

Book of Habakkuk

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 8, 2018

Main Theme – A brief overview/walkthrough of the Book of Habakkuk (i.e., key themes & app.).

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - WM – Tuesday Evening, July 10 (6:30–8:30pm)
 - Men’s Breakfast – Saturday, July 14 (9–10:15am)
 - Mid-Week Bible Study – Every Thursday @ 6–7pm

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers. Two offerings will be collected today:

- The FIRST offering goes to support the ongoing ministry/function of this assembly
- The SECOND offering goes to support a variety of missionaries (foreign/domestic)

KEY – Consider the following VIDEO as the offerings are collected. Let the thoughts shared within stir you in your giving to missions AND your own witness for Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless you all!

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- **CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN SERVICE THIS MORNING**
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OPENING REMARKS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. Please turn to the Book of HABAKKUK.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

KEY – There is a MISTAKE that we make when it comes to reading the Word. i.e., We gravitate to certain sections while bypassing others (nearly completely). We all have Books of the Bible that we are naturally inclined to (e.g., Psalms, the Gospels, Paul’s Epistles, etc.). Many have Books of the Bible that they have never accessed/overlook (e.g., Leviticus, Revelation, Prophetic Works, etc.). REMEMBER...

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Q. How much of Scripture is God-breathed (‘inspired’) and useful for spiritual cultivation? ALL

Q. If the whole Word is inspired and useful WHY do believers leave large portions unexplored?

KEY – There are TWO lies that we believe that produce this spiritual negligence:

1) Much of the Bible is TOO HARD to understand

-Is this true? Yes and no. Certain sections may require more study in terms of historical context, etc. but is this beyond the average believer? No! In an age of nigh unlimited resources—most of which are free online—this excuse is invalid. Plus, you can avail yourself of the Pastor & studies.

2) Much of the Bible is simply NOT applicable/relevant

-The belief that much of the Bible has no application to modern life and living is ridiculous, and is said only by people who do not spend adequate time in the Word. Moreover, this teaching violates the sentiment expressed in our opening verse:

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Thus said, this MORNING we are going to delve into a Book of the Bible that is largely unexplored by the vast number of church-goers: i.e., the Book of Habakkuk. The TIMING of this particular study is neat, as the children who are joining us today learned about this work last Sunday!

NOTE – GOALS FOR TODAY:

1) To provide a brief but thorough overview of this work:

- To establish the context necessary for understanding this work
- To identify and outline the primary themes of this Old Testament text
- To discuss contemporary application and relevance in the life of the believer

2) To whet your appetite that—maybe, just maybe—you will develop a hunger for more

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Let's take some time to establish a bit of the HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

WHO – The Book of Habakkuk was penned by an ancient prophet named Habakkuk

WHEN/WHERE – Habakkuk ministered app. 600 B.C. in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

KEY – Habakkuk ministered in an age of significant happenings and TRANSITIONS. Consider...

-His was an age of POLITICAL transitions. King Josiah had recently died from wounds suffered in battle. His son— Jehoiakim—was now on the throne of Judah. This political transition would precipitate other transitions. NAMELY...

-His was an age of SPIRITUAL transitions. Josiah had been a godly king who ushered in great revival among the people of God. But, upon his death, his son Jehoiakim led the nation back into spiritual idolatry. This spiritual corruption led to a moral depravity among the people, as they were now marked by violence and injustice in the time of Habakkuk. As we will note, this greatly disturbed the faithful prophet, Habakkuk!

-His was an age of GLOBAL transitions. i.e., The world powers of the scene were shifting. ASSYRIA had been the dominant regional power for some time. 100 years earlier, they were responsible for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. They were a notably wicked, violent people. But now, BABYLON was the up-and-coming power. Though they were newer to the scene, their REPUTATION for cruelty and barbarism was well-established.

AN INTERESTING NOTE

NOTE – One more item before we delve into the text...

-Though Habakkuk was a prophet of God, his text is wildly DISSIMILAR from the writings of other prophets. Unlike the other prophets, his text contains NO accusations/denunciations against the people of God for their sin. There is NO call to repentance or divine offer of mercy. RATHER, the Book is the record of a DIALOGUE between the prophet and the Lord, as the man of God wrestles with matters of faith in a difficult age and season.

KEY – ANY believer who has ever struggled with his faith in diff. times will feel at home herein...

SEGMENT 1 – THE PROPHET’S 1ST LAMENT

Habakkuk 1:1–4 (NIV)

1 The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.

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.

NOTEWORTHY ITEMS...

1) What we see is the prophet offering his first (of two) LAMENTS/COMPLAINTS before God. The style and mode of the author herein mirrors & parallels what we see in many of the psalms.

2) The author is deeply DISTURBED by the condition of the nation (Judah). The spiritual vitality that characterized the nation under Josiah was GONE. With a new and wicked king on the throne, the nation had been CORRUPTED. The Law of God was neglected (v. 4), justice was absent (v. 3, 4), wickedness abounded (4) and violence had overrun the nation (2).

3) Herein, the prophet is wrestling with God’s apparent SILENCE and LACK of response. How could a holy God allow for such rampant evil? Why wasn’t God doing something about this? Why were his prayers falling on apparently deaf ears? (v. 2–3) WHERE IS GOD?

4) I want to note that Habakkuk is still operating from a place of FAITH. Please don't think his offering of complaint is comparable to those offered—for instance—by the children of Israel in the time of Moses (wilderness wanderings). They are NOT comparable...

a) The foundation for THEIR complaint was distrust and rebellion. The foundation for HIS complaint was an abiding belief that there must be answers in the Lord—even if those answers currently eluded him.

b) Note that the complaint of the Jewish people in Moses' time led them to run from God. Habakkuk, on the other hand, ran to the Lord seeking divine wisdom and guidance.

c) Ultimately, the complaints of the Hebrew people in Moses' day led to judgment. Habakkuk's lament would lead to divine revelation and prophetic insight.

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS...

1) There is a place in the life of the believer for LEGITIMATE LAMENT before God.

a) There SHOULD be a place of lament over the sin that abounds in our time.

b) Lament/Complaint does NOT mean a lack of faith or rejection of the Lord God.

2) There will be seasons when we wonder where God is? Why are our prayers falling on deaf ears? There will be seasons when we will wrestle with the apparent prosperity of evil and the apparent lack of response from the Lord (micro and macro levels)

-But let us run to God—like Habakkuk. There are A's (even if they currently elude us).

SEGMENT 2 – THE LORD’S 1ST RESPONSE

Habakkuk 1:5–11 (NIV)

5 The Lord replied,

“Look around at the nations;
look and be amazed!

For I am doing something in your own day,
something you wouldn’t believe
even if someone told you about it.

6 I am raising up the Babylonians,
a cruel and violent people.

They will march across the world
and conquer other lands.

7 They are notorious for their cruelty
and do whatever they like.

8 Their horses are swifter than cheetahs
and fiercer than wolves at dusk.

Their charioteers charge from far away.
Like eagles, they swoop down to devour their prey.

9 “On they come, all bent on violence.
Their hordes advance like a desert wind,
sweeping captives ahead of them like sand.

10 They scoff at kings and princes
and scorn all their fortresses.
They simply pile ramps of earth
against their walls and capture them!

11 They sweep past like the wind
and are gone.
But they are deeply guilty,
for their own strength is their god.”

NOTEWORTHY ITEMS...

1) God took this opportunity to engage Habakkuk in a dialogue. AMAZING!

Psalms 8:3–4 (NIV)

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

2) The Lord begins to DEAL WITH the lament of the prophet.

-Habakkuk lamented God's apparent lack of response and apparent silence. But the Lord did see the sinfulness of His people and was already at work to deal with His wayward nation. i.e., In the same way that God allowed ASSYRIA to topple the Northern Kingdom of Israel for its sin 100-years beforehand, God was about to use BABYLON as His divine means/rod of judgment.

-FYI – The judgments that came through Assyria and Babylon are two major events in the history of the OT. Much of the OT hinges upon these happenings and we DO WELL to note and understand them!

-NOTE – God did NOT craft this plan to unleash the Babylonians based upon Habakkuk's complaint. No, in fact the plan was already in motion. Even though Habakkuk was unaware of God's work, God was at work! God has a PURPOSE. God has a PLAN. God has EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL!

3) Consider that this text speaks to SEVERAL FACETS of the Lord's NATURE...

-e.g., His omniscience, holiness, justice, sovereignty, and more.

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS...

1) The Lord is willing to ANSWER/RESPOND TO the laments of our hearts.

-This might mean the offering of a word from heaven, a message through a friend or peer, and above-all-else THE WORD OF GOD. But God has taken the time to reach out to and speak to us. The ISSUE is our willingness to listen, trust and obey...

2) God has a PURPOSE. God has a PLAN. God has EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL.

-This is true at the macro level (God's cosmic purpose for the world/nations).

-This is true at the micro level (God has a purpose and plan for each of us).

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

SEGMENT 3 – THE PROPHET’S 2ND LAMENT

Habakkuk 1:12–2:1 (NIV)

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.

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?

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?

2:1 I will stand at my watch
 and station myself on the ramparts;
 I will look to see what he will say to me,
 and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

NOTEWORTHY ITEMS...

1) Habakkuk recognized God’s reply. But he does NOT like what he hears! →2nd Lament.

-In his FIRST lament, Habakkuk wrestled with God’s LACK of response to the abounding wickedness of his people. In this SECOND lament, Habakkuk is wrestling WITH God’s response to the abounding wickedness of His people! How could a holy God use Babylon to judge Judah was Babylon was SO MUCH WORSE than Judah! (v. 12–13)

-In Habakkuk’s (accurate) estimation, the Babylonians were a despicable people who treated the nations BRUTALLY. The nations were as powerless/helpless before Babylon as fish caught in the net of a fisherman – and ALL were set to be devoured in kind!

2) Again, I want to note the inherent FAITH of Habakkuk herein.

He does NOT spurn the Lord and abandon Him when God's ways offend his sensibilities. Rather, he runs TO the Lord and raises his voice to the Lord who sees and answers. He assumes a posture before the Lord where he waits for a reply (2:1).

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS...

1) There will be times when you will NOT like God's response.

- There will be times when you pray and the Lord says 'no'
- There will be times when you pray and God says 'wait/not yet'
- There may be times when the Lord and His ways 'OFFEND YOU'

Matthew 11:2-6 (NIV)

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" [i.e., You're not acting like we expected...are you really the Messiah/Christ or should we look elsewhere?]

4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Matthew 11:6 (NKJV)

6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

2) There will be times when the Lord is NOT going to act in a manner you'd expect/want.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

3) Let us be LIKE/EMULATE Habakkuk. Let's not run FROM but TO the Lord!

- What will you do when you're offended? Let's act like our spiritual predecessor
- Let us run to the Lord and assume a position of humility and expectancy before Him

SEGMENT 4 – THE LORD’S 2nd RESPONSE

Habakkuk 2:2–20 (NIV)

2 Then the Lord replied:

“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.

4 “See, the enemy is puffed up;
his desires are not upright—
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness [i.e., faith]—

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 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 For 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.

NOTEWORTHY ITEMS...

1) The Lord again responds. AMAZING!

2) The Lord deals—AGAIN—with the lament of the prophet:

Q. How could a holy God use a wicked and vile people as a means of judgment?

A. God's use of the wicked does NOT mean He endorses them. They will be judged!

3) The 5-Fold Woe speaks to the CERTAINTY of judgment that would come upon Babylon

-Woe – A message of impending and imminent doom – a proclamation of judgment.

a) Woe 1 & 2 – Woes based on economics (theft and extortion) (v. 6b, 9)

b) Woe 3 – Woe based upon violence and cruel slave labor (v. 12–13)

c) Woe 4 – Woe based upon indulgent and irr. leaders (v. 15))

d) Woe 5 – Woe based upon pagan idolatry (v. 19)

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS...

1) The doom of Babylon (micro-level) is INDICATIVE/PREDICTIVE of all nations that embrace sin. Most nations, left to their own devices, will eventually become like Babylon—i.e., in their sinfulness AND in their fate.

2) Our proper RESPONSE to such realities:

a) v. 4 – the just shall live by faith (cf. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38)

b) v. 20 – let the earth be silent before him (i.e., assume a posture of true reverence)

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth."

SEGMENT 5 – A CONCLUDING PRAYER OF PRAISE

Habakkuk 3:1–19 (NIV)

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth. [i.e., a ‘musical’ term]

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.

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.

For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

NOTEWORTHY ITEMS...

1) Note the PROGRESSION of Habakkuk.

-Throughout the course of this dialogue with God, the author has moved from a place of complaint to confidence; from a place of protest to praise. Hearing God's reply/replies catalyzed a sense of reverence, praise, faith (present) and hope (future).

2) Note that Habakkuk HEARKENS back to the EXODUS account.

-The language of this song/prayer of Habakkuk is filled with ALLUSIONS to God's intervention in the days of Moses and His victory over Pharaoh. Habakkuk celebrates this dramatic intervention and victory as ILLUSTRATIVE of God's imminent intervention and victory over Babylon.

-i.e., "God, if you've done it BEFORE you can do it AGAIN!"

-**KEY** – Repeating past interventions stimulated reverence, faith (pr.) and hope (future)

3) This prayer was meant to be SUNG and PERFORMED

-As with the psalms, there was a musical COMPONENT to this. There is mystical connection/spiritual bond between matters of faith and music that transcends words...

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS...

1) There can be PROGRESSION for us.

-When you are in a place of confusion and bewilderment—i.e., when your faith feels so small—there CAN BE A TRANSITION from protest to praise and complaint to certainty. But it involves SEEKING the Lord and hearing from Him!

2) There is BENEFIT to LOOKING BACK and REMEMBRANCE.

-Habakkuk looked back to a time of God's intervention and victory to bolster his faith and hope. There is a time and a place to look back and REMEMBER what God has done for you in times past! CONSIDER!

3) There is a place for MUSIC in the life of the believer.

-Maybe you have the gift to write music.

-Maybe a song has touched your heart.

-EXPRESS yourself using this mode...

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE – We have examined a Book of the Bible that is often overlooked. Yet, in its pages we see lessons that are timeless and timely. With a little work, we were able to mine out some deep truths of the Word and connected them to life and living in 2018.

- It is my HOPE that something from this session resonates with/speaks to you
- It is my HOPE that this session and the work thereof stirs you – the whole Word!