

DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD



HABAKKUK

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church

ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au

INTRODUCING HABAKKUK

The prediction of the coming Babylonian invasion (1:6) indicates that Habakkuk lived in Judah toward the end of Josiah's reign (640–609 BC) or at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (609–598). The prophecy is generally dated a little before or after the battle of Carchemish (605), when Egyptian forces, which had earlier gone to the aid of the last Assyrian king, were routed by the Babylonians under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar and were pursued as far as the Egyptian border (Jer 46). Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, probably lived to see the initial fulfillment of his prophecy when Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonians in 597.

Among the prophetic writings, Habakkuk is somewhat unique in that it includes no oracle addressed to Israel. It contains, rather, a dialogue between the prophet and God (see Outline). (The book of Jonah, while narrative, presents an account of conflict between the Lord and one of his prophets.) In the first two chapters, Habakkuk argues with God over his ways that appear to him unfathomable, if not unjust. Having received replies, he responds with a beautiful confession of faith (ch. 3).

This account of wrestling with God is, however, not just a fragment from a private journal that has somehow entered the public domain. It was composed for Israel. No doubt it represented the voice of the godly in Judah, struggling to comprehend the ways of God. God's answers therefore spoke to all who shared Habakkuk's troubled doubts. And Habakkuk's confession became a public expression—as indicated by its liturgical notations (see note on 3:1).

Habakkuk was perplexed that wickedness, strife and oppression were rampant in Judah but God seemingly did nothing. When told that the Lord was preparing to do something about it through the “ruthless” Babylonians (1:6), his perplexity only intensified: How could God, who is “too pure to look on evil” (1:13), appoint such a nation “to execute judgment” (1:12) on a people “more righteous than themselves” (1:13)?

God makes it clear, however, that eventually the corrupt destroyer will itself be destroyed. In the end, Habakkuk learns to rest in God's sovereign appointments and await his working in a spirit of worship. He learns to wait patiently in faith (2:3–4) for God's kingdom to be expressed universally (2:14).

HABAKKUK 1:1-2:1: THE GOD OF SURPRISES

1. What is your most vivid memory of crying out, “That’s not fair!”?
2. Should we ever question God’s justice?



Read Habakkuk 1:1-2:1

3. What is Habakkuk’s cry and complaint (vv. 2-4)?

What can we identify about the situation that Habakkuk is describing?

4. **Read 2 Kings 23:31-24:7** for the (likely) setting. What was social, political and theological climate of the times?
5. What is amazing about the Lord’s answer to Habakkuk’s questions (vv. 5-11)?
6. What do you think God’s purpose was in using ungodly Babylon to punish Israel?
7. How would you feel if you were in Habakkuk’s shoes?
8. How does Habakkuk respond to God’s answer (1:12—2:1)?
How would you boil down Habakkuk’s complaints into one simple question?
9. What changes in Habakkuk’s complaint in 2:1?
10. Do you trust God even when things don’t look favourable? Why or why not?
11. What might you say to a Christian brother or sister who is asking the same sorts of questions as Habakkuk about why God allows bad things to happen?
12. Habakkuk introduced himself as a prophet. Historically, a prophet is one who proclaims God’s will with confidence. From what you’ve read, how does Habakkuk compare to that role?
13. How can you show that justice is important to you in:
 - personal relationships
 - work-related issues
 - dealing with those who have little influence (the poor, children, minorities)
14. How might God use terrorists, drug dealers, police states, and scandals in our day? In your life? For what purpose? Does **Romans 8:28-39** help?

Prayer Points

HABAKKUK 2: THE GOD OF JUSTICE



1. When do you find it most difficult to wait?

Read Habakkuk 2

2. In verse 2 God begins to explain his answer to Habakkuk. What is the challenge of verses 2-3?
3. Who is the “he” in v4-5? How are the righteous to live in contrast to him?
4. Why must one have faith in order to meet the challenge of v2-3?
5. What is the connection between faith and righteousness (v. 4)?
6. Compare 2:4 to Romans 1:16-18. What use does Paul make of this passage to speak a new word to a new generation? How is Paul’s emphasis like, and unlike, Habakkuk’s?
7. In v 6a, who are the “all of them” and who is “him”?
8. Chapter 2 lists five "woes" (vv. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19). For each of the woes, how is the consequence a direct result of the wrong committed?

Woe	Consequence
6	
9	
12	
15	
19	

9. How is the final woe connected to all the rest?
10. What is ironic about idols silent before people and people silent before God in v19-20?
11. How will destroying Babylon spread God’s glory? Does Romans 9:16-24, describing God’s purposes in destroying Pharaoh, help?

Prayer Points

HABAKKUK 3: THE STRUGGLE FOR FAITH



1. What past action of God in your life gives you confidence for the future?

Read Habakkuk 3

1. How does 2:20 connect with Chapter 3?
2. What is Habakkuk's prayer for in v2? How does it connect the past to the future?
3. How does v2 connect with the rest of the prayer?
4. How does v2 relate to the promise of 2:2-4?
5. Habakkuk prayed in verse 2, "In wrath remember mercy." How are these two qualities related?

What do you think he meant by that request?

How do we see God acting to show mercy in the midst of wrath in the rest of the Bible?

6. What past deeds of God are being referred to in 3:3-15?
7. How does Habakkuk, in v16-19, respond to recalling God's powerful actions in v3-15?
8. Compare v8-10 with **Psalms 74:12-17 and 77:16-19**. What similar images do these verses use to evoke awe for God's mighty works?
9. Re-write 3:17 to reflect your own situation and struggles.

Though _____ and _____
yet I will _____



10. Have you ever considered it possible to truly have joy in the midst of suffering, or have thought it is only possible to have joy after suffering passes?

How do the following New Testament verses help in these situations:

James 1:2-4

Mt 5:11-12

Romans 5:3-5

1 Peter 1:6-7

11. How does Habakkuk's prayer encourage you to continue when God's actions confuse you?

Something to try: Do you write down any of your prayers, like Habakkuk? Why not try it this week, and report back next week?



Prayer Points: