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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

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**“THE BURDEN WHICH HABAKKUK**

**THE PROPHET DID SEE”**

HABAKKUK 1:1-7

The prophet Habakkuk penned this book in approximately 605 B.C. This was about the time the Babylonians came into power. Very little is known about him, except his work in this book. The theme of the book is the mystery of providence. Habakkuk was troubled over the sinful world going unpunished. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Habakkuk was well preserved. In Romans Paul referred to Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4.

***Habakkuk 2:4 (KJV)
4  Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.***

***Romans 1:17 "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."***

It was these two Scriptures which influenced Martin Luther greatly, and he started the protestant reformation. Luther, like Habakkuk was troubled by God’s seemingly disregard of the sins of the church. He came to reject several teachings and practices of the [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church); in particular, he disputed the view on [indulgences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indulgence). The taught the recipient of an indulgence must perform an action to receive it. This is most often the saying (once, or many times) of a specified prayer, but may also include the visiting of a particular place, or the performance of specific good works. Luther came to understand that the Bible taught that [salvation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation_in_Christianity#Lutheranism) and, consequently, [eternal life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_life_%28Christianity%29) are not earned by good deeds but are received only as the free gift of God's [grace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_grace#Grace_in_the_Protestant_Reformation) through the believer's [faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith_in_Christianity#Lutheranism) in [Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) as redeemer from sin. The most important for Luther was the doctrine of justification, God's mysterious act of declaring a sinner righteous, by faith alone through God's grace.

***Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)
8  For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9  Not of works, lest any man should boast.***

***Mark 4:11 (KJV)
11  And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:***

***Romans 11:25 (KJV)
25  For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.***

***Romans 16:25 (KJV)
25  Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,***

***1 Corinthians 2:7 (KJV)
7  But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:***

***1 Corinthians 15:51 (KJV)
51  Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,***

***1 Timothy 3:16 (KJV)
16  And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.***

***Habakkuk 1:1 "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see."***

The word "burden" lets us know that Habakkuk was troubled by what he saw around him. Burden (Heb. masa’, “heavy load” or “oracle”) is a sentence of divine judgment. The word is used by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zachariah, Nahum and Malachi in reference to a prophetic utterance describing a threat or punishment on a nation or people. The basic concept seems to be that Israel's sinful actions have caused God to be burdened. Therefore, in righteousness he is compelled to judge them. The statement "did see", indicates that Habakkuk had been given a vision from God and a divine concern for His people. God never gives a burden without a vision.

***Amos 3:6-8 (KJV)
6  Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?
7  Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.
8  The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?***

***Habakkuk 1:2 "O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save!"***

Godly King Josiah had loved the Lord and his law, but Josiah had been killed and replaced by his wicked son Jehoiakim who “did what was evil in the Lord’s sight” (2 Kings 23:1-37). And Judah’s citizens followed his example. So, Habakkuk did something about it. He was a praying man and cried out to God. But his prayers seemed to go unanswered: How long, Lord, must I call for help and you do not listen. This is a plea to God to hear his prayers. He sees the injustice around him and does not understand why God is not punishing those involved. We have all, at some time or other, cried out "how long?”. It appears from this, that Habakkuk had prayed many times to God to do something about the moral decay of Judah. It appears, that those who pretended to belong to God {Judah} had strayed very far away, and Habakkuk had prayed so much about the seriousness of the problem, he had begun to doubt that God was hearing his prayers.

***Psalm 6:3 (KJV)
3  My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?***

***Psalm 13:1 (KJV)
1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?***

***Psalm 35:17 (KJV)
17  Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.***

***Psalm 74:10 (KJV)
10  O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?***

***Psalm 80:4 (KJV)
4  O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?***

***Revelation 6:10 (KJV)
10  And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?***

***Habakkuk 1:3 "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention."***

Most prophets spoke to the people what they heard from God. Habakkuk spoke to God about what he saw. And what he witnessed caused him no small amount of consternation. All around him, he saw injustice, wrongdoing, oppression, violence, strife, and conflict. Habakkuk was in the ministry. He was like a watchman. He saw all the evil and warned the people, yet God had not punished them. He is asking God, why He allows him to see all of the wrong, if God is not going to change it. Habakkuk is a righteous man, living in a society that has gone mad. He is questioning how God can know of these sins and abominations, and not do anything about them. This strife and contention are speaking of those rebellious who are not keeping God's law. Perhaps, those that question God's law are some who should know better, because they are the leaders of the people. In time, Habakkuk decided God was taking too long to come through. He asked, Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Have you ever felt alone in standing for justice in the world, while God seemed to be indifferent? This happens when we forget that God alone can see the whole picture, and he is working out his sovereign plan in the midst of the chaos. The Lord decides when to answer our prayers and how best to answer them. When you realize that he is omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful), and holy (perfectly righteous in all he does), then you’ll realize he knows how to run things better than we do.

***Habakkuk 1:4 "Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth."***

Here, Habakkuk argues that when justice does not emerge, the law is ineffective. Not only are the wicked people not keeping God's law, but they are attacking the righteous. They are actually opposed to those who have taken a stand for God. The law which had governed even their civil law is unequal. Habakkuk is disappointed that justice is no longer part of their society. In order for laws to have teeth, there needs to be some form of enforcement behind them. Habakkuk wondered why God didn’t do something about the wickedness in Judah.

***Habakkuk 1:5 "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for [I] will work a work in your days, [which] ye will not believe, though it be told [you]."***

***Habakkuk 1:6 "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, [that] bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces [that are] not theirs."***

***Habakkuk 1:7 "They [are] terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves."***

Up until this Scripture, Habakkuk had been complaining to God. In this Scripture, we see an answer to Habakkuk from God. God was listening to his prophet, and now he answers. Indeed, he plans to do something about the injustice in Judah—and it will leave Habakkuk utterly astounded. During Habakkuk's lifetime, God will take care of this situation. God will work so quickly and marvelously, that it will be difficult for Habakkuk to believe. God will punish Judah, and he names his minister of punishment: the Chaldeans, that bitter, impetuous nation that marches across the earth’s open spaces to seize territories. Chaldeans is another name for the Babylonians. The Chaldeans are even more evil than Judah. It is the chastisement God has judged, that will come upon them. It is just Babylon, {Chaldeans} that it comes by. They were a very cruel army. The prophet describes the mighty Chaldeans who ruled Babylon from 625 to 539 B.C. They were Semitic nomads who were descendants of Chesed, the son of Abraham’s brother Nahor (Genesis 22:20–22). They gradually populated southern Babylon and were under Assyrian authority until Nabopolassar destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. and founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire, which reached its greatest height under Nebuchadnezzar. The success of the Chaldeans is attributed to their swiftness and violence. We must remember that God sent them. Habakkuk is living for God in the middle of those who do not. God will use a heathen nation to bring the chastisement upon His people. Those of God's children who are living in sin, will not expect their punishment to come through a heathen nation. God can use whoever He wants to, however. At the time they attack Judah, they have become very powerful. There seemed to be no one who could stop them. They will not be aware that God sends them to attack Judah. God always begins His judgment with the house of God.

***1 Peter 4:17 “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”***

**QUESTIONS**

1. What is the theme of this book?
2. What greatly troubled Habakkuk?
3. What does verse 1 reveal about Habakkuk's message?
4. What is verse 2 pleading with God about?
5. Habakkuk had prayed many times for God to do what?
6. Habakkuk was, probably, in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
7. Habakkuk was a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ man, who lived in a society gone mad with sin.
8. These evil people are actually \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to those who have taken a stand for God.
9. What will be unexpected about the chastisement God sends upon His people?
10. What kind of army were the Chaldeans {Babylonians}?