

Habakkuk: Introduction and Background

Habakkuk 1:1, Wednesday, December 13, 2023

What are your thoughts about nations, God's people, and righteousness and judgment from an eternal perspective? What do you learn about God and His ways?

1. God brings respite even while movement toward impending judgment. Use it wisely.
2. Worship God's judgment as a sign of God's holy justice.
3. Look farther ahead for God's justice, mercy, and deliverance.

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Habakkuk 1:1

“It was an agitated time, characterized by rapid political change, international turmoil, bloody military encounters, and a growing rebellion against the demands of the covenant by the great majority in Judah. Prophetic activity was feverish, not only with the ministries of people like Jeremiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Huldah, and Ezekiel, but also with false prophets in abundance.”

Waylon Bailey

What do you think should be the posture we take before God in the face of injustice, doubts, fears, and lack of hope? What fights against this posture?

- Humility and confidence
- Praise – God's still holy regardless, therefore praise
- Faith/loyalty – trust based on what has been accomplished
- Knowing we won't understand because God is wiser/willing to do work of believing
- Build on what God has started rather than 'harp on the hardness' of situation
- Watch bitterness resulting from injustice – results from our determination of how justice should be attained (meditate on God's promise, character, trusting in His final, perfect judgement)
- Watch thoughts that God's grace is not sufficient
- Perseverance
- Examine definitions of injustice, identity, hope, forgiveness

What do you think should be the posture we take before God in the face of injustice, doubts, fears, and lack of hope? What fights against this posture?

1. Come before God honestly and humbly.

What happens if we fail to be honest with God?

- Minimize opportunities for God to work in us to change us
- Not fooling God when don't tell Him what we are thinking – don't get answers – continue in doubt
- Break communication
- Not how relationship work – relationship flounders – submitting to His will is active – to obey, must make step toward Him
- Luke 24 Emmaus men had dispositions that were prepared for correction and insight
- Seeking own path and not relating to Him (left with our own perspective & missing treasure of His presence)
- Leads to our destruction - 2 Peter 3 untaught and unstable, distort.
- Dishonesty begets dishonesty with God, with others – can't be sustained because God is truth

What prevents honesty in other relationships and what does this do to relationships?

- Superficial – therefore relationship doesn't grow deep
- No trust
- Fears & insecurities causing us to not want to be known – want to control what others know so appears good – shallow seems easier, more secure
- Want “nice” outcome so seek to control perceptions (afraid of letting the “chips fall” where they may) - often subconscious

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“Habakkuk’s message is relevant to all times and peoples, as we are taught in the full scope of the canon (II Tim. 3:16-17). But the problem is this: how can we contemporize his words without weakening the meaning they had in their original setting? It is all too easy to declare that we are under no obligation to discover the meaning Habakkuk’s message had for its original author or first audience. But we do so at the risk of losing the authority and any objective controls over what the text is saying. After all, it was the prophet who stood in the council of God, not we. And it is the author who must first state what he means to say if we are to gain any sense of what the Spirit of God is saying to our day and generation.”

Walter Kaiser

How would we “declare that we are under no obligation to discover the meaning Habakkuk’s message had for its original author or first audience?”

- Read it and give no thought to the meaning of it
- What pertains to me, now, in this moment
- Reading scripture for myself – without thought for God and His purposes
- By never thinking we have enough background & study to get implications for my life – OR – taking what is meaningful
- Just won’t read it
- Too much work , too much discipline required to find what God has for us
- By subjugating the OT in our study of God’s word (give me treasure for me now – even Jesus)

What did these men who questioned God have that we might be in danger of forgetting when we confront these topics?

- Belief that God can handle it
- Context of obedience was already there (we perhaps wonder if God will justify Himself/vindicate Himself)
- Go to Him
- Takes time to process, while still retaining certainties of God
- God is there and knows what is happening
- Continued before God
- Willing to wait without answer – still committed to God's existence – Heb 11:6

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What did these men who questioned God have that we might be in danger of forgetting when we confront these topics? What else do you think we might need?

- Character
- Careful thinking
- Patience
- Greater purposes to keep working while we wait

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THEME: The Path of Faith in the Providence of God

What do you think should be the **posture we take before God in the face of injustice, doubts, fears, and lack of hope? What fights against this posture?**

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3. Avoid the easy route of venting and taking apart. Come prepared to do the hard work to build up your faith.

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“A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic. A person's faith can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection. Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts—not only their own but their friends' and neighbors'. It is no longer sufficient to hold beliefs just because you inherited them. Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith will you be able to provide grounds for your beliefs to skeptics, including yourself, that are plausible rather than ridiculous or offensive.” Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, p. xxiii

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Besides the first two points we've covered, what will keep "examining our doubts" from ending with more self-focus and less faith—either in our findings or our failings?

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“How did one defend the justice and righteousness of God in a world where God no longer chose to speak or reveal himself or his ways? As Otto notes, ‘In view of the empirical situation of need, Habakkuk’s understanding of God lost its self-evident quality. . . . The idea of God can become totally clear again only when the reality of the experienced world becomes totally clear.’ Habakkuk dared to question all easy theological answers he had learned. He fought through real life situations with God. Only then did he affirm traditional theology, but it is a theology with firm roots in more than other people’s traditions and textbooks.

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Now he affirmed the justice of God on the basis of personal experience struggling with God and finding God in the midst of worship. 'The prophet's probing of Yahweh's will dispels any thought that the Lord may not judge covenant and cosmic sin equally. The wicked of all nations will be punished.' On the other hand, 'God is so great in His sovereignty He is even able to use human sin for His own purpose. . . . He did not force the Babylonians to assume the role of world conqueror. That was their own goal. . . . God allowed them to do what they themselves wanted to do, but He used it for His purposes.'"

Waylon Bailey

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Habakkuk 1:1

“Thus says the LORD, ‘Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah.’ ”

Jeremiah 22:30

Habakkuk: Introduction and Background

Habakkuk 1:1

Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. 12 After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.

Matthew 1:11–12

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Matthew 1:11–12

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

Jeremiah 23:5–6

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4. Look for areas to meditate and worship.

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Waylon Bailey, NAC, p. 284-285

- The Creator (1:14)
- Eternal (1:12)
- A personal God, related in a personal relationship with the prophet (1:12)
- An awesomely holy God, pure and distinct from all creation (1:12)
- Sovereign over history and all its nations (1:12, 2:13)
- A rock that can never be moved or changed (1:12)
- One who punishes disobedient people (1:12, 2:16)
- One whose purity makes him avoid all appearances of evil (1:13)
- One with no tolerance level for evil and wrongdoing (1:13)
- One who speaks with his prophets and reveals his plans (2:1)
- One who brings woe and destruction on all evil (2:6-19)
- Planning salvation for the earth so that he can fill all his creation with his presence (1:14)
- At home in his temple on earth and in heaven (2:20)
- So awesome that people must be silent when he is present (2:20)

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God shows that he is

- Planning to act in unbelievable ways (1:5)
- Able and willing to use enemies for his purposes even when they are wicked (1:6)
- Able and willing to reveal himself and his purposes to his people (2:2-3)
- Lord over his revelation and will bring it to pass in his own time (2:3)
- The one who always speaks the truth (2:3)
- The God of the righteous who serve him faithfully (2:4)

Meditation on God's past history also reveals much about the divine nature. He is

- Famous so that people talk about what he has done for them (3:2)
- Active with deeds that silence people awestruck (3:2)
- A God of wrath (3:2, 12)
- One who comes to his needy people from his ancient dwelling place (3:3)
- The glorious one who acts bring forth praise that fills the universe (3:3)
- So splendid in appearance that he dims the dawning sun (1:4)
- Powerful (3:4)

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- So splendid in appearance that he dims the dawning sun (1:4)
- Powerful (3:4)
- In control of all diseases (3:5)
- In control of all history, all nature, and all people (3:6-7)
- Willing and able to show his anger against sinful peoples as exemplified in the exodus from Egypt (3:8-15)
- In control of all the chaotic waters and deeps (3:8-10)
- Uses even the heavenly bodies for his purposes (3:11)
- Our Savior from the enemy and the protector of our anointed leader (3:13,16)
- The source of all our strength (3:19)

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4, Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

- I. I went to the right place with injustice, but there is no action.

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

Psalm 74:1

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

Psalm 13:1–3

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.

2 Kings 25:7

“Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. 8 “He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, And He has put darkness on my paths.

Job 19:7–8

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Indeed, there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim; and he prophesied against this city and against this land words similar to all those of Jeremiah. 21 When King Jehoiakim and all his mighty men and all the officials heard his words, then the king sought to put him to death; but Uriah heard it, and he was afraid and fled and went to Egypt. 22 Then King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor and certain men with him went into Egypt. 23 And they brought Uriah from Egypt and led him to King Jehoiakim, who slew him with a sword and cast his dead body into the burial place of the common people.

Jeremiah 26:20–23

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Genesis 6:11–13

Bringing Injustice Before God

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

Exodus 34:6–7

What happens to our prayer life (or fights against it) in the face of these questions? What does this reveal about our prayer life/relationship with God?

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