

Habakkuk

Minor Prophets—part 8

November 21, 2021

DAY 1: The problem of evil and suffering

Habakkuk 1:2 How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? ³ Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. ⁴ Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

1. Habakkuk looks at what is going on around him and it is discouraging. Make a list of the things Habakkuk sees wrong with the world.

2. As perplexed as Habakkuk is about the state of the world, man’s sin, wickedness and chaos of the world he is far more confused and mystified by how God seems to interact with the wicked world!

a. What does Habakkuk see that God could do but isn’t doing?

b. If God isn’t dealing with wickedness as Habakkuk sees God could, then what is God up to? What is He doing? Here is God’s response to Habakkuk.

*Habakkuk 1:5 “Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. ⁶ **I am raising up** the **Babylonians**, that **ruthless** and **impetuous** people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own. ⁷ They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor.*

⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; ⁹ they all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand.

¹⁰ They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. ¹¹ Then they sweep past like the wind and go on— guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”

3. If you were Habakkuk, what would you think after hearing God’s answer to your perplexing questions? Would you have been more helped or more confused by God’s answers?

4. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Habakkuk's confusion deepens!

1. Habakkuk is mystified about God's response. Here is his first conundrum.

*Habakkuk 1:12 LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, LORD, have appointed **them** to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained **them** to punish.*

2. "...**them...them...**" Habakkuk understands that God is going to use "*them*" to bring about needed judgment of sin. When Habakkuk says "them" he means the Babylonians. If you read Habakkuk's statement out loud, the emphasis would be on "THEM!!!" both times. "You're going to use **THEM**???! (the wicked Babylonians to bring about judgment???)"

3. What mystifies Habakkuk is that he cannot reconcile God using the most wicked of nations to bring about judgment on anybody!

4. What further mystifies Habakkuk is that he knows God is *from everlasting* (v. 12), and is *holy*!

*Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are **too pure to look on evil**; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?*

5. How would you reconcile these two conundrums? (1) God is holy, yet, (2) He will not judge the Babylonians who need judging, but (3) will rather use the Babylonians to judge others who need judging?

6. As Habakkuk is confused and puzzled, he comes up with an analogy that makes sense to him, and tells God what he thinks God's actions are like.

Habakkuk 1:14 You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. ¹⁵ The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. ¹⁷ Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

7. What strikes you about the analogy in vv. 14-15?

8. Habakkuk sees a conclusion to this analogy that is the opposite of what he knows God is trying to accomplish in the world and in people. What is the awful conclusion Habakkuk fears in v. 16? Will this activity draw the Babylonians closer to God or farther away?

9. And what conclusion does Habakkuk fear in v. 17?

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: God's second answer to Habakkuk

*Habakkuk 2:2 "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. ³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time; **it speaks of the end and will not prove false**. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.*

1. God promises that the end of the matter will be right. It will prove true.
2. Much of the rest of these verses is about timing, the difference between God's timing and Habakkuk's timing.
3. Then, God speaks of the wickedness of the Babylonians, *except for a statement of contrast at the end of verse 4...*

*Habakkuk 2:4 "See, the enemy **is puffed up**; **his desires are not upright**— but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness—*

*⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is **arrogant** and **never at rest**. Because he is as **greedy** as the grave and **like death is never satisfied**, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples. ⁶ "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, "'Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?' ⁷ Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you (Babylon) will become their prey. ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. ⁹ "Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin! ¹⁰ You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. ¹¹ The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. ¹² "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice! ¹³ Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?*

¹⁴ the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁵ "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies! ¹⁶ You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. ¹⁷ The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed human blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. ¹⁸ "Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. ¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it."

²⁰ The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Habakkuk 2:4 ... but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness (or "faith") (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Hebrews 10:37-38)

4. This is contrast to the way of Babylon, the way of self. The Babylonians will crash and burn.
5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Habakkuk remembers God's past faithfulness in judgment

1. What Habakkuk realizes that God will use the Babylonians to judge his own nation, but after that, Babylon will face God and her doom is sealed.

*Habakkuk 3:2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; **in wrath remember mercy.***

2. He realizes that his people deserve judgment. Notice his prayer at the end of verse 2!

3. Habakkuk now turns his attention to God's redemptive past. He recounts the many times that God intervened in history to bring judgment where judgment was needed. You will notice the picture of God's power illustrated in images of nature. Sometimes, God did use nature to judge the people, but sometimes the picture of "mountains splitting" illustrates the sheer power to overcome any human evil that is prevailing.

*Habakkuk 3:3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. ⁴ His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. ⁵ Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. ⁶ He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed— **but he marches on forever.** ⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish. ⁸ Were you angry with the rivers, LORD? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory? ⁹ You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers; ¹⁰ the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. ¹¹ Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. ¹² In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations.*

4. Next, Habakkuk remembers how God's judgment of people sometimes brought about the **deliverance** of people from slavery or tyranny.

Habakkuk 3:13 You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. ¹⁴ With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. ¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.

5. This is reminiscent of the psalmists who tell us to remember God's acts in history.

Psalms 105:5 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, ⁶ you his servants, the descendants of Abraham, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob. ⁷ He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. ⁸ He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations,

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Sweet surrender in troubling times

1. The climax of the book comes right here.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled....

2. Habakkuk hears the approach of the Babylonian army. He could hear the rumble of the chariots and horses as the ground shook.

3. He had a visceral response to the impending doom. “*Decay crept into my bones and my legs trembled.*”

4. Habakkuk knew the Babylonians were ruthless, yet he remembered his prayer to God, “in wrath, remember mercy” and he remembered God’s promise, that God would later judge the Babylonians. How would you have responded at that moment?

5. Instead of running in terror, this is what he said and did.

...Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

6. He knows that judgment on his nation will not be final. It will be final on Babylon. This gives Habakkuk hope even though the immediate future will be hard.

7. Faced with impending hard times Habakkuk surrenders himself to the Lord of Glory, in some of the most picturesque and beautiful language and prayer ever recorded.

*Habakkuk 3:17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ...*

Habakkuk 3:18 ...yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

*Habakkuk 3:19 **The Sovereign LORD is my strength;**
He makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
He enables me to tread on the heights.*

8. This is where the book ends. Habakkuk’s confusion and disgruntlement has been met. He sees the purposes of God in judgment and that judgment is needed. At the beginning of this book Habakkuk’s greatest questions were about the sovereignty of God. But now notice that at the end of the book that the “sovereign Lord is his strength!”

9. What strikes you about today’s devotional?