

## **The Lord's Answer to Habakkuk**

Habakkuk 1:1 – 3:19

### **Introduction - Who is Habakkuk?**

Very little is known about Habakkuk except what is revealed in the book. The fact that he saw the buildup of the Chaldean/Babylonian Empire at the edge of his city and country indicates that he was living at the same time as Jeremiah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Obadiah in the Southern Kingdom. In addition, Daniel and Ezekiel were alive and will be taken to exile in Babylon in 606 BC.

### **When does the Lord speak to Habakkuk?**

The Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar overthrew the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC with the destruction of Nineveh. From there, Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to the task of overthrowing the Southern Kingdom which he accomplished in 606 BC. However, Nebuchadnezzar had to return several times to keep the Southern Kingdom under his domain until his decision to destroy the temple in 586 BC which took all hope away from the Israelite people. With all that in mind, we see that Habakkuk could have been delivered by the Lord as early as 612 BC or as late as 586 BC.

### **The Oracle**

Habakkuk 1:1

**Habakkuk 1:**<sup>1</sup> The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

In the Old Testament, an oracle was a speech in which God declared His will.<sup>1</sup> It usually occurred at a specific holy place; however, in Habakkuk it was a series of conversations between the prophet and God. Furthermore, Habakkuk was recording what he had seen with his own eyes. He saw the Chaldean army surrounding the territory and he cried out to God and He replied. Once he knew God was listening, Habakkuk pled his case. God's intended to show Habakkuk His long term plan; therefore, the struggle with the Chaldean army was just one part of the larger picture that the prophet was to write down.

### **Habakkuk's Cry**

Habakkuk 1:2-4

**Habakkuk 1:**<sup>2</sup> How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, "Violence!" Yet You do not save. <sup>3</sup> Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause *me* to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. <sup>4</sup> Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.

God was not answering the general prayers of the Southern Kingdom because their sin was worse than that which caused the Lord to send the Assyrians to overthrow the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, 116 years before.<sup>2</sup> Even Habakkuk had prayed in the past with no

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<sup>1</sup> As in 1 Kings 6:5; 8:6

answer from God. He saw the trouble coming his way and all sense of law and order was ignored. Habakkuk was crying desperately for God to stop the enemy, but Habakkuk was hopeless in his prayer, not expecting to have a reply from God. We can only wonder if he truly expected God to answer him.

## God Responds

Habakkuk 1:5-11

**Habakkuk 1:**<sup>5</sup> "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because *I am* doing something in your days— you would not believe if you were told. <sup>6</sup> "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. <sup>7</sup> "They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves. <sup>8</sup> "Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping *down* to devour. <sup>9</sup> "All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces *moves* forward. They collect captives like sand. <sup>10</sup> "They mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress and heap up rubble to capture it. <sup>11</sup> "Then they will sweep through *like* the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god."

God was well aware of the army coming against the Southern Kingdom. He had sent them to overthrow the kingdom and it was a great work in God's plan. He had raised the Chaldeans to power for the specific purpose of bringing Judah to an end. The Lord promised Judah she would be a kingdom as long as she remained faithful to Him, but she had long been unfaithful when the overthrow occurred.

The Chaldeans were a wicked people and God knew them well. In just a few words, He explained to Habakkuk the massive power He had endowed in the Chaldean army to the point that they were afraid of no one. Although God was sending the Chaldeans on His mission, He would punish them one day for trusting in their own created gods. God uses whomever He wishes to accomplish whatever He wishes in any way He wishes. He will use the ungodly for godly purposes and then punish them for their ungodliness.

## Habakkuk's Misconception

Habakkuk 1: 12 - 2: 1

**Habakkuk 1:**<sup>12</sup> Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct. <sup>13</sup> *Your* eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness *with favor*. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? <sup>14</sup> *Why* have You made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them? <sup>15</sup> *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 glad. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing? **Habakkuk 2:**<sup>1</sup> I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.

Habakkuk understood correctly that God had always existed and by this time, he understood that God had sent the terrible Chaldeans to afflict Habakkuk's people. However, Habakkuk failed to accept that God actually approved of the mass terror and destruction the

Chaldeans were inflicting as they march over the nations. He failed to accept that God could approve the wickedness of the enemy and support them rather than His people in the Southern Kingdom. In reality, God had sent them to do His work, and he did look on them with favor and approval.

"Why?" Habakkuk asked. Why was God letting the enemy successfully trample all the nations and drag many away from their homes? God responded to his first cry and Habakkuk was hoping He would reply to this second plea. All Habakkuk could do was stand ready and watch for the Lord's reply, but he also wondered how He would answer if he said something wrong to God.

### **The Vision**

Habakkuk 2: 2-3

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>2</sup> Then the Lord answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe *it* on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. <sup>3</sup> "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.

God did reply to Habakkuk's misconception with a vision. He told Habakkuk to write down what he saw so everyone who read it would run for their lives. God was not going to show Habakkuk the destruction at the hands of the Chaldeans, but He would to show Habakkuk the ultimate punishment and tribulation that will come to Israel just prior to their national acceptance of Him and His establishment of the 1,000 Year Kingdom. God promised the vision would not be fulfilled in the near future. He will choose the time for its fulfillment.

### **Proud vs. Righteous**

Habakkuk 2: 4-5

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>4</sup> "Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

God contrasts the two kinds of people in the world, the proud and the righteous. The proud have it all wrong and their souls have had not yielded to God. The righteous are right in their souls. They have put their faith in Him and life is their reward.

### **Wine Betrays**

Habakkuk 2: 5

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>5</sup> "Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.

Excess use of wine in Habakkuk's day was just as bad as the overuse of legal and illegal drugs today, including alcohol. When a haughty man relies on wine as his drug of choice, he roams the city in search of the next drink. He sells all he has to provide for his needs and when he has exhausted his own resources, he then begins to steal from those nearest him, never satisfied that he has had enough. One day a man, proud and haughty, will gather up the nations to himself, never satisfied that he has enough under his control. He will swallow up everything in his path for one purpose – to go against the Lord.

## Taunt Song

Habakkuk 2:6-8

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>6</sup> "Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery *and* insinuations against him and say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his— for how long— and makes himself rich with loans?' <sup>7</sup> "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them. <sup>8</sup> "Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you— because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.

All the nations under the proud man's control will sing the same song against the Lord. Blasphemies will spew from their mouths against Him, but they will not prevail. They may become rich by their thefts or perhaps they may appear to be wealthy through loans, but the payday, settlement day, reckoning day and judgment day will come. The proud, haughty man and all who have sung his song will be plundered and that which they stole will be returned to the One who owns it all.

## Evil Gain

Habakkuk 2:9-11

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>9</sup> "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity! <sup>10</sup> "You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; so you are sinning against yourself. <sup>11</sup> "Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework.

The evil song against the Lord had cut off many people from God. It was a shameful thing. The nation which hated the Lord had been built with the revenue acquired through evil means. Sadly, this sin was the nation's downfall; sin begets sin, which in turn births more sin. It cannot be hidden. The very stones and rafters in our houses will cry out and expose each transgression.

## Nations Built by Bloodshed

Habakkuk 2: 12-14

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>12</sup> "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence! <sup>13</sup> "Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? <sup>14</sup> "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. <sup>15</sup> "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk so as to look on their nakedness!

The nation that is built for the purpose of opposing the Lord will be built through violence and bloodshed. Fear is always a part of such nations. One can never know if his blood will not be the next to be shed. At first it seems right in the uprising to take over with violence, but soon the same thinking can turn on its loyalist supporters. After a while, the people will be weary because there is no peace or rest where violence and bloodshed abound. When the Lord removes these nations who publicly stand against Him, He will fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory for He will reign over the whole world and violence will be no more.

## Disgrace Among the Nations

Habakkuk 2: 15-17

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>16</sup> "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory. <sup>17</sup>"For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of *its* beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.

The evil man does ungodly things. He seeks to drug his neighbors in order to sexually exploit them. They exploit not only their neighbors but also exploit their own sexuality. Such actions are an utter disgrace and the Lord will bring judgment upon them all.

Lebanon is north of Israel on the coast. The mountains of Lebanon provided the cedar for the temple and palace during Solomon's building project in his first 20 years as king. During Nebuchadnezzar's onslaught of the land, he destroyed the trees, the animals of the forest, and the human beings who made their homes in the forest. In the future, it will be destroyed again in the same way by the proud one.

## Senseless Idols

Habakkuk 2: 18-20

**Habakkuk 2:**<sup>18</sup> "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, *or* an image, a teacher of falsehood? For *its* maker trusts in his *own* handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. <sup>19</sup> "Woe to him who says to a *piece of wood*, 'Awake!' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' *And* that is *your* teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. <sup>20</sup> "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

Only one God exists; there are no others. Man-made gods and idols are senseless and useless. It is ludicrous for a man to carve an idol, cover it with gold and expect it to answer his prayers. It is just a gold-covered piece of wood and nothing more. One day, God will sit in His holy temple and the world will be silent and in awe before Him. He is the only true God.

## Prayer in a Song, Verse 1

Habakkuk 3: 1-3<sup>a</sup>

**Habakkuk 3:**<sup>1</sup> A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. <sup>2</sup> Lord, I have heard the report about You *and* I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. <sup>3a</sup> God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.

After seeing the vision presented by the Lord, Habakkuk pens a four-versed song. The text "According to Shigionath," means a rhythmic, wild, passionate song.

Habakkuk saw the vision and heard the report from the Lord and he was thrilled. He was ready for the Lord to accomplish what he had seen, and hoped that the Lord will not forget to be merciful when He shows His wrath on the world. On His way to Jerusalem, He will come across Teman and the mountain range of Paran. Teman is the grandson of Esau and his city was the chief capitol of the Edomites. The rest of the Edomites were settled along

the Paran mountain range. Today, both are desolate, but the Edomites will rebuild before the Lord sets up His 1,000-Year-Kingdom. On His way to destroy His enemies, He will destroy Israel's enemy, the Edomites. The verse ends with the word "Selah," a musical term which means, "Stop, think about what was just said." We might say it like this, "What do you think about that?"

### Prayer in a Song Verse 2

Habakkuk 3:3<sup>b</sup> – 9<sup>a</sup>

**Habakkuk 3:**<sup>3b</sup> His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise. <sup>4</sup> His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays *flashing* from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power. <sup>5</sup> Before Him goes pestilence, and plague comes after Him. <sup>6</sup> He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, the ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting. <sup>7</sup> I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, the tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling. <sup>8</sup> Did the Lord rage against the rivers, or was Your anger against the rivers, or was Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation? <sup>9a</sup> Your bow was made bare, the rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah.

Habakkuk has seen the glorious second coming of the Lord and describes it. When His splendor covers the heavens, praise erupts on earth. The sun is pale compared to His radiance and the lightning flashes from His hands indicating His true power. Destruction occurs with pestilence and plagues.

When He touches the Mount of Olives, all the mountains of the world will begin to shatter and collapse. His mountain will be the tallest on the earth. Everything will tremble in fear of His coming, even the Ethiopians and the other descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

His coming will rage against the rivers and the sea. He will ride in on His horse, and His bride will be on her horse. His bow will be emptied of its arrows and His rod will punish the nations. Selah – What do you think about that?

### Prayer in a Song Verse 3

Habakkuk 3:9<sup>b</sup>-13

**Habakkuk 3:**<sup>9b</sup> You cleaved the earth with rivers. <sup>10</sup> The mountains saw You *and* quaked; the downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, it lifted high its hands. <sup>11</sup> Sun *and* moon stood in their places; they went away at the light of Your arrows, at the radiance of Your gleaming spear. <sup>12</sup> In indignation You marched through the earth; in anger You trampled the nations. <sup>13</sup> You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil to lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.

The mountains, the waters, the sea - all will moan as they move in His presence. The sun and moon cannot be seen because of His gleaming radiance. Indignant, He will trample the nations who hate Him, but Israel and all who love Him will experience His salvation. Evil will be slain from neck to thigh. Selah – What do you think about that?

### Prayer in a Song Verse 4

Habakkuk 3:14-19

**Habakkuk 3:**<sup>14</sup> You pierced with his own spears the head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret. <sup>15</sup> You trampled on the sea with Your horses, on the surge of many waters. <sup>16</sup> I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise *who* will invade us. <sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, *though* the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup> Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup> The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places.

For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

The Lord will cause His enemies to kill each other with their own weapons, but first, they will attack Israel. The Lord will storm in and trample them down. Even Habakkuk is fearful of that day and the coming of the Lord. He is trembling to the bone. The Lord had instructed him to write down what he saw so the people could read it on the run. Habakkuk wanted to run himself.

Israel will suffer before the Lord comes. It will be invaded during her tribulation. When that time comes, it will be without food, without drink, without animals to eat, but it will turn to the Lord of Salvation during its starvation and God will not disappoint Israel for Habakkuk knows that the Lord's coming will bring joy and great blessing. In that day, all the worldly obstacles will be out of the way, and he will worship the Lord on His high place.

The four verses of this song are to be accompanied by the stringed instruments while the choir sings each line with great rhythm, and a wild, passionate heart and soul.

Habakkuk Chapter 1			Habakkuk Chapter 2 and 3		
Habakkuk is crying out to God because Nebuchadnezzar is attacking his country and city.			The Lord tells Habakkuk to write down what he see so the people can read it and run.		
612 BC	606 BC	586 BC	7 Years of Tribulation	The Day of the Lord	
Nebuchadnezzar overthrows Assyria and focuses his attention on overthrowing the Southern Kingdom	Nebuchadnezzar overthrows the Southern Kingdom in 606 BC.  He destroys the temple and ends the reign of the kings in 586 BC.		Gathering of the proud who build their nations with bloodshed.	The Lord returns with flashes of lightning from His hand.  The mountains and hills will collapse.  The Canaanite descendants will be destroyed.	The Lord is in His Holy temple in Jerusalem
Nebuchadnezzar attempts to overthrow the Southern Kingdom for 6 years.			In the future, sometime after 2011 AD ...		