



Bible Study

Habakkuk

Habakkuk 1

In his prophecy, Habakkuk is concerned that God's holiness and justice are being ignored. Habakkuk wants injustice to be brought to an end and God reveals to him that a day of retribution is coming through the Babylonians. However, rather than Israel escaping punishment, the prophet is committed to declaring the character of God.

Today, we see a number of regimes that are oppressive, particularly towards God's people and we also witness diseases appearing to run rampant across the earth but we must hold on to the reality that God is in charge and He will be true to His character in the way that He deals with His people and with the nations.

Habakkuk's Burden

There is a real sense of Habakkuk and God having a discussion. Habakkuk has seen so much that is wrong and he is finding it difficult to understand God's apparent lack of intervention.

God's Declaration

God declares that He will intervene and that we could not fully understand what is in His plans. God will use a nation that is very sinful in themselves and they will execute God's judgement. Even today, it is very difficult to understand how God uses tyrants and dictators to fulfil His purposes.

God's Character

Habakkuk declares that God is eternal. He has always been there and will always be there. God is the Holy One. God's holiness means that He hates sin and He will judge it. He is entirely separate from sin but, nevertheless, He is a God of mercy and love. God will bring judgement and He will bring correction.

God's Sovereignty

God is at work among the nations and He is a God of intense purity. He knows the nature of man. He knows our frailty and all of our limitations. A time will come, when all people will be caught up in God's judgement. God does not intervene every time He sees something evil is done but He does have a record of every action we ever make and, in particular, He will deal with those who are worshipping other gods!

Habakkuk's Faith

Habakkuk questions how God can use evil people for His purposes but he declares that they will not die, the nation will not be wiped out and that, in time, they will see God's purposes fulfilled!

Points to Consider:

1. How troubled are we about unrighteousness and God appearing to do nothing about it?
2. What are the key descriptions of God's character given to us by Habakkuk?
3. What other examples can we find in scripture of God using pagans to fulfil His purposes for His people?
4. How can we remain in faith when we witness so many things going wrong?
5. How do we show God's character, balancing judgement and mercy, to a sinful world?

Habakkuk 2

Habakkuk continues to share the burden that God has placed upon his heart. He clearly is a servant of God who waits upon the Lord and then delivers what God has put into his heart.

Standing On Watch

Habakkuk has chosen to use the picture of a watch-tower and as he stands upon this tower he is looking for God to speak to him. Jesus told us to watch and pray and we know that many great biblical characters were waiting, not just to hear but also to receive a picture - a vision of what God was going to do.

The Vision

The Lord speaks to Habakkuk and tells him to write down the vision and make it so clear that the hearer will want to run and share it with others. Some visions are for us personally and some visions need to be proclaimed. Habakkuk is told that this vision is to be shared widely, to make everyone very aware that it will be fulfilled, according to God's timing. Habakkuk hears these words, "the righteous shall live by faith". People who live by following their own selfish desires will ultimately face God's wrath but, as His servants, we must heed the warning, put our trust in God and keep our eyes upon the Lord.

The Self-Exalted Man

Scripture says that such people are not upright, they do not live by faith, they drink too much wine, they are proud, they are restless and they are greedy. They are under the wrath of God and their actions will lead to shame, disgrace and hell. Clearly this is very serious. Hell is a place of torment, it is a place of separation from God and it is a place that was made for the devil and all those who do not love God.

The Promise of God

Despite these self-centred, proud and arrogant people, Habakkuk declares that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. This verse is in such contrast to the misery and sadness that is pictured before this truth is stated. The hope that a day will come when, instead of sin, rebellion and darkness, the earth will be filled with the glory of God. We have a glimpse of this, when Jesus is born at Bethlehem and the sky is filled with the angels proclaiming the glory of the Lord. We also see something of this, when Jesus is transfigured on the mountain and we see it when John has his vision of Jesus in the book of Revelation. Habakkuk is looking forward to a day when there will not be a fleeting glimpse of God's glory but the fullness of His glory will be seen everywhere!

Judgement

Although the day of the glory of God is coming, we know that while we wait, there will be drunkenness, violence and idolatry. Sadly, for those who reject God, that day will be a day of judgement.

God's Holy Temple

The remaining verses of this chapter speak against those who create idols, spread lies and indulge themselves in the deception that idolatry brings. But the Lord is in His holy temple and God's people are encouraged to stand silently before Him. The temple of God is for God and for God alone and we must give Him His proper place. Even if we only seem to be few in number, we should not be discouraged but give God the respect and honour that He deserves.

Points to Consider:

1. How much are we attentive to what God wants to say, as we wait upon God and watch what is happening in our world?
2. Do you treasure what God has revealed to you and are you willing to share a vision with others when it is right to do so?
3. We need to heed the warnings about the self-exalted man. How can we avoid these characteristics taking root in our lives?
4. Verses 4, 14 and 20 contain three jewels which shine brightly in contrast to the darkness and sin in the world. Meditate on these. How can we be sure that we are living by faith and not according to our own will?
5. Do we spend sufficient time waiting upon God before we take action?

Habakkuk 3

This chapter is a prayer which the Prophet is lifting to God. He knows that God's judgement is inevitable and he fears the Lord but he also trusts God and prays that He will revive His work in the world and show mercy. He speaks of the glory of God, the wrath of God and the power of God over all creation but he also speaks of hope for God's people and the joy that can be found by those who seek God.

Lord, Revive Your Work

We know that there are times in history when there has been revival. Times when wonderful things that God has done in the past, He chooses to do again. It is like a fire that has become dying embers and we call upon God to fan it back into life. Habakkuk does not question God's right to be angry with sin but he is also aware that God is a God of mercy and so, he seeks for to God to be merciful.

God's Glory

Habakkuk has a vision of the greatness of God, a God of power and a God who is full of light. God's greatness is seen in the word picture which Habakkuk paints of creation in turmoil. The language that Habakkuk uses, shows us that, however majestic and powerful rivers and mountains can be, the One who made them is far greater.

The Judgement of God

In His holiness, God brings judgement upon the earth. Yet, Habakkuk speaks about salvation in the midst of judgement. He speaks of salvation for the anointed one and the crushing of the wicked one. This reminds us of God's word in Genesis when Adam sinned and had to leave the garden of Eden. The Lord promised a Saviour, a Messiah, truly man because he is born of a woman and truly God because he is conceived by the Holy Spirit. God says that this deliverer will crush the head of the serpent, which signifies the complete defeat of Satan's destructive plans!

Hope and Joy for God's People

Despite the evil of this world facing the righteous judgement of God, Habakkuk finds joy in God his Saviour. He declares that, although crops may fail and there be no food to eat, he will still rejoice in God. Habakkuk knows that his strength comes from the Lord. When material things fail, God will still bless His people. Whatever is happening in our world, whatever trials and difficulties we face, we can find strength in our God. Habakkuk believes that God will help him to endure and overcome all difficulties. Having feet like a deer, illustrates our ability to move nimbly and safely in situations where other people will be in

serious difficulty. God's promise is not only that He will strengthen us but also that He will help us to pick a safe path through difficulty and hardship. Habakkuk understands this and his words at the end of this book are a joyful song of praise and worship to God!

Points to Consider:

1. Do we pray for revival? Do we seek for God to send a wave of blessing that will bring people to Christ?
2. How aware are we of God's power over creation? How does this help us to live in times of great trial?
3. God provides salvation for His people. How confident are we to present this hope of salvation to a suffering world?
4. Do we respond in times of trial with praise and rejoicing?
5. Are we looking to God to guide us, knowing that there is much danger all around us?