

# Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Habakkuk

## Historical Background

- As with Nahum, Habakkuk doesn't actually tell us anything about himself or when he prophesied. Thus, we know very little about him. What we do know is that Habakkuk likely ministered during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.). We know this because Habakkuk describes Judah as righteous, which was true during Josiah's reign, and because the Babylonian's had not yet made advances on Judah, which began around 605 B.C.

## Outline

- The simple and well organized structure of Habakkuk makes it very easy to follow. It goes something like this...
  1. First Cycle
    - 🕒 Habakkuk Laments
    - 🕒 God Responds
  2. Second Cycle
    - 🕒 Habakkuk Laments
    - 🕒 God Responds
  3. Habakkuk's Prayer

## The Message of Habakkuk

### 1. First Cycle

#### 🕒 Habakkuk Laments

- ❖ Habakkuk 1:2-4--*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? 3 Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4 So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.*
  - What is Habakkuk talking about? The fact that Habakkuk's ministry was during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) makes this an odd start to the book. Spiritually speaking, this was something of a golden age for the kingdom of Judah. Josiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 22:2). Under Josiah the whole nation made a covenant to walk with the Lord and keep his commandments (2 Kings 23:3). He destroyed the idols that former wicked kings had brought into the temple. He fired all the priests who lead idolatrous worship. He tore down the houses of cult prostitution. He tore down idolatrous high places all over Judah and even some in the fallen northern kingdom of Israel. He restored the observation of the passover which had not been observed since the time of the judges. Of Josiah, the book of 2 Kings says...
    - ❖ 2 Kings 23:25--*Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him*
  - So why then is Habakkuk worried? What is he so upset about? Because he sees the next verse of 2 Kings coming true...

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- ❖ 2 Kings 23:26-27--*Still the Lord did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. 27 And the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there*

- The next portion of Habakkuk will confirm for us that this indeed is Habakkuk's fear.

#### God Responds

- ❖ Habakkuk 1:5--*"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.*
  - This is a verse that is very often taken out of context. This verse is usually quoted when God is doing something that seems "too good to be true." However, the verses that follow show us that this isn't the case.
- ❖ Habakkuk 1:6-11--*For 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. 7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. 8 Their 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. 9 They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. 10 At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. 11 Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!*
  - God isn't doing something too good to be true. He is doing something that Habakkuk can't understand. God says he is raising up the wicked, evil Chaldeans (Babylonians) to conquer everything. To accomplish this, he has made them "swifter than leopards" and "more fierce than the evening wolves." Why in the world would he do this? Why would he cause righteous Judah (yes, they were actually being righteous for once) to fall to the wicked Chaldeans (Babylonians)? Why is this God's plan? How could this possibly be a good thing?
  - It is in this that we first begin to see Jesus in Habakkuk. Just as God ordained that righteous Judah to be destroyed by the Babylonians, the New Testament teaches us that..
    - ❖ Acts 2:23--*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men*

## 2. Second Cycle

#### Habakkuk Laments (again)

- ❖ Habakkuk 1:12-2:1--*Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. 13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? 14 You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. 15 He 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. 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. 17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?*
  - A few things to see here...

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- (1) Habakkuk pleads with God for an explanation. He says, “Aren’t you the eternal Holy God? I get that the sins of our past demand reproof, but why in the world must that reproof come from these evil men?”
- (2) Habakkuk is basically saying, “If there is any other way that this reproof can come, please Lord, send that instead.” I think most of can can easily see the that this prayer is something of a type of Jesus’s prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. In the garden he said to his disciples...

- ❖ Matthew 26:38--*he said to them, “ My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.*

- And like Habakkuk, he cried out to the Father...

- ❖ Matthew 26:39--*“ My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;”*

- ❖ Habakkuk 2:1--*I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*

- Habakkuk, like Jesus was alone. No one accompanied him as he desperately waited to hear back from the Lord. This again is very similar to Jesus in the garden who said to his sleepy disciples...

- ❖ Matthew 26:36--*“So, could you not watch with me one hour?”*

- So what then was God’s response?

### God Responds (again)

- ❖ Habakkuk 2:2--*And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end —it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. 4 “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

- two points to make here...

- (1) Just as wicked Babylon’s victory over Judah is only temporary, so it is with the wicked men who crucified Jesus. His defeat is not permanent. He rises from the dead, he sits at the right hand of the throne of God in infinite might and power, and will judge the wicked for their deeds. However, he deals out more than just death and judgment...

- (2) Habakkuk says, “the righteous shall live by his faith.” He grants faith. Faith that makes us able to endure any and all of life’s circumstances and faith that grants us eternal life...

- ❖ Romans 1:16-17--*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

- From here, he goes on to describe the terrible doom that awaits the Babylonians.

- ❖ Habakkuk 2:5-14--*“Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.” 6 Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “ Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long? — and loads himself with pledges!” 7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities*

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*and all who dwell in them. 9 “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm! 10 You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. 11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. 12 “Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary 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.*

- Verse 14 is another one of those verses that are often taken out of context. While it is absolutely true that God is glorified as Jesus saves people from all over the planet, the context here is not one of salvation. Verse 14 is referring to the fact that God will glorify himself by being the wrathful, righteous, judge of the wicked.
- ❖ Habakkuk 2:15--*“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink — you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness! 16 You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!*
  - These verses show us that when God comes to glorify himself all over the earth, it will not be glorious to them. They will be exposed for the wicked people that they are. The use of the term “uncircumcision” here is to emphasize that these are absolutely not God’s chosen people.
- ❖ Habakkuk 2:17-20--*The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them. 18 “What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! 19 Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. 20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*
  - The wicked idolater who constantly clamors over his idols trying to get them to speak will be utterly silenced in the presence of a terrifyingly holy, just, and wrathful God. They will one day hear the Lord Jesus say to them...
- ❖ Matthew 7:23--*‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.*
  - So how did God’s response affect Habakkuk? Was he comforted? Did he come to trust the Lord in the midst of his dire circumstances?

### 3. Habakkuk's Prayer

- ❖ Habakkuk 3:1-15--*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. 2 O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. 5 Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. 6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? 9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. 11 The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. 12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.*

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*13 You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah 14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.*

- In these first several verses of his prayer, we see Habakkuk basically saying, “I have read about how powerful you can be! To deliver your people from Pharaoh in Egypt you sent plagues, parted the Red Sea, and then caused the sea to swallow up Pharaoh’s warriors. You used Gideon and a mere 300 men to deliver your people from the massive host of Midianites and you did it with trumpets and shouts, not swords. Please do something like that again! Show wrath to your enemies and mercy to your people!”
- This portion of the prayer is doing more than recalling past victories. When Habakkuk says, “You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck, (3:13)” he is foreshadowing the victory of Christ over Satan. Habakkuk 3:13 is promising the fulfillment of Genesis 3 when God said to the serpent Satan...
  - ❖ Genesis 3:15--*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*
- ❖ Habakkuk 3:16--*I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me.*
  - Here, Habakkuk admits that the very thought of what he is asking God to do terrifies him, as well it should. In fact, the power of God and his terrible wrath ought to terrify each and every one of us. Who among us is not guilty? Who among us can say that we have not sinned?
    - ❖ 1 John 1:8--*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
  - Thus each and everyone of us deserves the furious wrath that Habakkuk is speaking of and praying for. Because of this, we too ought to be a bit weak in the knees, a bit “rotten in the bones.” For it is only by grace that we escape this doom. If Jesus hadn’t gotten on his knees in the garden of Gethsemane and went to the cross to bear God’s wrath for your sins and mine, the very power that saves us in love would destroy us in justice and furious wrath.
  - All that said, fear is not how Habakkuk chooses to end this prayer. He will end his prayer with faith...
- ❖ Habakkuk 3:16-19--*Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster:with stringed instruments.*
  - Habakkuk has been affected. Something has changed the way he thinks. He is no longer fretting. He is no longer worrying. He is no longer frustratedly trying to figure out what God is doing. He has peace even in the most dire of circumstances, but how? Because the focus of his gaze is no longer on circumstance but on the one who ordains all circumstances. His happiness was once dependent on circumstances, now it is dependent on knowing the Lord.
  - This reality is exactly what Jesus came and died to accomplish for his people. That we would be a people who can say with the Apostle Paul...

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- ❖ Romans 8:18--*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*
- ❖ Philippians 3:7-11--*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*