



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

• HABAKKUK 2 • 3/19/2023

MAIN POINT

The righteous can trust in God despite the presence of evil in the world because God will one day judge the wicked.

INTRODUCTION

Has there ever been in time in your life where you doubted or questioned God's goodness? What about your situation made it difficult to reconcile His character with your circumstances?

When faced with blatant evil, are you tempted more to doubt God's sovereignty (if He is truly in control) or God's goodness (if He is morally trustworthy with His plans and purposes)?

How can an all-powerful God allow evil if He is truly good? This is what theologians and philosophers call “the problem of evil,” and it’s not just an abstract problem for

intellectuals to ponder and debate. Rather, it is something that we all must come to terms with, no matter how philosophically inclined we are or what our religious faith might be. Ever since Genesis 3, the problem of evil has been an everyday problem for humanity. But what are we to make of God's purposes and plans in light of evil? This is an issue that the prophet Habakkuk encountered. In this study, we will see how Habakkuk's struggle to trust God in the face of present injustice and ongoing evil informs our own lives as this prophet learned to hope in God with assured confidence in His purposes.

UNDERSTANDING

READ HABAKKUK 1:12–2:20.

The structure to Habakkuk's oracle is simple. It is made up of two cycles—the first is Habakkuk lamenting and the second is God responding. The final portion (chapter 3) consists of Habakkuk offering prayer and praise to God. However, the earlier portions of the book show us how he reaches the point of becoming confident in God. The first lament concerns the social injustice that was taking place at the time among the people of Judah (1:2–4). God responds by relaying to Habakkuk His plans to raise up the Chaldeans (i.e. the Babylonians) in order to conquer the Israelites as a form of punishment for their corrupt and oppressive practices (1:5–11). This perplexes Habakkuk in that the Chaldeans are seemingly more evil and corrupt than the Israelites (1:13b); yet God is at work in bringing them to power over other nations. This prompts Habakkuk's second complaint in 1:12–2:1, which along with God's response in 2:2–20 will be the focus of our study.

READ HABAKKUK 1:12–2:1.

In light of the previous verses, why do you think that Habakkuk brings up God's eternal nature and holiness in verse 12 (especially in view of 1:11)?

According to verse 13, why does Habakkuk seem confused about God's plans to use the Chaldeans? What attribute of God seems to be creating problems for his thinking?

What kind of imagery does Habakkuk use to describe the Chaldeans' relationship with other nations in 1:14–17? What does this suggest about God's sovereignty over nations and world history in general (if time allows, see also Isa. 44:24–28; 46:9–10; Dan. 2:21)?

READ HABAKKUK 2:2–5.

When does 2:3 say this vision will be fulfilled? How does this verse speak to our need to trust God's timing in fulfilling His promises rather than to impose our expectations on His plans?

How is the faith of the righteous contrasted with the self-confidence of the Babylonians in 2:4?

Where is Habakkuk 2:4 quoted in the New Testament (see Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; cf. Heb. 10:38)?

What does the New Testament's use of Habakkuk 2:4 tell us about the nature of saving faith, the kind of faith the gospel requires?

READ HABAKKUK 2:6–20.

What does the set of five oracles against the Babylonians tell us about God's final plans for the wicked, regardless of how powerful they might become during the present time?

What does Habakkuk 2:14 tell us about Yahweh's ultimate purpose for the world (see also Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3; Rev. 11:15; cf. Gen. 12:2-3; Ex. 19:5-6)?

How does the judgment and destruction of earthly kingdoms factor into the fulfillment of this purpose?

Why does the condemnation of idol making and idol worship in 2:18-20 seem relevant to the context of Habakkuk? How does verse 20 contrast Yahweh with idols and in turn promote worship of Yahweh alone?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What can we learn from Habakkuk's recollection of God's timelessness and holy character in light of difficult circumstances (see 1:12)? Why must we never look at God's plans separately from His revealed character in Scripture?

What promises of God encourage you when you are going through a difficult time? What promises remind you of His good and trustworthy character?

How could the Book of Habakkuk be useful in explaining the place of evil in the world to a non-Christian? How can the book's teaching help us model

for others what it looks like to experience genuine struggle with a difficult reality while also maintaining a humble confidence in God?

In what ways does the Book of Habakkuk point us to Jesus and the gospel? Why must we as Christians never wrestle with “the problem of evil” without first connecting it to the gospel—God entering His creation and experiencing suffering as a human being to overcome evil?

PRAYER

Praise the God who is sovereign over your circumstances. Reaffirm your trust in the goodness of God. Tell Him you love Him and you trust that He is in control. Give any worries or concerns over to Him. List specific circumstances in your life which you entrust to Him. Finally, thank Jesus for dying to break the curse of sin and for His return that will seal God’s triumph over the whole world.

COMMENTARY

HABAKKUK 1:12–17

1:12 Habakkuk reasoned that since God is holy, He must be using Babylon as an implement of his judgment on Judah. All manuscripts literally read “we will not die” rather than You will not die, but HCSB follows a Jewish tradition that says “You” was original and that this verse is one of 18 places where the Hebrew Bible was deliberately changed by scribes. If so, the change the scribes made here aimed to avoid any hint of the unthinkable notion that God (“You”) could die.

1:13 Habakkuk complained that rewarding the more wicked in order to punish the less wicked seemed inconsistent with God's pure goodness. As bad as the Jews were, they were more righteous than the wicked Babylonian invaders.

1:14–16 Like fishermen who pull in a huge catch of fish from the sea and as a result begin worshiping their net, so Babylon captured hordes of people and thus worshiped its own military strength (cp. v. 11).

1:17 How could a just God allow Babylon's merciless slaughter of the nations, much less their triumph against His people Judah?

HABAKKUK 2:1–20

2:1 Habakkuk braced himself for God's response. Hebrew tokachath ("reproof, reprimand") is probably stronger than the word complaint suggests: The prophet had presumed to correct God. Alternatively, it may refer to God's reproof of Habakkuk: "[His] reproof of me."

2:2–3 God replied that the vision must be written down clearly for—in spite of Habakkuk's objections—the vision of the Babylonian invasion would come true.

2:4–5 The arrogant Babylonians were just as wicked as Habakkuk supposed. Yet verse 4b says righteous people such as Habakkuk must exercise faith in God's goodness despite His use of evil Babylon. This is similar to the answer Job received from God (Job 38–41). God does not have to explain Himself to humans. We must let God be God and trust in His goodness even when we find His ways difficult to understand. This verse conveys the central message of the book. The NT cites it to show how the Christian life from beginning to end is based on faith (Rm 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

2:6–8 Even though God used Babylon to punish Judah, Babylon would not go unpunished. Five woes in conjunction with taunt (or "proverb") are pronounced upon them. Babylon's plunder from the nations is like a debt from creditors that they must eventually repay.

2:9–14 Babylon built its house (empire; v. 9) with stolen stones and its rafters from stolen lumber. This involved the bloodshed and injustice of slave labor. God in His glory would make it all fuel for the fire when Persia toppled Babylon in 539 b.c.

2:15-17 Babylon's shameless perversity foisted upon its neighbors such as Lebanon (whose famous forests provided much of the stolen lumber of v. 11) would come back in the form of violence against itself. By degrading and humiliating conquered peoples, the invaders sought to break their will and render them incapable of further resistance.

2:18-20 Though the Babylonians attributed their strength to their god Marduk, their god was only a lifeless idol, a piece of wood or stone, but Yahweh lives and will have the last word. There is an allusion here (Wake up! ...Come alive!) to Egyptian and Mesopotamian rituals that were used to consecrate new idols. Called the "opening of the mouth," these rituals were supposed to prepare the idol for habitation by the god.