the interior certainty of the nature of God himself.”<sup>2</sup>
  - It's not as simple as asking for God to feed His people or heal them; it deals with what is going on around them seeming to be contradictory to what God had revealed about how He acts and works.
  - Habakkuk's interior certainty was becoming less certain as he was clinging to God.
  - We can all identify with Habakkuk's frailty here.
- The problem is that God was promising to do the opposite of what Habakkuk knew to be true about God, and this is communicated in Habakkuk's questions that follow.

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<sup>2</sup> Barker & Bailey, *Commentary on Habakkuk*, 311.

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Habakkuk 1:13b-2:1 – “Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are you silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? Why have you made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them? The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net, and gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net and burn incense to their fishing net; because through these things their catch is large, and their good is plentiful. Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing? I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.”

- Habakkuk asks why...
  - “Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously?”
  - “Why are you silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?”
  - We can see him getting a little pushy in his tone at this point.
  - God just said that He is going to let a people who love to destroy, come and destroy Judah in order to punish their sin.
  - Habakkuk is wondering how that is just because they are getting what they want, and Judah gets punished even though Judah is more righteous.
  - Why do bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people? – This age-old question is a result of short-sightedness.
- Commentator’s paraphrase of Habakkuk 1:14-17: “God You made us like helpless fish without a leader, and the enemy Babylonians took advantage of the situation. The natural result is his rejoicing, his self-worship, because he is prosperous. So we must ask if he is going to be allowed to keep this up forever.”
  - Cheaters actually do prosper...in this lifetime at least.
  - God gets the last laugh.
- Habakkuk’s confident patience...
  - Habakkuk 2:1- “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.”
  - Rampart refers to the walls of Jerusalem.
  - He knows the Lord will answer him.
  - Habakkuk is eagerly waiting to hear what the Lord has to say so that he can continue speaking with the Lord.
  - Reprove communicates an argument, and can also be translated, “when God argues with (answers) me.”
  - So...what did God say?

**Answer #2 – God – Hab. 2:2-20**

Habakkuk 2:2, 3- *“Then the Lord answered me and said, ‘Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.’”*

- God commands Habakkuk to write down what He is about to say (2:2).
  - He also tells him to write it legibly so that people could read it. Like a billboard.
  - This verse has some difficulty interpreting, but this is the simplest and easiest way to understand it.
- God tells Habakkuk to wait for its fulfillment (2:3).
  - Literal meaning of “It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail” is “It will pant to the end and not lie.”
  - God is warning Habakkuk that this will not happen very soon according to how Habakkuk understands time. In fact, the prophecy would come about 66 years later in 539 BC.

Habakkuk 2:4, 5- *“Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by faith. Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.”*

- This is God’s opinion about the Chaldeans and others like them.
  - His primary description of them is that they are prideful.
  - They are also accused of being drunkards, greedy, discontent, violent, destructive, and ruthless.
- There is a contrasting statement in the middle of this which is one of the most lasting statements in the Old Testament: “But the righteous will live by faith.”
  - This statement answers the question Habakkuk asked earlier in 1:13, 17. Not all of Judah would be swallowed up by this bully-fisherman.
  - God is plainly saying that the proud will die and the righteous will live by his faithfulness. This is meant to be a clarifying encouragement.
  - The word “live” here means to actually survive or exist, and does not refer to conduct. This is the most logical way to understand it when the context is taken into consideration.
  - But to be faithful requires a steady trusting in God, so both eternal living and life conduct are referred to in this statement.
  - “There is no more important passage in Habakkuk than this one, and few in the Old Testament more significant because of the later use of it by the apostle Paul, the author of Hebrews [Apollos], and Martin Luther.”<sup>3</sup> –What do those say?
    - Galatians 3:11- *“Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident; for, ‘THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”* – set in the context of Paul explaining the

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<sup>3</sup> R.L. Smith, *Micah—Malachi*, 106.

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doctrine of justification by faith. It is an eternal living that is referred to here.

- Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38 quote it as well both referring to how faith in the promises of God will save one from eternal death and destruction.
- “He then who finds that he is deprived of all protection, will live by his faith, provided he seeks in God alone what he wants, and leaving the world, fixes his mind on heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

Habakkuk 2:6-20- *“Will not all of these take up a taunt song against him? ... [read if time allows]... But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”*

- These verses show just how the tide will turn against those who seem to be prospering in their wickedness.
- Five woes against the Chaldeans-
  - These would be said one day by those who had been afflicted by the Chaldeans.
  - 1.) Greedy conquests and looting (2:6-8).
    - The same thing they are doing will be done to them.
  - 2.) Pursuing worthless protection that will not last and mass murder (2:9-11).
    - They are sinning and lying against themselves.
    - Cutting off = genocide
  - 3.) Violent conquest of cities (2:12, 13).
    - God causes the plans of the wicked to fail (v. 13)
  - 4.) Drunken debauchery and wasteful stewardship of the earth (2:15-17).
    - Perverted partying – this is the life of the party animal...fun? No especially when considering what will happen to the wicked in the end.
    - God's power (a cup of his holy wrath) would be poured out on them.
    - The violence done in Lebanon: cutting down all its trees for extravagant construction and the slaughter of the animals<sup>5</sup> there
  - 5.) Idolatry (2:18, 19).
    - It does not make sense to worship something you made with your own hands.
- Two statements of the power of God-
  - 1.) *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* (2:14)
    - Between woes #3 and #4

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XV, 74.*

<sup>5</sup> The Assyrians hunted in Lebanon often, they probably did the same.

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- Just as the waters cover the ocean, so the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth. Cool visual.
- This will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom – other references similar to it: Numbers 14:21, Psalm 72:19, Isaiah 6:3, 11:9.
- 2.) *“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”* (2:20)
  - Follows the fifth woe about idolatry
  - Contrast between idleness of idols and the living God who is worthy of awe.
- These two statements serve to bring the reader back to reality of his faith while in the midst of observing the ways of a wicked society.
- God is so much better than the wicked ways of the world.

### Conclusion-

- Habakkuk was living in a time when everyone around him was living in sin and bringing the people of Judah down by their influence.
  - He knew bad things were going to happen, but when God revealed exactly what those bad things were, he was shocked to find out the terror that was to come to his country.
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- I am humbled by how he clung to the Lord (just like the meaning of his name) when his situation was that bad.
    - I get so frustrated and depressed when things aren't going my way, and many times it leads me to sinful introspection.
    - Habakkuk goes straight to the Lord because his faith was strong. He knew God on a deep and personal level.
  - Psalm 15:1, 2 – *“O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.”*
    - David Wreesman
  - Philippians 4:4-9 – *“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any*



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*excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."*

- This seems to be the NT equivalent of Habakkuk's second question.
- It also brings a more positive light to how we should respond when we are in a situation similar to Habakkuk's.
- When things go terrible wrong in life, will you be faithful to fall on the Lord and go to Him?
- Before things to terribly wrong in life, will you be faithful to prepare yourself for them by studying the word and deepening your relationship with God?