

## Habakkuk • So What Should I Do?

### Introduction

Have you ever read a really riveting book on the End Times, got to the end and wondered, “I believe these things are going to happen, but what am I supposed to do about them?” It’s a variation of the question nearly every person has about why God allows evil to work in the world, or why does He work the way He does. Habakkuk is our best example in this, of how to bring our concerns to God and what to do with the answers God provides.

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

<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.

<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.”

### [Read 1:1-4]

#### Q: What is Habakkuk questioning? What is his basic concern?

A: He sees sin and evil as seeming to be the predominant forces in the world, perverting justice into whatever it wants in its own favor. He wants to know why God does not appear to care or intervene.

#### Q: What does Habakkuk identify as the spiritual issues of what is going on?

A: “...the law is ignored and justice is never upheld.” They do not adhere to God’s Word.

**Application:** Do you know the difference between “complaining” as opposed to “inquiring”? Do you plainly and clearly bring before God your questions and concerns? Do you see in Habakkuk’s example that he is actually concerned about God’s Word and justice, not man’s?

### [Read 1:5-11]

#### Q: How would you summarize God’s response to Habakkuk?

A: “I AM in charge.” He is not only at work in general throughout the whole earth (“Look among the nations!”), but He is specifically behind the rise to power of what appears to be the greatest earthly threat in all the earth, the Chaldeans (“I am raising up the Chaldeans”).

#### Q: There are two types of descriptions God gives concerning the Chaldeans. What is the earthly description that would be most apparent from Habakkuk’s earthly view?

A: They are “fierce and impetuous” (v.6), “dreaded and feared” (v.7), and described as capable of overcoming every earthly foe and obstacle in their path.

#### Q: What is the spiritual description that is NOT apparent from Habakkuk’s earthly view?

- They are used by God, yet do not adhere to His ways or submit to Him personally -- “Their justice and authority originate with themselves...” (v.7)
- Pride is the false god in which they trust – Their “strength is their god” (v.11)
- They will be held accountable for their own sin – “...they will be held guilty...” (v.11)

**Application:** Do you make spiritual judgments based on earthly circumstances? Do you allow for the fact that God is always in control? Do you see that earthly injustice and rebellion are temporary conditions which, in the scheme of God’s timing, will all be eventually addressed? Are there things like this with which you’re struggling right now?

<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 can not 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?

<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.

### [Read 1:12-17]

**Q: How does Habakkuk begin his response and second question in v.12?**

A: Habakkuk reaffirms the sovereignty and rule of the One True God, sincerely granting that these things have come from God for His stated purpose. (“You, O Rock, have established them to correct.”)

**Q: But how does God’s first answer seem to create a further problem in Habakkuk’s understanding of what is going on?**

A: Habakkuk struggles with how a Holy God can allow such a wicked nation to be used against His people. It seems to Habakkuk that the Chaldeans’ earthly actions are justifying their own faith in the false gods and desires they serve.

**Point:** *It’s worth pointing out that Habakkuk never discusses anything that may have in the past, during this present time, or in the future, happens to him personally in being treated unfairly, losing material wealth to the unjust, or as the victim of social injustice; he is solely focused on the name and work of the One True God whom he follows and worships.*

**Application:** *Do you see the value of bringing before God those issues where we think He’s not responding or caring? How is this an exercise that actually **builds** our personal faith?*

**Note:** *Many have been martyred and suffered for the cross throughout history, and especially in the Last Days the earth will be given over to darkness like never before. It’s important to bring these things continually before the Lord that we might best know how to live according to His will in the midst of them, while being re-energized with His vision of eternity rather than overwhelmed at the difficulties of current, temporary conditions.*

### [Read 2:1]

**Q: Having voiced his concerns to God, what is Habakkuk’s example of a right response to God?**

A: This verse describes someone whose response is to meditate in prayer and on His Word, looking for God’s answer rather than their own. They do not give up just because there’s no immediate response, but know they must remain vigilant to receive the answer according to God’s way and timing. The fact that he expects to be “reproved” is evidence of a right heart prepared to accept the authority of God’s answer over his own.

**Application:** *How do **YOU** respond when you’re expecting a response from God? How does it compare with the example of Habakkuk?*

<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.

<sup>4</sup>“Behold, as for the proud one,  
His soul is not right within him;  
But the righteous will live by his faith.

<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.

## **[Read 2:2-5]**

**Q: Why is the command to write God’s response on tablets VERY good news where Habakkuk is concerned?**

A: God is putting in writing His promise that these things – and more – are being brought about by Him personally. This was a method employed of sharing God’s Word publicly in those days, a kind of “billboard” posted by a prophet from which many people could read for themselves the very words of God.

**Q: Why does God stipulate, “That the one who reads it may run”?**

A: Some scholars think it was to be written in such large letters that one running by could still easily read it. It’s more likely, however, that this was an idiom for spreading the news, for God’s message to be shared:

*“I did not send these prophets,*

***But they ran.***

*I did not speak to them,*

***But they prophesied.***

*Jeremiah 23:21*

**Q: What are the characteristics of someone given over to pride?**

- “His soul is not right within him” (v.4)
- “...he does not stay at home” (v.5)
- “He enlarges his appetite like Sheol...never satisfied” (v.5)
- “He also gathers to himself” (v.5)

In other words, he acts exactly as the Chaldeans were previously described as acting, taking as much of this present world as possible without thought for the consequences.

**Q: What is the contrast of the righteous person?**

A: He “will live by his faith”, treating this present world as a temporary condition that is ultimately subject to God’s will and ways.

**Point:** *The initial call which God commands Habakkuk to place in writing and encouraged to be shared as widely as possible is a call to faith.*

**Q: This call to faith is central to 3 books in the New Testament. What is the context of its usage in each place?**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*

*Romans 1:16-17*

The emphasis here is on “the righteous”.

*Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*

*Galatians 3:11*

The emphasis here is on “shall live”.

### **Habakkuk • So What Should I Do?, Page 3 of 8**

FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE,  
HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.  
BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;  
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

*But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*  
Hebrews 10:37-39

The emphasis here is on “by faith”.

**Q: What is God communicating about the difference between the proud (exemplified by the Chaldeans) and the righteous?**

A: The proud don't see how God is working or even using them, whereas the righteous see beyond the present circumstances to what God is **REALLY** doing. The righteous knows that “*Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.*”

**Point:** God doesn't just call us to faith individually, but wants us to likewise call others to faith. It's an issue beyond the surface circumstance for **everyone**, both messenger and hearer.

<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.

<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.

**[Read 2:6-8]**

**Q: What is the essence of the first “woe”?**

A: God's judgment for financial mistreatment of others.

**[Read 2:9-11]**

**Q: What is the essence of the second “woe”?**

A: God's judgment for selfish elevation of one's own interest at the expense of others.

<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?”

**[Read 2:12-13]**

**Q: What is the essence of the third “woe”?**

A: God’s judgment for using violence against others to further one’s own self-interest.

<sup>14</sup>For the earth will be filled  
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
As the waters cover the sea.

**[Read 2:14]**

**Q: God’s first assurance to Habakkuk was, “But the righteous will live by his faith”, that there is a greater reality than meets the eye. What is the nature of this second assurance from God in the midst of pronouncing judgment?**

A: That the sin currently polluting the earth will one day give way to God’s kingdom and presence on earth, removing all its ill-effects and instead bathing its subjects in God’s glory.

<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!  
<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.

**[Read 2:15-17]**

**Q: What is the essence of the fourth “woe”?**

A: God’s judgment for seduction of others into unfaithfulness.

<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.

**[Read 2:18-19]**

**Q: What is the essence of the fifth “woe”?**

A: Whereas the first four woes pertained to judgment for their mistreatment of others, (the “second tablet” of the Law), this is judgment for their personal mistreatment of God, the “first tablet” of the Law. They are judged for their idolatry, making something else their god.

<sup>20</sup>But the LORD is in His holy temple.  
Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

**[Read 2.20]**

**Q: What is the nature of this third assurance provided Habakkuk?**

A: God is still on the throne. This is actually the ultimate answer to Habakkuk’s question of whether God was interested in the problems and issues of this life. He has now learned that God is not just very

concerned, but working everything out according to His will and way in His own time.

*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an **eternal** weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are **temporal**, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

**Application:** How can you apply this to your most urgent concerns and issues at this moment?

**[Read 3:1-2]**

**Q: Taking Habakkuk as an example, what is the right response of someone that does “live by faith”?**

A: Worshipful respect of God.

**Q: Is Habakkuk using the word “revive” to seek some kind of spiritual revival?**

A: No, it's really asking that God continue to work exactly as He's always been working. Now that Habakkuk understands that God is in complete control, he no longer fears the earthly circumstances that originally frightened him. In spite of the conditions, he's actually encouraged because of his faith in God's working through them and wants His work continued!

**[Read 3:3-7]**

**Q: What is the meaning of the references to Teman and Paran?**

*He said,  
“The LORD came from Sinai,  
And dawned on them from Seir;  
He shone forth from Mount Paran,  
And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones;  
At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.  
Deuteronomy 33:2*

It's a reference to how God gave them His Word in the wilderness first at Mt. Sinai, and then again at other times. Mount Paran was the place where Deuteronomy was communicated to Israel, between Sinai and the Promised Land.

**Q: What is the meaning of all these references to God's working and power?**

A: They simultaneously look back at their working for His people through His Word in the past while looking to how He will again work in the same way in the future. This is the symbolism of Cushan, another name for the Chaldeans who are a future threat God will deal with in the same manner as He once dealt with the past threat of Midian.

<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>3</sup>God comes from Teman,  
And the Holy One from Mount Paran.  
Selah.

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>9</sup>Your bow was made bare,  
The rods of chastisement were sworn.  
Selah.

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.

<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.

### [Read 3:8-15]

**Point:** This is a very poetic recap of God's working on Israel's behalf both in the past and how it will be repeated in the future. It has application both for ancient Judah in the coming captivity into Babylon as well as for us in the Last Days. In spite of the overwhelming earthly appearances of earthly powers and nations (symbolized by the waters and the sea), God did, has, and will conquer them for His purpose and glory, saving His people at the same time.

<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.

### [Read 3:16-19]

**Q: What is the final result for someone who accepts by faith that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD” (2:14) and “the LORD is in His holy temple”?**

A: That in spite of the earthly circumstances, regardless of the harshness of present conditions, there is a greater joy and peace enabling the continual worship and praise of God, knowing that He is in complete control. This is the Old Testament equivalent of Romans 8:28...

*And we know that God causes **all things** to work together **for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to **His purpose**.*

### Habakkuk • So What Should I Do?, Page 7 of 8

For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

## **Epilogue**

- *In the history and events of Israel, God's calling was not a call to knowledge but faith.*
- *In this present life as we live it, God's calling is not a call to knowledge but faith.*
- *In these Last Days as the great prophetic events unfold as given in Scripture, God's calling is not a call to knowledge but faith.*
- *In all these circumstances, we are to call others not simply to knowledge of God, but faith in Him.*