



**How Long, Lord?
An Extended Conversation With God
Habakkuk 1**

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Habakkuk is a man with questions. His primary question, which God will answer in this book, “Why don’t you do something about the sin going on today?” Habakkuk hated sin, so does God.

That sounds like a familiar question, one I get at least once a week or more. Lots of folks today feel just like Habakkuk felt. “Why doesn’t God do something? Why doesn’t He stop the violence, injustice and suffering?”

Here is the thing, as we spend time in the Word and learn from the Lord, we discover He has answered that question in the past.

Many do not like the answer. The answer was not one that Habakkuk wanted to hear. “God answered the question for Habakkuk by informing him that He was preparing a nation, Babylon, to punish Judah and to take her into captivity—unless she changed her ways.” (McGee 1997, 835)

Time out! Wait just a minute! Really, Babylon?

And now you see the conundrum we hit as we study this book.



We have already seen, thanks to Amos, that Israel, the northern kingdom, had a serious sin problem. God used the Assyrian Empire to solve the problem for them and thanks to Jonah and Nahum, we know just how wonderful those folks were.

So now we come to Habakkuk, speaking about Judah in the south, and he has questions, and he gets answers. Be careful what you wish for.

Habakkuk is important to us for other reasons as well. This book is the source of a major New Testament doctrine.

Anyone who tells you that the Old Testament is past its prime and doesn't hold anything for the New Testament believer, is someone who has not spent enough time studying God's Word. We have already seen how much the Minor Prophets are in the room today by what they have to say. And now, doctrine. One which is primary for New Testament believers, is sourced from Habakkuk. This doctrine is echoed in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews.

The verse to memorize, one that severely impacted Martin Luther leading to his October 31st, 1517, Wittenberg door performance is this.

Habakkuk 2:4

"Behold, as for the impudent one, His soul is not right within him; **But the righteous one will live by his faith.**" (NASB 2020)

"The Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther was influenced by the Book of Habakkuk. Luther's discovery of the biblical doctrine that the just shall live by faith came from his study of the apostle Paul's beliefs in the Books of Romans and Galatians. But Paul's famous declaration, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17), is a direct quotation from Habakkuk 2:4. Thus, in this brief prophetic book, we find the seeds of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (Youngblood, et al. 1995)

What do we know about the man Habakkuk?

His name means "to embrace." Luther thus explained the name of the prophet: "Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another, takes him into his arms. He embraces his people, and takes them to his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God wills, it shall soon be better." (Feinberg 1990, 205)

Habakkuk hated sin; thus, he has the questions.

We know he is a prophet. We also know that from the last verse in chapter 3, he was a worship leader from one of the Levitical families.

Other than that, we don't know anything more about the man.

Yes, there are a lot of really interesting conjectures, but that is all they are.

All that can be gathered with any certainty from his own writings is that he prophesied before the arrival of the Chaldeans in Palestine, i.e., before the victory gained by Nebuchadnezzar over Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 46:2), since he announces the bringing up of this people to execute judgment upon Judah as something still in the future (Hab. 1:5ff.). (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 388)

This is a single prophecy, and Habakkuk tells us up front, he sees the coming judgment on Judah and Babylon. This is from God direct. It is something he has seen and heard.



For us today, Habakkuk is a great book to study, especially since we live at the end of the end of the age and find ourselves wondering “where is God” as the culture around us melts down.

He is still there.

Minor Prophets

- Hosea – Israel 748 – 686 BC
- Joel – Judah 835 – 796 BC
- Amos – Israel 786 – 746 BC
- Obadiah – Edom 848 – 841 BC
- Jonah – Assyria 771 – 754 BC
- Micah – Judah 750 – 686 BC
- Nahum – Assyria 661 BC
- **Habakkuk – Judah 625 – 597 BC**
- Zephaniah – Judah 640 – 608 BC
- Haggai – Judah 520 BC
- Zechariah – Judah 520 – 480 BC
- Malachi – Judah 455 – 432 BC

Babylon is the invader of Judah the Lord announces in chapter 1, anticipating conquest starting in 605. The fact that God’s preparation of Babylon to be His instrument would be hard for Judeans to believe (1:5) is suggestive. The date is before the northern power had shown signs of real threat to disturb Israel. (Rosscup 2008, 1379)

As Habakkuk begins his ministry, Josiah is on the throne. He is about to witness revival; he will also suffer the tragedy of a good King being cut down in his prime and the beginning of the downfall of Judah, just as he had already seen earlier in his life.

He will indeed see the transition of his culture from one which appears to be Godly, to one which is decidedly not. In fact, he will sound a lot like some believers in our culture today, who also wonder what happened to the “Godly culture” of the past. Hint, it never really was.

Most Old Testament prophets proclaimed divine judgment. Habakkuk pleaded for divine judgment. (Blue 1985, 1505)

We find that today, there is a similar downward leaning problem brought on by cultural transition, even with those who say they are born again. A recent survey conducted by George Barna compared data pre and post pandemic. There is only a 3-year spread in the data.

First, the percentage of born-again adults who believe that they have a unique, God-given calling or purpose for their life was sliced nearly in half, from 88% to 46%. The second major reorientation was a 35-point swing regarding born-again individuals claiming that they are deeply committed to practicing their religious faith. The proportion dropped from a very robust 85% in 2020 to merely half of the group (50%) in 2023. Interestingly, the faith commitment of non-born-again adults showed little change during the same period. (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #3: How the Faith of Americans Has Shifted Since the Start of the Pandemic 2023)

I never thought we would see the day that those who say they are born again, having trusted Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, would say this.

The majority of born-again believers here in this nation no longer believe that there is any such thing as a calling of God or leading of God or even a God given purpose. God does not call a person into anything.



And a little more than half of all believers are committed to even doing what the Bible says. Most born again believers no longer look like or act like Christians. “In fact, the first national study of Americans’ worldview in the post-lockdown era found that the incidence of biblical worldview declined to a mere 4%—down one-third from the 6% recorded just months before the pandemic started in 2020.” (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2023 Release #1: Incidence of Biblical Worldview Shows Significant Change Since the Start of the Pandemic 2023)

Jesus talked about this as He in a parable on prayer and discouragement, kinda like where Habakkuk was.

Luke 18:1–8

“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. **Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”**” (ESV)

Romans 10:17

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (ESV)

Is that the problem? A church that has departed from teaching and preaching the Word? If you do not know what God’s Word says, then what is the guidepost for you.

I wonder if that is what took place with the death of King Josiah. It was no longer politically correct to follow YAHWEH, in fact, the new King, introduced after the death of King Josiah by Pharaoh Neco who defeated him in battle, was King Jehoiakim.

2 Chronicles 36:5

“Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.” (ESV)

Habakkuk lived through that. As a Prophet, he was one who also stood before the Divine Counsel.

Habakkuk’s status in the divine assembly is similar to Isaiah’s. He sees, hears, and takes part. Compare Jer 23:18 with the verbs “stand,” “see,” and “hear,” the same as in Hab 2:1; 3:2, 16. Then, when a decision has been reached, and declared as a divine decree, it is recorded “on the tablets” and the messenger runs to proclaim it (2:2). (Anderson 2008, 95)

Habakkuk loves the Lord but has the same view as YAHWEH concerning sin. He will learn what faith is and makes the ultimate statement about that which winds up being quoted in Romans 1:7, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38.

The theme of Habakkuk is simple, YAHWEH’s judgements are righteous, have faith in YAHWEH. Initially, Habakkuk questions that, but after learning that Babylon will be judged too, he moves to worship in chapter 3.

Prevalent sins of his people sorely disturb him, and God’s silence baffles him. Intense wickedness fostered by Manasseh and Amon in the preceding half century had seized the will of the people, and they continued their poison in Josiah’s kingship. Judah was tottering on the verge of God’s judgment about which the prophets had warned (Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, etc.). (Rosscup 2008, 1379)



The outline, just as we saw with Nahum, is relatively short.

- Chapter 1 and 2 – Dialogue with the Lord. Complaints and answers.
- Chapter 3 – The confidence in the Lord.

Habakkuk 1:1–4

“The pronouncement which Habakkuk the prophet saw: How long, LORD, have I called for help, And You do not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see disaster, And make me look at destitution? Yes, devastation and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the Law is ignored, And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out confused.” (NASB 2020)

When you read this in the NLT, you begin to wonder if Habakkuk is writing about our culture today.

Habakkuk 1:1–4

“This is the message that the prophet Habakkuk received in a vision. How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! “Violence is everywhere!” I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted.” (NLT)

We have been caught up in the myth that only what happens today is important. Far from it.

This is a topic that King Solomon spent time writing about. Solomon “explains why what appears novel to us is really not new but a repeat of something old. Old things seem new to us because we have forgotten or are ignorant of them...But the verse does more than depress us with our ignorance of the past in the present. It reminds us that we should not expect anything different in the future.” (Longman 1998, 75)

Ecclesiastes 1:9–11

“History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don’t remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.” (NLT)

This is why the minor prophets, writing about conditions thousands of years ago, sound so contemporary. The topic, mankind, remains just as sinful and corrupt as ever. There has truly been no change.

Jeremiah 17:9

“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?” (NLT)

YAHWEH knows and since Habakkuk has the heart of YAHWEH, he does too. His observations of his culture there in Judah, running from the heady days of revival under King Josiah to the return of the idolatry of King Manasseh via King Jehoiakim, has impacted him. Just as we have been impacted with the disaffection of our culture over the past few years.

In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul laments the sinful condition of some of the flock there in Corinth. He is seeking repentance from them but says this at the end of the book.

1 Corinthians 16:21–24



“The greeting is in my own hand—that of Paul. If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.” (NASB 2020)

When he uses the word Maranatha (Μαράνα), he is taking the Aramiac word for “our Lord” but then adds to it μαρανα θα, the last word is come. Your translation may actually say “our Lord come.”

Just as Habakkuk reflected his concern over the sins of his people, Paul is also concerned over the sins of some who have moved into the church and his thought reflects ours, come quickly Lord, how long can you let this go on?

Even Jesus reflects this thought as He reassures the church at Philadelphia struggling to remain faithful in a lost world.

Revelation 3:11

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” (NKJV)
Just as Jesus tells His people to remain faithful, so to Habakkuk will learn the same.

Habakkuk 1:2

“How long, LORD, have I called for help, And You do not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save.” (NASB 2020)

Habakkuk feels like he is all alone as he watches the downward spiral of Judah. He is talking to the Lord about it, obviously, since he says that his constant prayer is for help. He is not the first though.

Exodus 16:28

“And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?” (ESV)

Back in Exodus, it was the Lord asking His own people that same question, “how long.” The Lord asks that question over and over. Jesus asked the same question centering again on a lack of faith.

Matthew 17:16–17

“And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” (ESV)

When Habakkuk questions, he is reflecting to YAHWEH that he has lost his patience with the sinful condition of the people, why can't God see that and deal with it?

By the way, when we pray, are we this honest with the Lord? Do we let Him know about the frustration we have over His seemingly slowness in acting? “It can be God-honoring for a spiritual person concerned for God's will to ask point-blank questions, not beat around the bush vaguely, or impugn His righteousness or compassion.” (Rosscup 2008, 1380)

Habakkuk loves the Lord and is jealous for His name. Because of that, he prays about the sin he sees and asks the Lord to do something about it. When was the last time we prayed about the condition of our culture and asked the Lord to do something, to use us to make an impact by sharing Him with those around us.

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (ESV)

But Lord, when?



The questioning from Habakkuk has to do with the presence of evil and God's justice. "This is known as the task of theodicy. The word theodicy is a linguistic conjoining of the Greek words Theos, meaning simply God, and diké, meaning justice. A theodicy, then, is an attempt to explain the justice of God in the face of evil: How can the two cohere philosophically and theologically?" (Murphy 2006, 170)

Habakkuk 1:3

"Why do You make me see disaster, And make me look at destitution? Yes, devastation and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises." (NASB 2020)

Habakkuk takes this personal. He sees the reappearance of idols on the street corners, he has seen the massive taxation imposed by the King and the resulting poverty as those unable to pay sell themselves into slavery.

The Aramaic Bible puts a bit more perspective on this for us.

Habakkuk 1:3

"Why do I see oppressors and look upon those who practise vain deceit? And before me are plunderers and violent men who grow strong by contentiousness and haughtiness." (Cathcart, Maher and McNamara 1990, Hab 1:3)

He continues his questions. Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do I have to see the violence and oppression taking place everyday? He is watching a people who no longer want to have Shalom, but are now involved in moral evil and the disruption of relationships, the opposite of Shalom, violence.

He even reflects that there are those who simply love to argue. What we have here is most likely the first comments in the Bible of talk show hosts and cyberbullies. Not really, but the increase of those who argue simply because they can, is a reflection of the culture's need for Jesus.

There are those who, like Habakkuk, see what is going on and are still faithful, but the numbers are few and they feel, just like he does, powerless. The only thing that can change this is prayer so that is what Habakkuk has been doing, nonstop.

Habakkuk here typifies the faithful person who has to live in the world as it is and who has grown weary with the world's ways of wickedness. When he looks about him, he sees those on every hand who do not care a whit for God's will—those who take the word of God and twist it to their own purposes; those who openly break every code of decency and morality and yet who justify their ways; those who seek their own selfish ends and who stamp their self-seeking on a whole generation; those who violate and cheat and deceive and yet who are honored in society's eyes. (Achte-meier 1986, 36)

This is a behavior that we see taking place all around us today. Those who seem to be the most strident in the cries are lauded by the media as being activists. Isaiah though had a different view.

Isaiah 5:20

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (NKJV)

Our culture is running full speed in the wrong direction, just like Judah.

Rescue will not come by mere politics. We do not need a political movement. We need a theological protest. True Christianity and true gospel preaching depend on a firm commitment to the authority of Scripture. That is why, since the time of the Enlightenment, the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture have been under constant attack. (Mohler Jr. 2020, 13)



In verse 4, just as we see happening around us today, Habakkuk saw the same.

Habakkuk 1:4

“Therefore the Law is ignored, And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out confused.” (NASB 2020)

God’s word was ignored, just like it is today. Josiah’s revival kicked off because someone found the Torah in the Temple and then read it, discovering that what it said was not being followed. We need the same discovery today.

We are confused because we, the church as a whole, walked away from the primacy of God’s word and chased after other things.

When God’s law is abandoned, the result is chaos. Justice is not upheld, and it appears that the the wicked win. This is confusing to many and was confusing to Habakkuk. Thus, questions. The righteous in every age ask similar questions. One of the helpful lessons to be learned from Habakkuk is that God does know what is happening. He is not oblivious to wickedness in high places. In his time and in his way the Lord brings judgment on those who oppress the weak. Kenneth L. Barker, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, vol. 20, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 299.

Habakkuk asks God why as he prays, but he doesn’t suggest any solution. He knows who he is talking to, and that God can supply solutions way beyond his imagination. As we have seen in the prophets up to this point, the answer to why, many times, is simply let those who are sowing sin and evil, simply get what comes along with that. Let them reap what they sowed.

Paul points that out in Romans 1.

It is no surprise that the apostle Paul and others used Habakkuk to reflect on the power of God in the face of Torah’s incapacity. If Habakkuk’s complaint about God’s passivity is understood as a complaint about the lack of God’s anger in the face of wrongdoing, Paul’s answer at the beginning of his letter to the Romans seems to be that God’s wrath is evident precisely in his lack of intervention, in his handing over of humanity to its own devices. This relates to the answer that unfolds in Hab 2. The punishment of sin is experiencing sin and its consequences. (Renz 2021, 230)

Habakkuk has completed his first prayer. He feels as if God has not responded to his prayers. God should be the first to act, or so thinks Habakkuk as he views through mortal eyes.

He is jealous for God. Why no answer to his prayers?

God always answers prayer, yes, no or wait. I hate the last answer. Waiting is not fun. Then there are the yes answers, and we struggle with how that was done. We wanted a yes done this way, not the way the Lord did it. When I needed a job, I claimed the promise that God would take care of our need, thus He would take care of the job.

He did, He had me recalled to active duty in the Air Force and shipped off to Kuwait. That was not anywhere in my prayer.

Did He answer and keep His promises? Absolutely, just not the way I wanted it. He had things to teach me that being recalled was the only way to do it.

God responds to Habakkuk. He is doing something.



Habakkuk 1:5–11

““Look among the nations! Watch! Be horrified! Be frightened speechless! For I am accomplishing a work in your days— You would not believe it even if you were told! For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That grim and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth, To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrifying and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves. Their horses are faster than leopards, And quicker than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen charge along, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour. All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They gather captives like sand. They make fun of kings, And dignitaries are an object of laughter to them. They laugh at every fortress, Then heap up dirt and capture it. Then they fly along like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.”” (NASB 2020)

God loves us. He loves Habakkuk and He loves the people of Judah, even though they have wandered a long way from where they should be. Because of His love, He will prepare His people for the answer.

God starts off in His answer with four imperatives, commands.

- Look
- Watch
- Be horrified
- Be frightened

And the answer requires Habakkuk to look outside of Judah to the nations. That is the first imperative, look among the nations.

When he looks, he then must watch and what he sees will horrify and frighten him.

God’s answer would not be what Habakkuk was expecting when he cried out to God in prayer. Is this not sometimes the case for us too? God may not answer our prayers as we expect! His plans are often bigger than ours. (Pakula 2014, 74)

God was going to deal with the sin problem in Judah, but He was not going to do so from anything internal. This time it isn’t going to be a new King.

God was going to do the unexpected, He was going to use a gentile nation to do His work for Him. He tells Habakkuk that the work He is accomplishing, a work which must be watched because it is a horrifying and frightening solution for the faithful who are praying, is unbelievable. His work is unexpected. His work is imminent, it will happen in your days. The rise of Babylon is happening as we speak.

The first question, “how long,” is being answered. Habakkuk asked why does he have to look, and God says in return, look at the nations.

His answer to us would be the same. Look up. Turn your eyes away from the troubles you are seeing locally, and see what it is that God is doing globally. “Like us, the prophet had become preoccupied, if not obsessed, with his own situation. His horizons had narrowed to the limits of his own vision and experience. He could not lift himself above the daily events of his particular circumstances. Because God seemed to be inactive, indeed absent, he was becoming sucked into a downward spiral of doubt and despair.” (Prior 1988, 212)

Habakkuk 1:6



“For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That grim and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth, To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs.” (NASB 2020)

Surprise, I am raising up the Chaldeans. You know, that world power that defeated Assyria, yep, those guys. The same nation that defeated the power of Egypt at Carchemish.

YAHWEH lets Habakkuk know that the Babylonians have a reputation that was earned from their conquest of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire. But what sealed the deal in terms of their reputation was the follow-up to the initial action against Egypt.

“Up until 605 B.C., the Babylonian accounts of the campaigns against Assyria and its Egyptian ally do not impress one with Babylonian “impetuousness” or “daring,” but when Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish, he immediately pursued them to Hamat, a distance of slightly more than 150 miles, in order to follow up the first victory with another crushing defeat; then, learning of Nabopolassar’s death, Nebuchadnezzar, with only a small bodyguard, quickly returned to Babylon to secure his succession. Those actions were both impetuous and daring.” (Roberts 1991, 96)

Yes, God intends to use Babylon to achieve His purposes. But that doesn’t mean He approves of their methods.

Habakkuk 1:6b

“...Who march throughout the earth, To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs.” (NASB 2020)

Babylon is not in it for any altruistic reasons, they are in it for power, money and territory. Really, no different than the Assyrians. They take whatever they want.

God is going to use this people but make no mistake, they do not worship YAHWEH.

Habakkuk 1:7

“They are terrifying and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves.” (NASB 2020)

Babylon has proven themselves on the battlefield and have demonstrated the capability to take whatever they want to whenever they want to.

They look to no one to provide them the authority to do what they do. They do not refer to any so-called justice system either. The justice and authority exercise by Babylon comes from themselves.

Judah had rejected the law. We saw that in verse 4, so who attacks them, a nation that is lawless. “How ironic that lawless Judah should be confronted with a real taste of what it meant to be without the law of God or any vestige of its effects in society!” (Kaiser and Ogilvie 1992, 157)

Habakkuk 1:8

“Their horses are faster than leopards, And quicker than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen charge along, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.” (NASB 2020)

Continuing with His discussion of the effectiveness of the Babylonian military, the Lord talks about their cavalry. This is a trained and battle-hardened force. To make His point, YAHWEH compares them to three different animals, all unclean. That should provide the reader a hint.

This is a force known for its speed.

Wolves work together in a pack so what we are seeing here is not only do they have the speed, but they operate as a unit. They all work together to attack and destroy their prey, and they enjoy their work. Due



to their training and how they operate as a unit, they also have the capability of traveling long distances and then still engaging the enemy. Like swooping down as suddenly and violently as a bird of prey.

Habakkuk 1:9

“All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They gather captives like sand.” (NASB 2020)

Every member of the Babylonian cavalry, as a unit or individually, have the same goal. They all come for violence. They like what they do as professional soldiers. It isn't just duty as far as they are concerned. Because of this reputation, it is wiser to surrender to them, which apparently many have done. “They gather captives like sand.”

Habakkuk 1:10–11

“They make fun of kings, And dignitaries are an object of laughter to them. They laugh at every fortress, Then heap up dirt and capture it. Then they fly along like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.” (NASB 2020)

This was going to be a lesson learned the hard way by King Zedekiah of Judah. They had no problem parading Kings around as captives. This is something they learned as vassals of Assyria and they learned well. King Manasseh was subjected to this behavior, and it led him to repentance (2 Chronicles 33:11 – 13).

2 Kings 25:4–7

“The enemy broke through the city walls, and all the soldiers tried to escape. They left the city during the night. They went through the gate between the two walls, which is near the king's garden. (The Babylonians were all around the city.) Then they headed for the rift valley. But the Babylonian army chased after the king. They caught up with him in the rift valley plains of Jericho, and his entire army deserted him. They captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence on him. Zedekiah's sons were executed while Zedekiah was forced to watch. The king of Babylon then had Zedekiah's eyes put out, bound him in bronze chains, and carried him off to Babylon.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Not only did Babylon scoff at the Kings they conquered, those fortified cities which they attacked, they laughed at as well. That makes sense, they took Nineveh after all and that was the ultimate fortified city. Babylon perfected the use of siege ramps.

In verse 11 YAHWEH lets Habakkuk know that Babylon will sweep through the entire region just like the wind. Yes, God is going to use them, but they will be held accountable for what they do by God.

Part of the reason would be idolatry.

Habakkuk 1:11

“Then they fly along like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.” (NASB 2020)

They had ultimate confidence in their military might, to the point that they worshipped their military might. This is reflected in a statement made by Nebuchadnezzar; one he had been warned about and for which he was humbled by God.

Daniel 4:28–32

“All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, **“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”** While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has



departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” (NKJV)
Unfortunately, no lessons were learned from this. A common practice today is for politicians to take credit for virtually everything and anything while blaming the other party or their opponent for causing all the problems of the world.

God has now given Habakkuk the good news and the bad news. Yes, your prayer is being answered, but I will use another nation to answer it. Then I will hold that nation accountable just like I held Judah accountable. He said “but they will be held guilty.”

Habakkuk responds and has more questions.

Habakkuk 1:12–17

“Are You not from time everlasting, LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, LORD, have appointed them to deliver judgment; And You, O Rock, have destined them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look at evil, And You cannot look at harm favorably. Why do You look favorably At those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they? Why have You made people like the fish of the sea, Like crawling things that have no ruler over them? The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are joyful. 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. Will they therefore empty their net, And continually slay nations without sparing?” (NASB 2020)

God has told Habakkuk that He intends to use Babylon to discipline the people of Judah for their sin. He used Assyria to discipline Israel and then Assyria was conquered by Babylon. They were judged for their own sins and disappeared.

Now, God has told Habakkuk that He will use a gentile nation, one more wicked than Judah, to discipline Judah? How can a Holy God use a sinful nation to achieve His purposes?

If God did that then, does He still do that today?

Let's see,

- Assyria was used to discipline Israel and Judah
- Babylon was used to judge Assyria
- Babylon to be used to discipline Judah
- The Medes and the Persians will embarrass and discipline Babylon

Would God do that today? What took place in Afghanistan?

Why do we think we are exempt or that God has changed the way He deals with nations.

Habakkuk worships and begins his question with an acknowledgment of who he understands God to be. He is eternal. He is YAHWEH, He is God, He is the Holy One. You are protecting us even as you plan to discipline us, we will not be wiped out, there will be a remnant.

But Lord, you appointed Babylon to deliver judgement? Again, let's look at the NLT.

Habakkuk 1:12–17

“O LORD my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal— surely you do not plan to wipe us out? O LORD, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins. But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they? Are we only fish to be caught and killed? Are we only sea creatures that have no leader? Must we be strung up on their hooks and caught in their nets



while they rejoice and celebrate? Then they will worship their nets and burn incense in front of them. "These nets are the gods who have made us rich!" they will claim. Will you let them get away with this forever? Will they succeed forever in their heartless conquests?" (NLT)

I like Habakkuk because he asks questions that I have asked in the past. He asks the why question and gets an answer that touches on the fact that God is God, and we aren't. This is all leading up to what the Lord will tell him as part of the answer to the second question.

Habakkuk 2:4

"Behold, as for the impudent one, His soul is not right within him; **But the righteous one will live by his faith.**" (, NASB 2020)

It would be like having a conversation with Abraham right after his name change. Father of a nation?

God wants us to see the future that is the now, as far as He is concerned. Like His greeting Gideon as a valiant warrior (Judges 6:11 – 12) while he is cowering in a ravine. He wants us to simply trust Him that He will fulfill the promises He has made and that we simply need to rely on Him.

It's okay to remind Him of those promises as we pray to Him. Habakkuk does that and He is also honest in His conversations with God. Trust me, it's okay to go directly to the Father with our requests. We do not need to beat around the bush before we get to the meat of the request.

The Online Campus goes live this weekend.

- 9:30
- 11:00
- 1:00
- 4:00

Links:

<https://www.calvarychapelmartincounty.org/online-campus>

<https://www.youtube.com/@CalvaryChapelMartinCounty/streams>

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