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Habakkuk 1

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Habakkuk 1.

Topics.

- The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.
- The LORD is raising up Babylon to march through the earth.
- Sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.
- The Chaldeans are fearsome and their horses fiercer than wolves.
- You, O Rock have ordained the Chaldeans to bring judgment on Judah.
- The LORD makes mankind like the fish of the sea that have no ruler.

INTRODUCTION: Habakkuk was probably written about 640–615 B.C., just before the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon. God used Assyria to punish Israel (722); now he would use Babylon to punish Judah. This prophecy would be fulfilled several decades after Habakkuk, in 586. The “theme question” of Habakkuk is how can God use a wicked nation such as Babylon for his divine purpose? God judges all nations, said Habakkuk, and even Babylon would eventually be judged (Babylon fell to Persia in 539). But God’s people are held to a higher standard because they have greater revelation. Though God’s ways are sometimes mysterious, “the righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4) while awaiting salvation. These words are quoted three times in the New Testament. (Rom. 1:17) (Gal. 3:11) (Heb. 10:38).

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

HABAKKUK 1:1-4

The Oracle that Habakkuk the Prophet Saw.

- **Habakkuk 1:1-4:** The oracle (burden in KJV) that Habakkuk the prophet saw. ²O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? ³Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ⁴So the law is paralysed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so, justice goes forth perverted.

The word, oracle (burden in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word (massa) and means a burden tribute, an utterance mostly of doom. We are told in verse one that this is an oracle Habakkuk saw and in (Hab. 2:2-3) the LORD tells Habakkuk to write the vision on tablets, because the vision awaits its appointed time so we know that this is a vision Habakkuk is seeing in his mind and put into words. Biblical visions can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Because many of these biblical visions, events or experiences often appear as real events to the person experiencing them they can be spoken of in the following three ways, firstly, as an actual and real event, secondly, as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind and thirdly the person maybe left in confusion as to whether it was a vision or an actual event. This is because many biblical visions appear so real the emotions and the body functions as though it is an actual real event, even though it may simply be playing out in vivid colour and crystal-clear pictures on the imagination of the mind. The reason for

this is that the human nervous system does not have a mind of its own and therefore cannot discern the difference between a real picture being played out on the imagination of the mind or an imaginary one so the nervous system responds to both the real image and the imaginary image in the same manner. This is why in many chapters the same event is written as a real experience in some verses and as a vision in others since the biblical character is not always sure what they actually experienced (2 Cor. 12:1-3). A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision. Habakkuk is a righteous man of faith living amongst the people of Judah who are full of violence, destruction, iniquity, strife and contention. Justice is being perverted and there is no one to uphold the law. Habakkuk is not only devastated at the strife and contention, the injustice and violence he sees amongst the people, he is also confused because he sees the wicked are prospering over the righteous. He has prayed that God would judge the wicked, but to no avail. Because of this he feels that the LORD is indifferent to all the wrong doing and asks God how long must he look upon so much violence and injustice, before He will do something? He feels that God is idly sitting in heaven doing nothing about the wicked even though he sees justice being perverted and the righteous suffering because of their lies, deceit, corruption and violence.

HABAKKUK 1:5-6

The LORD is Raising up Babylon, to March through the Earth.

- **Habakkuk 1:5-6:** "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I (the LORD) am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. ⁶For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.

The Chaldeans: established the Babylonian dynasty of which the city of Babylon was the capital of their country. (It is called Iraq today). The LORD answers Habakkuk's question, "How long will I cry for help, and you will not hear?" (v1) by telling him that He is about to do a great wonder that will absolutely astound Habakkuk. The great wonder that God is about to do refers to Him raising up a pagan nation (the Chaldeans/Babylonians) and their armies to punish Judah because of their rebellion and gross wickedness.

Sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem: following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. The following sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel.

Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of

responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

HABAKKUK 1:7-11

Chaldeans are Fearsome and their Horses Fiercer than Wolves.

- **Habakkuk 1:7-11:** They (the Chaldeans) (v6) are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. ⁸Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. ⁹They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. ¹¹Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

Remember Habakkuk is seeing this in a vision the event is still to take place in the future. The LORD tells Habakkuk to take a good look at the nation surrounding him (v5) and he will see that the armies of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) are enormously strong, highly disciplined and skilful in warfare, they cannot be intimidated by any nation and they have no fear. Their God is their might and strength and they conquer every nation they march against.

HABAKKUK 1:12-13

You, O Rock Ordained the Chaldeans to Bring Judgment on Judah.

- **Habakkuk 1:12-13:** Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them (the Chaldeans) as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them (Judah) for reproof (rebuke and disapproval). ¹³You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

The expression, "Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God," means God is eternal, no beginning and no end and therefore sees everything and the words, "We shall not die. O LORD," (v12) implies that Habakkuk is struggling to accept the horror he sees in this vision. It seems that Habakkuk feels that the faithful of Judah should not die.

He understands that God has appointed a time for the punishment and judgment of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but he seems puzzled how God can ordain such a corrupt and cruel people as the Chaldeans to judge the people of Judah who Habakkuk feels are more righteous than the people of Chaldea. Habakkuk realises the Chaldeans are going to lay the land of Judah waste and destroy the city of Jerusalem and wonders how God can idly sit in heaven and allow such an evil nation to destroy the people of Judah.

HABAKKUK 1:14-17

The LORD makes Mankind like Fish that have no Ruler.

- **Habakkuk 1:14-17:** You (the LORD) make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. ¹⁵He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. ¹⁷Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?

The dragnet: refers to the fishing net closing on its catch as it is dragged from the ocean into the shore or the boat. It is symbolising an enemy taking its captives back to its city as Babylon did with the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. God is holy, He does not approve of wickedness and cannot do iniquity Himself and being of pure eyes he cannot behold wickedness with any approval, yet wickedness prospers amongst all generations. It is by this principle all mankind lives throughout all ages even though we cannot agree with it. Habakkuk is saying because judgment against these evil workers of corruption is not executed speedily, their hearts are the more fully set in continuing to do evil.

Habakkuk in these verses is saying:

Will these cruel and proud Chaldeans led by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his armies (the fishermen) empty their full net as fishermen do, when they have had a good catch and spread the net open again to take out the fish in order to throw it again, and catch more. Will these Chaldeans after they have conquered one nation and filled themselves with the spoil, carry it to Babylon and lay it up, and then proceed to fight against another kingdom and nation, and plunder it in like manner? Will they continue to endlessly repeat their cruel and merciless attacks and lay nations and kingdoms waste? Habakkuk is asking the LORD, "Will this cycle of filling the net, emptying the net and filling it again continue forever. "Will the wicked be allowed without interruption to enjoy the fruits of their violence?" How long will the enemy be allowed to gather people together like fish for prey and after he has taken them captive and rejoiced because he has filled his net with the choice treasures of the earth go out again when he has emptied his net to fill it again without mercy before there will be judgment on this cycle of evil.

CONCLUSION: Habakkuk is complaining because he sees the wicked around him prospering, he is basically saying, God fills the fishing nets of Israel's enemies so they have plenty to eat making them healthy and strong and they thank their god for making them prosperous and then continue on mercilessly killing and making war against other nations.

If it was today: Habakkuk would be saying, LORD why do you prosper governments, companies and businesses that lie, deceive, and oppress their employees so they can live in excessive luxury when their so called success encourages them to continue to lie, deceive and oppress their workers or go to war and bomb and bring to ruin cities and nations, killing the innocent to make even more money for themselves. After bringing these questions or thoughts to the LORD, Habakkuk then asks the LORD if He is going to continue to prosper the wicked, and allow them to carry on killing nations for their own selfish gain. The summary at the end of chapter two answers Habakkuk's questions.

FOOTNOTE

It is interesting to notice the bold personal relationship and confidence Habakkuk had with God. Many of us today might secretly wonder when we see the wicked prospering and in good health and good people we know and love suffering with terrible sicknesses and extreme hardships, why does God idly look at the wicked and remain silent especially when the wicked afflict suffering on the innocent? Why does the LORD who is Holy, just and good allow the wicked to bring harm upon the innocent and

allow the unrighteous to destroy others who only do-good? How many of us would be bold enough to stand before the immortal, invisible, Almighty and Holy God the creator of all things and source of all life and ask such questions. This is the relationship God wants all those who love His Son to have with Him. This is why He is given the title: "Heavenly Father." There is nothing more joyful to an earthly father who loves their children than to have their children sit upon their knee and express their inner most thoughts, doubts and confusions to them with honesty and without fear.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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