

## Habakkuk 1

Verse 1

### **The pronouncement which Habakkuk the prophet saw:**

Habakkuk's prophesy is against both Judah and Babylon. While the wickedness of Judah is announced in some detail, the agent of their doom (Babylon) is given more attention and Habakkuk is often seen asking God a number of questions.

Verse 2

**<sup>2</sup> How long, Lord, have I called for help,**  
**And You do not hear?**  
**I cry out to You, "Violence!"**  
**Yet You do not save.**

This is the kind of question that men and women of every generation have thought about and wondered why God is very often slow to act.

See 2 Peter 3:9

**<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.**

This means God gives evil people plenty of time to experience the results of their sowing so they might repent, but this also means that righteous people will suffer at the hands of such people.

People often feel oppressed by an evil world that only seems to care about power, money and sex. But God is in the business of saving people, and letting evil people see the end result or outcome of their Godless ways gives them an opportunity to repent before it is too late. The world as a whole has rejected God and His ways so one cannot expect such a world to be a place of peace, love and charity.

People suffer in numerous ways and God knows how to comfort them and how to let them grow from their suffering. Is it an easy life, certainly not, but it is the life that we have been called to and we have been told to endure and overcome by living a life of faith. So what has God said to those who suffer for the sake of righteousness? Go to the Lord with all your burdens and let your brothers and sisters in Christ help by bearing some of that burden. Live by Faith.

Verses 3 - 4

**<sup>3</sup> Why do You make me see disaster,  
And make *me* look at destitution?**  
Yes, devastation 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 confused.**

Habakkuk was not pleased that he had to see and experience life in a society that was full of strife and contention when it could have been much better if God's people were actually keeping the law. He wanted to know why God allowed this situation to continue.

When the courts fail to administer justice by siding with the guilty it demoralizes the community and people lose hope. God is well aware of this kind of evil and he will punish those who break His law of justice, but it may not be as soon as we would all like to see because God is patient with those who are good and bad. If God punished wrong doing immediately there would be no chance for repentance and mankind's free will would be greatly diminished.

Verses 5 - 6

**<sup>5</sup> “Look among the nations! Watch!  
Be horrified! Be frightened speechless!  
For *I am* accomplishing a work in your days—  
You would not believe *it even if you were told!***  
**<sup>6</sup> For behold, I am raising up the **Chaldeans**,  
That grim and impetuous people  
Who march throughout the earth,  
To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs.**

Even though God is long suffering when it comes to being patient with people and nations of the world there is a time when He will judge them for their sins. The amazing thing here is that He will do it using Babylon (the Chaldeans), a nation that was a tributary to Assyria at the time. This is why the people would not believe it even if they were told. Paul quoted this verse in the Book of Acts to make a similar point

See Acts 13:38 - 41

<sup>38</sup> Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, <sup>39</sup> and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. <sup>40</sup> Therefore, see that the thing spoken of in the Prophets does not come upon *you*:

<sup>41</sup> ‘Look, you scoffers, and be astonished, and perish;  
For I am accomplishing a work in your days,  
A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.’”

Since the people of Judah had no indication that Babylon would be a threat, this means that Habakkuk’s prophecy was delivered prior to the emergence of the Chaldeans as a world power. Therefore the dating of this prophecy must be prior to 626 B.C.

See Pic 105

<b>Kings of Babylon</b>	<b>Reign</b>	<b>Years</b>
Nabopolassar	626 - 605	21
Nebuchadnezzar	605 - 561	44
Amel-Marduk	561 - 560	1
Nergal-shar-usur	560 - 556	4
Labashi-Marduk	556	< 1
Nabonidus	556 - 539	17
Belshazzar	544 - 539	5

This was a prophecy concerning the judgment and destruction of Judaea, but it was also a prediction of the rise of Babylon as a world-power.

God describes the Babylonian people as “that grim and impetuous people” and this more fully explains in verses 7 thru 11.

Verses 7 - 11

<sup>7</sup> They are terrifying and feared;  
Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Their horses are faster than leopards,  
And quicker than wolves in the evening.

Their horsemen charge along,  
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 gather captives like sand.

<sup>10</sup> They make fun of kings,  
And dignitaries are *an object of* laughter to them.  
They laugh at every fortress,  
Then heap up dirt and capture it.

<sup>11</sup> Then they fly along *like* the wind and pass on.  
But they will be held guilty,  
They whose strength is their god.”

<sup>7</sup> They are terrifying and feared;  
Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

Babylon had no regard for the one true God but instead invented their own standards of justice and authority and they would humble Judah who should have known the Lord God but did not know Him or keep His law.

<sup>8</sup> Their horses are faster than leopards,  
And quicker than wolves in the evening.

Jeremiah also wrote concerning the Babylonian army and its swiftness.

See Jeremiah 4:13

<sup>13</sup> “Behold, he goes up like clouds,  
And his chariots like the whirlwind;  
His horses are swifter than eagles.  
Woe to us, for we are ruined!”

**<sup>10</sup> They make fun of kings,  
And dignitaries are an object of laughter to them.  
 They laugh at every fortress,  
 Then heap up dirt and capture it.**

When it says “they” it is referring the Babylonian army and those who were leaders of the military forces. The kings that fought against them or refused to pay a heavy tribute each year were put to death in a humiliating fashion or died in captivity.

See Jeremiah 22:19

**<sup>18</sup> Therefore this is what the Lord says regarding Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:**

**“They will not mourn for him:  
 ‘Oh, my brother!’ or, ‘Oh, sister!’  
They will not mourn for him:  
 ‘Oh, for the master!’ or, ‘Oh, for his splendor!’**

**<sup>19</sup> He will be buried with a donkey’s burial,  
Dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.**

And 2 Kings 24:15

**<sup>15</sup> So he led Jehoiachin into exile to Babylon; also the king’s mother, the king’s wives, and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.**

See chart 110

	<b>King</b>	<b>Kings</b>	<b>Began</b>	<b>Ended</b>
14	Amon		642	640
15	Josiah	Like David	640	609
16	Jehoahaz		609	609
17	Jehoiakim		609	598
18	Jehoiachin		598	597
19	Zedekiah		597	586

There were three separate deportations of people from Jerusalem to Babylon and these two kings were taken during the first two deportations.

See chart 115

	Reigning king	Year	Scripture
1st	Jehoiakim	605	Daniel 1:1-4
2nd	Jehoiachin	597	2 Kings 24:15-16
3rd	Zedekiah	586	2 Kings 25:11

<sup>11</sup> Then they fly along *like* the wind and pass on.

**But they will be held guilty,**

**They whose strength is their god.”**

Great leaders often become prideful and begin to believe that they are responsible for their success rather than giving the glory to God who has granted them the privilege of leadership for a period of time. And the bigger they are the harder they fall.

See Daniel 4:30 - 34.

<sup>29</sup> Twelve months later he was walking on the *roof* of the royal palace of Babylon.

<sup>30</sup> The king began speaking and was saying, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?’ <sup>31</sup> *While* the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, <sup>32</sup> and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place *will be* with the animals of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ <sup>33</sup> Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails like birds’ *claws*.

Despite Babylon's great power and fierce army God will punish Babylon because no person or nation can escape the law of reaping and sowing. The law of reaping and sowing overtook all five of the great world powers that ruled in succession, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persians, Greeks, and the Romans.

Verse 12

**<sup>12</sup> Are You not from time everlasting,  
Lord, my God, my Holy One?  
We will not die.  
You, Lord, have appointed them to deliver judgment;  
And You, O Rock, have destined them to punish.**

In verses 2 Habakkuk complained to God that he was too slow in bringing about justice for the righteous.

**<sup>2</sup> How long, Lord, have I called for help,  
And You do not hear?  
I cry out to You, "Violence!"  
Yet You do not save.**

God's reply to him was the revelation that a new world power, Babylon, would soon arise and destroy Assyria.

See verse 6

**<sup>6</sup> For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,  
That grim and impetuous people  
Who march throughout the earth,  
To take possession of dwelling places that are not theirs.**

However this news was both good and bad. It was good news because their current enemy, Assyria, would finally get punished for their evil ways but it was also bad news because this would not be of any help to Israel. They would get a new landlord but he was just as evil as the old one. How could the Holy and righteous God of heaven do such a thing?

What Habakkuk failed to understand was that Israel would have to go thru a crushing defeat and deportation so God could purify the nation as a whole. Judah was just as bad if not worse than the nations around them so God would have to destroy the nation of Israel in order to save a remnant that was willing to serve Him and keep His law. The process of purification is never pretty and seldom appreciated.

Verses 13 - 15

**<sup>13</sup> Your eyes are too pure to look at evil,  
And You cannot look at harm favorably.**

**Why do You look favorably**

**At 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 people like the fish of the sea,  
Like crawling things that have no 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 joyful.**

If Habakkuk was speaking of Babylon as “those who deal treacherously” then his argument is somewhat weak or invalid because Israel had entered into a covenant with God and they had abandoned that agreement long ago. This made them, the Jews, just as bad, and in many respects worse than the pagan nations that didn’t know God. In addition, God was only doing what he said he would do if the people rejected His law. See Leviticus 26 or Deuteronomy 28 if need be.

We can see from verse 15 that Judah will be deported to Babylon. Losing their homeland was one of the punishments predicted in the Law.

Verses 16 - 17

**<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?**

The Babylonians did not worship their military prowess (net and fishing net) but they did see it as the means of living the “good life”. The problem with this was that they gave the credit for their success to their false gods and their own ability rather than to the One True God of heaven and earth.

Habakkuk wanted to know if Babylon would continue in their cruel ways. That question will be addressed shortly.