

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

We have covered a lot of ground in our study of the Minor Prophets – not minor in significance, but smaller in size. We have not spent much time in review of past book studies since each book stands on its own.

QUICK REVIEW: Dual themes: Deserved Judgment with Call for Repentance / Restoration and Blessing in future Messianic Kingdom

Look at the Key Theological Question addressed in each book and the Main Theme:

1. Hosea — “What does God’s covenant love look like in the face of unfaithfulness?”

Theme: God’s unconditional loyal love despite unfaithfulness

2. Joel — “How should God’s people respond to the Day of the Lord?”

Theme: The coming **Day of the Lord** and the call for Repentance leading to Future Blessing

3. Amos — “How does God judge a nation’s social injustice?”

Theme: No Escape Clause from God’s judgment for injustice, oppression, false worship, and superficial religion.

4. Obadiah — “How does God respond to pride and hostility toward His people?”

Theme: God’s judgment on Edom for arrogance and cruelty; God vindicating His covenant people.

5. Jonah — “How should we respond to God’s mercy extended to our enemies?”

Theme: Mercy Triumphs over Judgment; God’s extension of Grace and Mercy to Gentiles

6. Micah — “Who is a God like Yahweh and What does He require of His people?”

Theme: God is Holy, Righteous and Forgiving and demands Justice, Mercy and Humility

7. Nahum — “What is your Destiny when God is Your Enemy?”

Theme: God’s wrath against His enemies (Assyria) brings comfort to His people

OVERVIEW:

The dialogue between Habakkuk and God wrestles with the fundamental question of “How can God remain silent in the face of evil and even use wicked instruments as His tools to discipline His own people?” The prophet seeks deliverance for the people of Judah; but God responds with the promise of judgment in the form of the wicked Babylonian empire. We see the struggle in Habakkuk’s mind as he moves from a state of perplexity and confusion as he openly questions the wisdom of God to a settled conviction that the just must live by faith. God remains sovereign as the Righteous Judge and works out His plan according to His timetable. We need to wait on the Lord with perseverance with the expectation of long term deliverance and justice.

ILLUSTRATION: The Chess Master's Strange Sacrifice (Habakkuk 1:5–11)

A young chess student watched a grandmaster play against a world-class opponent. Early in the match, the grandmaster sacrificed a major piece—a move the student thought was absurd.

“Why would he do that?”

To the student, it felt like losing on purpose.

But many moves later, the board suddenly shifted: the sacrifice set up a complex trap that would eventually lead to a brilliant checkmate. Only when the game ended did it become clear that the “loss” was actually the **key strategy** all along.

Habakkuk Connection:

When God told Habakkuk that He was raising the **Babylonians**—a violent empire—to judge Judah, Habakkuk was horrified.

It looked like God was sacrificing His people to an evil opponent.

But God was working through a **larger strategy**—one that would expose injustice, humble nations, purify His people, and ultimately bring about restoration and hope.

Divine moves often look wrong until the endgame.

Habakkuk's short book is a record of a man learning to walk by faith when he couldn't see what God was doing.

When circumstances confuse us, when evil seems to triumph, and when God's timing puzzles us, the righteous must live by faith in the unchanging character of God.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

- Author: The prophet Habakkuk, likely a contemporary of Jeremiah. Less known about him than Nahum – name probably means “*to embrace*” – some have suggested that there may be an analogy to Jacob wrestling with God for a blessing – just as Habakkuk wrestles with God for his answers regarding **God's Justice ???**
- Date of Writing: Assyria has passed from the world stage. Babylon (Chaldeans) rose to dominance after 627 BC.
1:6; 3:16 – only date reference is to the imminent coming Babylonian conquest and captivity of Judah
Does not fit the situation of the reign of **Josiah** with his moral and spiritual reforms – 640-609 BC
Probably **608 BC** or later – reign of ungodly king Jehoiakim (**2 Kings 23:34ff**)

- Context: Judah is morally collapsing. God is preparing to judge His own people by using the violent Babylonian empire. Nation has been resisting God's warnings and calls for repentance. No longer any pleas for repentance in Habakkuk's message.
- Uniqueness: Unlike most prophetic books, Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet and God initiated by the prophet, not primarily a message directed to the people initiated by God. Importance of being honest in our dialogue with God – voicing our doubts and confusion and listening to His revelation. (cf. Job and Jonah)

BIG IDEA:

The Long Term Conviction of Faith Exults in the God of Our Salvation Despite the Perplexing Questions of the Pain and Apparent Injustice of Our Present Circumstances

Habakkuk 3:2 *"In wrath remember mercy."*

Habakkuk 2:4 *"The just shall live by faith."*

STRUCTURE OF PASSAGE

Twofold Division:

- I. (1-2) COMPLAINTS AGAINST GOD'S JUSTICE (2 Questions)
- II. (3) CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S JUSTICE

Threefold Division:

- I. (1:2-11) PERPLEXING PARADOX = JUSTICE LONGED FOR
 - A. (:2-4) Question: Is God's Justice Postponed?
 - B. (:5-11) Lord's Response: Shocking Discipline Strategy
- II. (1:12 – 2:20) PERMANENT PRINCIPLE = GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE
 - A. (1:12 – 2:1) Question: Is God's Justice Perverted?
 - B. (2:2-20) Lord's Response: Make no Mistake – The Wicked Will Be Punished in a Righteous Manner
- III. (3:1-19) PERSEVERING PERSPECTIVE = GOD WILL DELIVER HIS PEOPLE
 - A. (3:1-2) Prayer for Merciful Revival -- In Wrath Remember Mercy
 - B. (3:3-15) Portrait of God's Power and Glory -- Historical Remembrances of God's Sovereign Power and Majestic Glory
 - C. (3:16-19) Profession of Joyful Confidence of Faith – Choose abiding Joy regardless of present circumstances

I. (1:2-11) PERPLEXING PARADOX = JUSTICE LONGED FOR

A. (:2-4) Question: Is God's Justice Postponed?

COMPLAINT OF THE PROPHET -- DELAY OF THE LORD IN RESTORING JUSTICE TO THE LAND -- THE LAMENT OF A DISTURBED SOUL

Throughout history, unbelievers have scoffed at the inevitability of accountability before a sovereign God and coming judgment.

- Days of Noah
- Prideful Assyrians
- Now the Babylonians
- Look at the scoffers in the last days who now mock the promise of the 2nd Coming

But God's people as well have made the wrong application from God's long suffering

- Fall of Northern Kingdom in 722 BC
- Imminent Fall of Judah which will come in 586 BC

Delay in Judgment does not always mean denial of justice

1. (:2) Delay in Deliverance Disturbs the Soul

a. When Will the Lord Hear?

"How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And you will not hear?"

John MacArthur: The phrase, reflecting the prophet's impatience, is frequently used by the psalmist to express similar thoughts of perplexity (cf. **Pss 13:1,2; 62:3; Jer 14:9; Mt 27:46**).

The perceived silence of God tests our faith in perplexing times. What is going on?

b. When Will the Lord Deliver?

"I cry out to you, 'Violence!' Yet you do not save."

Speaks to the prevalent social injustice and moral decay in the land

Tension between God's promises of protection for His people and the reality of present suffering

2. (:3) Culture of Corruption Disturbs the Soul

a. Pervasive Corruption

*"Why do you make me see iniquity,
And cause me to look on wickedness?"*

Sounds like **Psalm 73** where the psalmist struggles with the prosperity of the wicked

Job 21:7-15 – questioning why the wicked live prosperous lives

b. Escalating Conflict

*"Yes, destruction and violence are before me;
Strife exists and contention arises."*

3. (:4) Perversion of Justice Disturbs the Soul

a. Disregard for Covenant Standards

"Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld."

Speaks to the corruption of the political leaders and judges = a sign of the collapse of Judah's society

b. The Righteous End Up the Victims

*"For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore justice comes out perverted."*

Not only is justice absent, but it is actively being twisted to serve the interests of the wicked.
Need for divine intervention

ILLUSTRATION: The Slow-Growing Bamboo

In parts of Asia, farmers plant **Chinese bamboo** knowing they'll see almost nothing for years.
For **four years**, the seed pushes only a tiny shoot above the surface—just inches.
But underground, massive root systems are forming.
Then, **in the fifth year**, the bamboo suddenly shoots up to nearly **80 feet in six weeks**.

People often ask, "Did it grow 80 feet in six weeks?"

The real answer is, "It grew 80 feet in **five years**—most of it invisible."

Point:

We often conclude that God is doing nothing against injustice because **we see no vertical growth**.
But His work—like the bamboo roots—is real, deep, and hidden until the moment He acts

B. (:5-11) Lord's Response: Shocking Discipline Strategy
CONSTERNATION OF THE PROPHET -- DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD BY USING
CRUEL CHALDEANS AS INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT –
THE ASTONISHMENT OF A SHOCKED PROPHET

1. (:5) Unexpected Discipline Strategy

a. Amazing

"Look among the nations! Observe! Be Astonished! Wonder!"

b. Unbelievable

*"Because I am doing something in your days –
You would not believe if you were told."*

This emphasizes the extraordinary nature of God's plan, which would be difficult to accept even if explicitly revealed. It highlights the **challenge of faith** and the need to trust in God's wisdom and timing.

2. (:6-10) Unrestrained Cruelty of the Chaldeans

a. (:6-7) Summary Qualifications of the Chaldeans for This Mission

1) Divinely Appointed for Instrument of Discipline

"For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,"

Main qualification = chosen by God for the task

2) Proven Aggressiveness of Spirit

“That fierce and impetuous people”

3) Unquenchable Appetite for Conquering New Territory

“Who march throughout the earth

To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.”

Their military campaigns were extensive, and they were known for their ability to conquer and control large territories.

4) Reputation Acknowledged – Strike fear in the hearts of their enemies

“They are dreaded and feared;”

Ruthless, barbaric

5) Completely Autonomous – Don’t care what other nations think

“Their justice and authority originate with themselves.”

This self-governance is indicative of their self-reliant pride and autonomy, often leading to moral relativism and tyranny. They establish their own standards for conduct – no outside objective standard like the law of God.

b. (:8) Superior Military Resources

1) Their Horses

“Their horses are swifter than leopards

And keener than wolves in the evening.”

Blue: Both leopards and wolves are fierce, fast, and excellent hunters. At dusk, wolves are hungry and ready to pounce on prey. The Babylonians’ voracious speed in conquest was also likened to a vulture swooping to devour.

2) Their Horsemen

“Their horsemen come galloping,

Their horsemen come from afar;

They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.”

Biblehub.com -- The **vulture** is a scavenger bird known for its keen eyesight and ability to swiftly descend upon its prey. This imagery conveys the idea of the Babylonians as opportunistic and ruthless, ready to exploit any weakness and consume what remains. The vulture's flight suggests both speed and inevitability, reinforcing the theme of impending judgment.

c. (:9-10) Swaggering Confidence in Victory

1) Bent on Violence

“All of them come for violence.”

2) United in Aggression

“Their horde of faces moves forward.”

3) Merciless in Enslavement

“They collect captives like sand.”

4) Brazen in Arrogance

a) Mock at Any Royal Authority

“They mock at kings

And rulers are a laughing matter to them.”

The Babylonians' contempt for kings indicates their belief in their own superiority and invincibility.

b) Make Fun of Any Feeble Defense

“They laugh at every fortress

And heap up rubble to capture it.”

3. (:11) Ultimate Accountability – the Chaldeans Will Be Judged Themselves

a. Their Dominance will only be Temporary

“Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on.”

b. Their Cruelty will be Condemned

“But they will be held guilty,”

Biblehub.com: Despite being used by God as a tool for judgment, they are not exempt from guilt. Their actions, driven by pride and violence, are inherently sinful. This reflects a broader biblical theme where God can use even unrighteous nations to fulfill His purposes, as seen in **Isaiah 10:5-7** with Assyria. The concept of divine sovereignty over human actions is a recurring theme in scripture, highlighting God's ultimate control over history while still holding individuals and nations accountable for their sins.

c. Their Idolatry will be Exposed

“They whose strength is their god.”

John MacArthur: Though the Chaldeans were God's instruments of judgment, their self sufficiency and self-adulation planted the seeds for their own destruction (described in **2:2-20**), as they stood guilty of idolatry and blasphemy before the sovereign Lord.

II.(1:12 – 2:20)

PERMANENT PRINCIPLE = GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

A. (1:12 – 2:1)

Question:

Is God's Justice Perverted?

DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD DESPITE PERPLEXITY OF INCOMPREHENSIBLE TACTICS - - THE HOPE OF A PERPLEXED PROPHET

1. (:12-17) COMFORT/CONFUSION OF THE PROPHET –

a. (:12) Perspective Based on Eternity

1) Character of God

“Are You not from everlasting,

O Lord, my God, my Holy One?”

Hampton Keathley: He began in **verse 12** by claiming that God is **eternal**. I think the idea of **immutability**, that God does not change, is included here. The fact that God does not change is important because it means God keeps His promises and He has made promises to Israel.

Habakkuk knows that God will not totally destroy Israel because of his covenantal promises. That is why he says, *"We will not die."*

2) Confidence in Deliverance

"We will not die."

3) Control of the Discipline

"You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge;

And You, O Rock, have established them to correct."

Biblehub.com: The term "Rock" is a metaphor for God's strength, stability, and faithfulness, often used in the Psalms (e.g., **Psalm 18:2**). It conveys trust in God's unchanging nature amidst turmoil. The phrase "established them for correction" indicates that the Babylonians' rise to power is not random but part of God's corrective plan for His people

b. (:13) Perspective Based on Holiness – Paradox

Faith grows when the believer looks from earth's chaos to God's character.

1) You Don't Approve of Wickedness – God's Holiness and Purity

"Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,

And you cannot look on wickedness with favor."

2) You Seem to be Favoring the Wicked over the Less Wicked

"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?"

c. (:14-17) Perspective Clouded by Unrestrained Cruelty of the Chaldeans

1) (:14) Vulnerability of Men to Such Unrestrained Cruelty

"Why have you made men like the fish of the sea,

Like creeping things without a ruler over them?"

The reference to "*creeping things*" further emphasizes the idea of insignificance and lack of guidance.

2) (:15a) Vultures Take Advantage of Such Vulnerability

"The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook,

Drag them away with their net,

And gather them together in their fishing net."

3) (:15b-16) Victory Celebrations of the Wicked are Especially Galling

"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 food is plentiful."

4) (:17) Vexing Question: How Long?? (back to question of vs 2)

*“Will they therefore empty their net
And continually slay nations without sparing?”*

J Ronald Blue: The action depicted signified a seemingly perpetual operation. They emptied their net so they could fill it again, again, and again. When would God put a stop to the Babylonians' greed for conquest? How could He let a people continue in power when they so openly worshiped that very power as their god? Habakkuk was confused.

2. (2:1) Waiting for a More Definitive Answer

*“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 climbs the watchtower—symbolizing expectancy, patience, and surrender. He waits for God’s correction.

Application:

- Christians need “watchtower moments”—intentional pauses where we wait on God rather than rush to conclusions.

B. (2:2-20) Lord's Response: Make no Mistake – The Wicked Will Be Punished in a Righteous Manner

PERPLEXITY REGARDING GOD'S WAYS AND GOD'S TIMING SHOULD NEVER SHAKE OUR FAITH IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS OR FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES

1. (:2-3) DON'T BE SHORT-SIGHTED OR IMPATIENT REGARDING THE LORD'S LONG TERM PROGRAM –
PROPHETIC REVELATION PROMISES THE CERTAINTY OF
FULFILLMENT ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIMETABLE

a. (:2) The Lord Goes on Record

1) Charge to Faithfully Record God's Revelation

“Then the Lord answered me and said, ‘Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets,’”

John MacArthur: Habakkuk was to record the vision to preserve it for posterity, so that all who read it would know of the certainty of its fulfillment (cf. similar language in Da 12:4, 9). The prophecy had lasting relevance and thus had to be preserved. Although a period of time would occur before its fulfillment, all were to know that it would occur at God's "*appointed time*" (cf. Is 13; Jer 50, 51). Babylon would fall to the Medo-Persian kingdom of Cyrus ca. 539 B.C. (cf Da 5).

2) Charge to Faithfully Communicate that Revelation to Others

"that the one who reads it may run."

J Ronald Blue: the point is that the messenger [herald] would read it and then run to spread the news to others.

b. (:3) The Prophecies Will Not Fail

1) The Deadline Has Not Passed

“For the vision is yet for the appointed time;”

2) Rapid Progress is being Made (from God’s Perspective)

“It hastens toward the goal”

3) Fulfillment is Certain

“and it will not fail.”

4) Patience is Needed (Because there is an appearance of delay)

“Though it tarries, wait for it;”

Biblehub.com: The notion of lingering suggests a delay from a human perspective, yet it calls for patience and faith. This echoes the biblical principle of waiting on the Lord, as seen in **Psalm 27:14**. The call to “wait for it” encourages believers to trust in God’s timing, even when immediate circumstances seem unchanged. This patience is a recurring theme in Scripture, as seen in **James 5:7-8**, which urges believers to be patient for the Lord’s coming.

5) Fulfillment is Certain (In actuality there is no delay)

“For it will certainly come, it will not delay.”

2. (:4-5) KEY PRINCIPLE: GOD WILL ALWAYS MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PROUD AND THE RIGHTEOUS

a. (:4a) The Unbelieving Proud – Needs a Soul Adjustment

*“Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him”*

b. (:4b) The Believing Righteous – Needs to Stick to His Guns

“But the righteous will live by his faith.”

Faith endures when God’s actions are confusing.

Ray Stedman: It is interesting that in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews there is a kind of **divine commentary** on this verse:

1. Romans stresses what it means to be “righteous.” There we are told that the righteousness of Christ is imparted to us by the gift of God. Righteousness is handed to us. We don’t earn it; we have it the minute we believe.

2. Then the words, “shall live,” are interpreted in Chapter 5 of Galatians, the great chapter on the life in the Spirit. What does “to live” mean? It means to walk in love, and joy, and peace, and longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self control.

3. Then the words, “by faith,” are interpreted in Hebrews, the great letter on faith. What does it mean to have faith? It means to trust that the invisible God is working, despite

present appearances.

John MacArthur: The emphasis in both Habakkuk and the NT references goes beyond the act of faith to include the **continuity of faith**. Faith is not a one-time act, but a way of life. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will persevere in faith as the pattern of his life (cf **Col 1:22, 23; Heb 3:12-14**).

c. (:5) Three Summary Charges Against the Proud Chaldeans

1) Deceived into Discontentment by Strong Drink

*“Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man,
So that he does not stay at home.”*

J Ronald Blue: The treachery of wine is described in Proverbs 23:31-32. It looks so inviting in the glass but *“in the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.”*

2) Devoted to Greed and Covetousness

*“He enlarges his appetite like Sheol,
And he is like death, never satisfied.”*

3) Driven by Ambition and Lust for Conquest

*“He also gathers to himself all nations
And collects to himself all peoples.”*

3. (:6-20) PRONOUNCEMENT OF FIVE WOES AGAINST THE PROUD CHALDEANS

John MacArthur: Five woes, in the form of a taunt song, were pronounced upon the Chaldeans in anticipation of their eventual judgment. Presented in 5 stanzas of 3 verses each, the 5 woes were directed at 5 different classes of evildoers.

J Ronald Blue: **Woe** is an interjection of distress pronounced in the face of disaster or in view of coming judgment (e.g., **Isa. 3:11; 5:11; 10:5**) because of certain sins.

This expression is a warning to those who act unjustly, indicating that their actions will lead to their downfall.

a. (:6-8) **Woe #1 – Extortion / Greed -- The Looter Will Be Looted**

1) Pronouncement of Woe – Extreme Usury

*“Woe to him who increases what is not his – For how long –
And makes himself rich with loans?”*

Biblehub.com: This rhetorical question expresses the frustration and impatience of those suffering under injustice. It echoes the cries of the oppressed throughout Scripture, such as in **Psalms 13:1**, where David asks, *“How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?”* It reflects a deep yearning for God's intervention and justice. The question also implies that the current state of affairs is unsustainable and that divine judgment is inevitable. This anticipation of God's righteous action is a recurring theme in the prophetic books, where the ultimate hope is in God's deliverance and the establishment of His kingdom.

2) Painful Taunt Song

*“Will not all of these take up a taunt -song against him,
Even mockery and insinuations against him ”*

3) Promise of Retribution – The Looter Will Be Looted

*“Will not your creditors rise up suddenly,
And those who collect from you awaken?
Indeed, you will become plunder for them.
Because you have looted many nations,
All the remainder of the peoples will loot you –
Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,
To the town and all its inhabitants.”*

Theo Laetsch: The first woe refers to the rapacity of the Chaldean, his eagerness to enrich himself at the expense of others by conquest of their home countries, making vassals of the nations, extorting from them huge contributions of materials, money, and men, bleeding them white.

b. (:9-11) **Woe #2 – Exploitation / Injustice** -- Ill-Gotten Gains Will Cry Out Against You

1) Pronouncement of Woe – False Security

*“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house
To put his nest on high,
To be delivered from the hand of calamity!”*

The "*hand of disaster*" represents impending judgment and calamity, which is inevitable for those who trust in their own strength and wealth rather than in God.

2) Painful Taunt Song

*“Surely the stone will cry out from the wall,
And the rafter will answer it from the framework .”*

J Ronald Blue: Even if every single enemy were exterminated, the very stones and lumber would testify against the rapacious and cruel hands of the Babylonians that had fashioned these building materials to show off their empire’s strength and glory. The stones and timber with which the houses and palaces were built had been obtained through plunder and injustice.

3) Promise of Retribution – Turning the Tables on Their Pride and Sin

*“You have devised a shameful thing for your house
By cutting off many peoples;
So you are sinning against yourself.”*

c. (:12-14) **Woe #3 – Exaltation / Violence** -- Ruthless Kingdom Building Will Be Frustrated By the Dominion of the Messiah

1) Pronouncement of Woe – Malicious Power Play

*“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed
And founds a town with violence!”*

2) Painful Taunt Song

*“Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts
That peoples toil for fire,
And nations grow weary for nothing?”*

John MacArthur: Like a fire that burns everything given to it, their labors would all be futile, having no lasting value (v. 13; cf. **Mic 3:10**).

3) Promise of Retribution – Kingdom Reversal

*“For the earth will be filled
With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,
As the waters cover the sea.”*

Biblehub.com: The "knowledge of the glory of the LORD" implies an intimate understanding and recognition of God's majesty and holiness. This is not merely intellectual knowledge but a deep, experiential awareness of God's presence and power. The glory of the LORD often refers to His manifest presence, as seen in the tabernacle and temple. This knowledge is transformative, leading to worship and reverence.

d. (:15-17) **Woe #4 – Excessive Debauchery / Immorality** – The Shamers Will Be Exposed to Public Shame

1) Pronouncement of Woe – Shameful Exploitation

*“Woe to you who make your neighbors drink,
Who mix in your venom even to make them drunk
So as to look on their nakedness.”*

2) Painful Taunt Song

*“You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor.
Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness.
The cup in the Lord’s right hand will come around to you,
And utter disgrace will come upon your glory.”*

3) Promise of Retribution – Reaping Violence and Devastation

*“For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
And the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them,
Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,
To the town and all its inhabitants.”*

Charles Ryrie: The violence done to Lebanon by several rulers in cutting down its great forests and killing its cattle would be done to Judah (see **Isa. 14:7-8**).

e. (:18-20) **Woe #5 – Extreme Idolatry** – The Worshipers of Idols Will Be Mocked

1) Pronouncement of Woe – Foolish Loyalty

*“Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’
To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’
And that is your teacher?
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,*

And there is no breath at all inside it.”

John MacArthur: Compare the sarcasm with that of Elijah’s words to the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Ki 18:27; cf. Jer 2:27).

2) Painful Taunt Song

*“What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it,
Or an image, a teacher of falsehood?
For its maker trusts in his own handiwork
When he fashions speechless idols.”*

3) Promise of Retribution – Conclusion --

Stand in Awe of the Lord of History

Who Judges Righteously From His Holy Temple

“But the Lord is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

God is sovereign, enthroned, and in control—even when nations rage.

Biblehub.com: This phrase emphasizes the sovereignty and majesty of God. The "holy temple" refers to the heavenly sanctuary where God dwells, signifying His ultimate authority and purity. In the context of Habakkuk, this statement contrasts the impotence of idols and the futility of human efforts against the divine power of God. The temple in Jerusalem was a central place of worship for the Israelites, symbolizing God's presence among His people. The temple imagery points to Jesus Christ, who referred to His body as the temple, indicating that He is the ultimate dwelling place of God among humanity.

III. (3:1-19) PERSEVERING PERSPECTIVE = GOD WILL DELIVER HIS PEOPLE

THE PERSEVERING PERSPECTIVE COMBINES THE SHORT TERM PAIN OF DISCIPLINE WITH THE TRIUMPHANT RESOLVE TO REJOICE IN GOD’S LONG TERM DELIVERANCE

A. (3:1-2) Prayer for Merciful Revival -- In Wrath Remember Mercy

CHANGED PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROPHET –

COMBINES ACCEPTANCE OF DISCIPLINE WITH HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

1. (:1) Posture of Prayer

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.”

No longer arguing and complaining because of his perplexities

John MacArthur: The precise meaning is unknown (its singular form occurs in the heading to Ps 7). In light of the musical notation at the end of chap. 3, it is thought that it has a musical-liturgical significance, and that this chapter was sung.

2. (:2) Plea for Revival and Mercy

a. Foundational Attitude of Fear of the Lord = The Beginning of Wisdom

“Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear.”

b. Plea for Revival

*“O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known;”*

c. Plea for Mercy – While Accepting Discipline

“In wrath remember mercy.”

One of the key phrases in the book

This tension between **wrath** and **mercy** is ultimately resolved in the person of Jesus Christ, who embodies both God's justice and His grace.

B. (3:3-15) Portrait of God's Power and Glory -- Historical Remembrances of
God's Sovereign Power and Majestic Glory

COMBINES THE OUTPOURING OF GOD'S WRATH WITH THE REPEATED
DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE

(Primarily looking at God's Deliverance of His People from Egypt and the giving of the Law)

A poetic theophany describing:

- God marching in judgment.
- His splendor, power, and sovereignty over nations and nature.
- God's past faithfulness becomes the anchor for present faith.

1. (:3-5) Vision of the Glory and Power of the God of Wrath

a. His Coming

*“God comes from Teman,
And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.”*

John MacArthur: Teman, named after a grandson of Esau, was an Edomite city (**Am 1:12; Ob 9**). Mount Paran was located in the Sinai peninsula. Both allude to the theater in which God displayed great power when He brought Israel into the land of Canaan (cf. **Dt 33:2; Jdg 5:4**).

b. His Manifest Glory

*“His splendor covers the heavens,
And the earth is full of His praise.
His radiance is like the sunlight;
He has rays flashing from His hand,”*

c. His Hidden Power Demonstrated in Wrath

*“And there is the hiding of His power.
Before Him goes pestilence,
And plague comes after Him.”*

2. (:6-11) The Outpouring of God's Wrath

a. (:6A) His Piercing Gaze

*“He stood and surveyed the earth;
He looked and startled the nations.”*

b. (:6B) His Eternality Contrasted with Mortal Fragility

*“Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered,
The ancient hills collapsed.
His ways are everlasting.”*

c. (:7) His Terrified Witnesses – En Route to the Promised Land

*“I saw the tents of Cushan under distress,
The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.”*

d. (:8-11) His Power Demonstrated in Nature – But His Wrath
Not Directed Against Nature

1) (:8) Waters of Turmoil – But Goal of Bringing Deliverance

*“Did the Lord rage against the rivers,
Or was your anger against the rivers,
Or was your wrath against the sea,
That you rode on your horses, on your chariots of salvation?”*

2) (:9) Weapons of Wrath

*“Your bow was made bare,
The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah.
You cleaved the earth with rivers.”*

3) (:10-11) Witnesses of Destruction

*“The mountains saw You and quaked;
The downpour of waters swept by.
The deep uttered forth its voice,
It lifted high its hands.
Sun and moon stood in their places;
They went away at the light of your arrows,
At the radiance of your gleaming spear.”*

3. (:12-15) God’s Wrath Set in the Context of God’s Mercy and Deliverance

a. (:12) Mission of Wrath Against the Nations

*“In indignation You marched through the earth;
In anger You trampled the nations.”*

b. (:13A) Goal of Deliverance for God’s People

*“You went forth for the salvation of Your people;
For the salvation of Your anointed.”*

c. (:13B-15) Execution of the Wicked Who Had Oppressed God’s People

*“You struck the head of the house of the evil
To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.
You pierced with his own spears the head of his throngs.
They stormed in to scatter us;
Their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret.
You trampled on the sea with Your horses,
On the surge of many waters.”*

**C. (3:16-19) Profession of Joyful Confidence of Faith – Choose abiding Joy
regardless of present circumstances**

**TRIUMPHANT RESOLVE OF THE PROPHET –
COMBINES THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD WITH
THE UPLIFTING RESOURCES OF THE JOY AND STRENGTH OF THE LORD**

1. (:16A) Foundational Attitude of Fear of the Lord = the Beginning of Wisdom

“I heard and my inward parts trembled,

*At the sound my lips quivered.
Decay enters my bones,
And in my place I tremble.”*

2. (:16B-17) Persevering Acceptance of the Discipline of the Lord

a. (:16B) Expectation of the Inevitability of the Discipline of the Lord

*“Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,
For the people to arise who will invade us.”*

b. (:17) Anticipation of the Bleakest of Times

1) No Food From the Fields

*“Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,”*

2) No Food From the Flocks

*“Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls”*

3. (:18-19) Abiding Confidence in the Sufficiency of the Joy and Strength of the Lord

a. (:18) The Joy of the Lord

*“Yet I will exult in the Lord,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”*

Biblehub.com: This phrase reflects a profound declaration of faith and joy in God despite adverse circumstances. The prophet Habakkuk, after expressing his concerns and witnessing the impending judgment on Judah, chooses to find joy in the LORD. This decision to exult is significant, as it demonstrates a deep trust in God's sovereignty and goodness, even when the situation seems dire. The term "*exult*" implies a triumphant and exuberant joy, suggesting that Habakkuk's faith transcends his immediate circumstances. This mirrors the attitude of other biblical figures, such as Job, who maintained faith despite suffering.

b. (:19A) The Strength of the Lord

“The Lord God is my strength,”

c. (:19B) Victory in the Lord

*“And He has made my feet like hinds’ feet,
And makes me walk on my high places.”*

CONCLUSION — A FAITH THAT FINDS ITS FOOTING

The book that began in **confusion** ends in **confidence**.

The prophet who began with complaints ends in praise.

Why?

Because Habakkuk looked from his circumstances to his God.

Ken Boa:

Progression of Habakkuk's faith reflected in his dialogue with God:

- From Mystery to Certainty
- From Questioning to Affirming
- From Complaint to Confidence
- From Burden to Blessing
- From Wondering to Worship
- From Restlessness to Rest
- From a Problem to God's Person
- From a Complaint to Consolation

Three closing challenges:

1. Trust God's Plan—even when you don't understand it.

God uses strange messengers and surprising methods.

2. Trust God's Promises—the righteous shall live by faith.

Faith is not merely belief but steadfast obedience.

3. Trust God's Person—the Lord is in His holy temple.

He is sovereign, holy, wise, and good.

Habakkuk teaches believers to live by faith when God's timing is mysterious, when evil seems to prosper, and when life appears to unravel—because God remains sovereign, righteous, and worthy of praise.

J.N. Boo Heflin: It is better to live in faith than in rebellion, trusting God when answers are not to be found, living a life of faithfulness even when evil seems to have the upper hand. This approach to life is wise because God is the omnipotent ruler; He will ultimately prevail over evil.

Major Theological Themes:

The great issue with which Habakkuk struggles is **theodicy**. How could a just and holy God allow evil to exist? How could He remain inactive and silent in the face of brutality, injustice, and atrocious inhumanity? Though intellectual answers for the problem ultimately give way to experiential answers, Habakkuk does in fact learn several significant theological truths:

1) First, he learns that God and good will inevitably triumph. . . God's people must be a waiting people, living with the certain hope that eternity will clarify the issues, revealing the triumph of right.

2) Second, Habakkuk learns that evil contains the seed of destruction (**2:4-20**). Individuals and nations who live in pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency find in the end these very attitudes are

their undoing. Though on occasion evil appears to have the upper hand, it is really filled with death and destruction. It cannot and will not endure in God's moral universe. Its transitory nature is an unalterable fact of history.

3) Third, the prophet learns that those who are right with God are to live by their faithfulness (2:4).

4) Fourth, Habakkuk learns that while intellectual answers to the enigmas of history may not be available, God is good and He is enough. Accordingly, His people rejoice in His salvation and strength. They await with confidence the triumphant end, even in the midst of oppression and deprivation (3: 17-19).

Access **Bibleoutlines.com** for resources to study each book – Take Habakkuk for an example

- 1) Go to the website main page – BIBLEOUTLINES.COM
- 2) Select Old Testament or New Testament books
- 3) Select the book you want to study – takes you to the Summary Page for that book

HABAKKUK – IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY



OVERVIEW

BIG IDEA

BASIC OUTLINE

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

NOTABLE QUOTES
