

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 39 w/Answers

Habakkuk

We continue our survey of the Old Testament and our survey of the Minor Prophets. In this lesson, we will finish our look at the prophets of Judah with a quick survey of the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is the only Minor Prophet to actually record a dialogue with God about the injustices of this world and why God seems to allow them. Quoting again this week from *The (Old Testament) Bible Knowledge Commentary* by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (written in 1978, over thirty years ago), we observe references to the very questions that we ask ourselves today. It reads:

"Planet Earth may look marvelous from a satellite, but for those who live on the dusty globe, things tend to look rather grim. Increased turmoil, rising terrorism, mounting tragedies, unprecedented trauma, increasing pollution, deepening trials, and unparalleled tensions cast dark shadows over earthlings. The world looks more and more like some ominous black sphere with a very short fuse, a time bomb sizzling to explode.

"It is little wonder thinking people begin to ask questions. Why is there so much oppression? Why all the injustice? Why do evil men prosper? Why do the righteous suffer? Why doesn't God clean up this mess? Why? Why? Why?"

We will examine these as well as other questions that Habakkuk asked God; and we will also examine God's response:

Read the book of Habakkuk and consider the following questions:

1. For a better understanding of the times when Habakkuk was a prophet, read the following passages and note what insight it provides us into the evil and unrighteousness that existed:
 - a. 2 Kings 23:36 through 2 Kings 24:7
 - i. ANSWER: "Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah. And he did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done. During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets. Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive. As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king. The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River."
 - b. 2 Chronicles 36:5-8
 - i. ANSWER: "Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the LORD and put them in his temple there. The other events of Jehoiakim's reign, the detestable things he did and all that was found against him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king."

2. During this time of shedding innocent blood and all of the detestable things that were happening in the Temple and in the nation of Judah, what questions did Habakkuk ask of God? (see Hab. 1:2-3, and Hab. 1:13)
 - a. ANSWER 1: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save?"
 - b. ANSWER 2: "Why do you make me look at injustice?"
 - c. ANSWER 3: "Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds."
 - d. ANSWER 4: "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"
3. How does God answer Habakkuk? (see Hab. 1:5-11)
 - a. ANSWER: He tells Habakkuk that He, God is aware of the injustice and unrighteous behavior, that He is in control, and that He is bringing judgment, in His time and in His way. Habakkuk 1:5-11 reads: "Look at the nations and watch - and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on - guilty men, whose own strength is their god."
4. What else does God say to Habakkuk in all of Chapter 2?
 - a. ANSWER: He tells Habakkuk that even though man may think that he is smarter than God, and that he can do as he wishes and live an evil and unrighteous life, these things do not escape God's knowledge. Judgment will come to all, and when it does, it will be swift and righteous.
5. In Habakkuk 2:4, what does God tell Habakkuk about the righteous?
 - a. ANSWER: God tells him that the righteous will live by faith. Even in today's terrible times, just as it was in Habakkuk's, we must live by faith and trust in God as our God and Sovereign King, no matter what evil we see around us. In His time, judgment will come. God is very much in control and on the throne. He is not fooled, nor is he mocked by man's evil ways, nor will God's plans be changed or affected by them.

Walvoord and Zuck's book also summarizes Habakkuk's message: "In the dark days of Jehoiakim's reign just before the Babylonian Captivity, the Prophet Habakkuk penned an unusual message of hope and encouragement for God's people. Though doubts and confusion reign when sin runs rampant, an encounter with God can turn those doubts into devotion and all confusion into confidence.

"Habakkuk's book begins with an interrogation of God but ends as an intercession to God. Worry is transformed into worship. Fear turns to faith. Terror becomes trust. Hang-ups are resolved with hope. Anguish melts into adoration.

"What begins with a question mark ends in an exclamation point. The answer to Habakkuk's 'Why?' is 'Who!'. His confusion, 'Why all the conflict?' is resolved with his comprehension of who is in control: God!"

We can take hope and comfort from Habakkuk's message. Hope that no matter how lost or confused the world around us might seem, God is very much in control. His plan for all eternity is being worked out, and we as people of faith need to continue to trust in Him. May this be a time that you come to know God and His Son Jesus in ways that you have not known Him before. May your faith and trust in God and His Son Jesus continue to grow as you study His Holy Word.

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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