

HABAKKUK (Teacher's Edition)

- I. The Questions of Habakkuk 1:1--2:20
 - A. The First Question 1:1-4
 - B. God's First Reply 1:5-11
 - C. The Second Question of Habakkuk 1:12--2:1
 - D. God's Second Reply 2:2-20
- II. The Praise of Habakkuk 3
 - A. Habakkuk Prays for God's Mercy 3:1-2
 - B. Habakkuk Remembers God's Mercy 3:3-15
 - C. Habakkuk Trusts in God's Salvation 3:16-19

AUTHOR & WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

Nothing is known about the prophet Habakkuk except his name, which means, 'embrace' and that he probably was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The musical notation in 3:19 may indicate he was qualified to lead **in temple worship** as a member of the Levitical family. He was surely a sensitive poet as well as a **courageous spokesman** for God. His little book is a literary masterpiece that points people of all ages to **faith in God** and **His eternal purpose**. Since the book speaks of the coming destruction of Judah, it had to be written some time before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C. The most likely time for its composition is probably about **600 B.C.**

ABOUT THE BOOK, BASIC THEMES, & TRUTHS & APPLICATIONS-

This awesome, prophetic book of the Old Testament deals with the age-old problem of **evil and human suffering** and gives the account of a spiritual journey, telling of one man's pilgrimage from **whining and doubt to worship**. The difference between the beginning (1:1-4) and the end of the book (3:17-19) is striking. Habakkuk begins his book with a cry of woe. Injustice is rampant, the righteous are surrounded by the wicked, the law is powerless, and **God doesn't seem to care** about the plight of the righteous of His people. Men are in control, and evil ones at that. They act as one would expect men to act **without God's restraint**. God's reply brings little comfort to the prophet. He explains that the armies of Babylon are moving throughout the ancient world on a campaign of death and destruction. At the time when Habakkuk received this vision, the Babylonians had already defeated Assyria and Egypt. The implication is that Habakkuk's nation, Judah, will be the next to fall. He is shocked by this and pleads for mercy. He reminded God of His justice and holiness (1:12-13). God assures Habakkuk that the Babylonians will prevail not because they are righteous but because they are **temporary instruments** of judgment in His hands (2:4). Then he pronounces five burdens of woe against the Babylonians (2:6,9,12,15,19). God will not be mocked; the end of the Babylonians is as certain as the judgment they will bring on Judah. In all of this, God will **vindicate His righteous character**: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2:14).

After this assurance, Habakkuk breaks out with the beautiful psalm of praise because **his sights have been raised**. And he is no longer anxious over his circumstances. He has fixed his hope **on God**, for God does take interest in His creatures. He has followed a path we should all learn from: he has gone from **complaining to confidence**, from doubt to trust, **from man to God**, from the valley to the high hills. He has ultimately gone from **whining to wonderful worship!** If the heart of the gospel is transformation, the Book of Habakkuk demonstrates it. At the center of the change and at the center of the book is the clear credo of faith: “The just shall live by his faith” (2:4). By this faith, the prophet goes beyond just trust- it signifies **integrity, fidelity**, and steadfastness under all provocations. This statement of living by faith became, for **Martin Luther**, the watchword for **the Reformation**.

Ultimately, the book of Habakkuk is unlike all other prophetic books because it is not a prophecy! It is **several pages out of a personal devotional!** It reminds us of the importance of a **consistent time and place** of meeting with God- a time spent meditating on the Scriptures, praying and **listening** to what **the word of the Lord** to us may be. It reminds us that we should **write down those things He speaks** and hold fast to them, knowing they will come to pass. We should determine to respond to circumstances, no matter how devastating, by **praise and worship**, thanking God for **His faithfulness**, as Habakkuk did. This book proves we can **rise above our circumstances** and even rejoice in them, by focusing on God. Perhaps, for our generation, this teaches the greatest lesson: if you ask, “Why?” the answer will be found **in God**, and Him alone. Do not ask, “Why?” if you are only looking to blame someone.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD, KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER-

For me, there can be, because of our discussion above, only one key phrase: **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**. This becomes my key verse: **Habakkuk 2:4**. My key chapter reflects the **response** of the prophet to God’s answer to his question, his arrival from complaint to confidence: **Habakkuk 3**.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

Habakkuk 3:13 uses Hebrew terms that join the idea of salvation with the Lord’s anointed. This speaks of Jesus (“**salvation**”) Christ (“**the Anointed One**”). Also, the term “the just shall live by his faith” speaks of the gospel, that we will be saved and lived eternally by faith in Jesus.

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

The ministry of the prophet, the speaking of God to him and “revelation” (2:2) is all the working of the Spirit. Also, **2:4 is linked by Paul in Gal 3:11-14 to receiving the Holy Spirit through faith**.

A MESSAGE OUTLINE ON HABAKKUK

1) Habakkuk begins by whining (1:1-4)

- A) Why does he have to see evil?
- B) Why does God allow the evil and not judge it- does He condone it?
- C) Why does God put up with hypocritical, so-called believers?

2) God Reponds (1:5-11)

- A) God will judge half-hearted believers
- B) God will use unbelievers to judge them!

3) Habakkuk whines again (1:12-17)

- A) Though God's people are bad, unbelievers are worse, so don't do it, God!
- B) If the unbelievers succeed, people may think being an unbeliever is better than being a child of God
- C) If God uses unbelievers, it will validate them trusting in themselves (humanism).

Key moment (2:1): Habakkuk has enough Godliness inside himself to know that he may be speaking out of turn. He quiets himself to hear what God has to say about it- even if it is a rebuke.

4) God responds again (2:2-20)

- A) Success of unbelievers now is only short-lived: they will get their own
- B) **Key Statement:** During time of judgment, during time when all the good that God promises seems to not be going to happen, His people must just trust Him (2:4)! They must live by that trust or they will lose it!
- C) A series of woes: to the greedy (5-8)- success will not bring satisfaction; to the complacent (9-11)- they have a false sense of security; to the violent (12-14); to the shameless (15-17)- they may exalt in the shame of others, but they will be exposed to disgrace; to idolaters (18-20).

5) Key Point: Habakkuk responds with worship (3)!

Main points: This book shows us the journey from whining to worship. It teaches us that we can ask "Why?". But for the ungodly, "why" has no meaning except to assess blame. The godly ask it and find there answer on God and their trust grows stronger as they hear their God say, "Believe Me, I am trustworthy!"