

Bible Studies on

Habakkuk

A Prophet for the 21st Century?

4 studies

Study 1: Where does Habakkuk fit and where do we fit?

Study 2: Questioning God (Hab 1:1-13)

Study 3: Questioning God...Again (Hab 1:12-2:20)

Study 4: Waiting with Faith (Hab 3:1-19)

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Reading Habakkuk today.

Introduction:

Habakkuk may seem like the book of an unknown, minor prophet stuck somewhere near the back of the Old Testament. My hope is that as we dig into this little book you will be amazed at how relevant his teaching is to us today. Habakkuk reminds us that our God is Sovereign, that we can wait faithfully for his promises to be fulfilled and that He has acted to bring salvation to his people in a surprising manner.

In the first week we will look to place Habakkuk in its historical context and consider how we should approach reading this 'little' minor prophet. And then we will spend three weeks digging in and asking the questions that Habakkuk asks before listening to God's answers.

If you are a leader preparing these studies, it is always helpful to start with the text of Habakkuk itself. Let God's word speak to you before looking at further resources. You will find the full text of Habakkuk printed at the back of these notes.

When and if you get to the point where you want to consider other resources, I recommend these commentaries:

- Martin Pakula *Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah - The End of Evil*. Reading the Bible Today series. Sydney South: Aquila Press, 2014.
- David Prior *The Message of Joel, Micah & Habakkuk*. BST. Nottingham: IVP, 1988, 2010 (rpt).

And another helpful intro is <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/habakkuk/>

It is well worth watching the video introduction to the book (don't get put off by the American pronunciation of Habakkuk!).



Enjoy the Study of God's Word.

Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah

Where does Habakkuk sit historically?

Key to table:

	Judah
	Israel
	Kings who did evil
	Kings who followed the Lord

Year	Kings and Prophets				Notes	
1050	King Saul (39)					
1011	King David (41)					
970	King Solomon (40)					
	Judah		Israel			
	Prophets	Kings	Kings	Prophets		
931	Shemaiah	Rehoboam (17)	Jeroboam (22)	Ahijah		
<i>Egypt invades Jerusalem</i>						
913	Iddo	Abijah (3)	<i>War with Judah</i>			
911	Azariah	Asa (41)	Nadab (2)	Iddo		
909	Hanani		Baasha (24)			
<i>Allies with Syria against Baasha</i>						
886			Elah (2)			
			Zimri (7 days)			
885		Omri (12)	<i>Samaria becomes capital</i>			
870	Jehu	Jehoshaphat (25)	Ahab (22)	Jehu		
			Ahaziah (2)	Elijah		
848	Jahaziel	Jehoram (8)	Joram (12)	Elisha		
841		Ahaziah (1)	Jehu (28)			
841	Joel	Queen Athaliah (6)				
835		Joash (40)			Jehoahaz (17)	
			Jehoash (16)			
796			Amaziah (29)	Jeroboam II (41)		
767			Uzziah (52)	Zechariah (6 mth)		
	Isaiah		Shallum (1mth)			
	Micah		Menahem (10)			
740		Jotham (16)	Pekahiah (2)			
			Pekah (20)		Amos	
732			Ahaz (16)		Hoshea (9)	Hosea
715			Hezekiah (29)		<i>Fall of Samaria 722- Israel in Captivity</i>	
687		Manasseh (55)				
642		Amon (2)				
640	Zephaniah	Josiah (31)				
609	Huldah	Jehoahaz (3 mth)				
609	Habakkuk	Jehoiakim (11)				

598	Jeremiah	Jehoichin (3 mth)		
	<i>Many deported to Babylon</i>			
597	Ezekiel	Zedekiah (11)		
587	<i>Fall of Jerusalem</i>			

Study 1: Where does Habakkuk fit and where do we fit?

As we begin Habakkuk you may be thinking 'Where is it in the Bible?' or 'Where does it fit in the timeline?'

In this first study that's what we're looking at.

Activity

[Leader – for this activity to work you will need to have prepared some timeline cards – of people, events, and dates from Creation to the end of the Old Testament period, from Genesis 1 to Malachi, including key Kings and Prophets from Israel and Judah's history – and include Habakkuk!]

- 1) In 2 groups put the cards into order for the people, events and dates. Then write it into your booklet. (Work as a team remembering that this will be very new for some people).

- 2) Where does Habakkuk fit? Habakkuk was written to Judah (the southern kingdom).
What do you learn about Judah's last kings?

- 2 Kings 21:1-6
- 2 Kings 21: 19-22
- 2 Kings 22:1-2, 14-20 and 2 Kings 23:25-27
- 2 Kings 23:31-32
- 2 Kings 23: 36- 24:4
- 2 Kings 24:8-12
- 2 Kings 24:18-20

3) How should God's Old Testament people have responded to the prophets? How did they? See 2 Kings readings above and 2 Chron 36:15-17.

4) Where do we today fit in the timeline?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12. Try to draw a picture/ diagram of Peter's view of history and where we fit in it. Include the prophets, Christ and his suffering, new birth, our inheritance, trials, salvation.

5) What should we expect to learn from the Old Testament prophets? How should we view their writings?

Read Luke 24:25-27, 44-49.

1 Peter 1:10-12

2 Peter 1:19-21

Study 2: Questioning God (Hab 1:1-13)

1. If you could have a face-to-face conversation with God – what questions would you ask?

Read Habakkuk 1:1-4

2. What does Habakkuk say his society is like?
3. What is his question of God?

Read Habakkuk 1:5-11

4. What reaction is God expecting to His answer?
5. How is God going to address the wickedness that so disturbs Habakkuk? (Note: the Babylonians were the incoming superpower of the day)
6. How do you react to God's answer?

Study 3: Question God...Again (Hab 1:12-2:20)

1. Review study 1 and 2. Where is the book of Habakkuk placed in the timeline of Old Testament Salvation history? What is the first question Habakkuk asked of God and what was God's answer?
2. When we see human acts of evil on the news (e.g. Murder, Violence, Terrorism et al.), in which innocent people die - what does it make you think about God?

Read Habakkuk 1:12-17.

3. What is the structure of Habakkuk's complaint?
4. Spend some time exploring the fishing imagery of verses 14-17. Why is Habakkuk using this imagery?
 - Why say: 'People are like fish in the sea' and 'sea creatures with no ruler' (14)?
 - Why say: 'he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet' (16)?
 - What say: 'by his net he lives in luxury' (16b)?
5. Summarise what Habakkuk is asking God in verse 13 and verse 17. What is the essence of his second complaint?

Read Habakkuk 2:1-3.

6. What does it tell us about God's timing? Why do you think God is seemingly slow to act sometimes?

Read Habakkuk 2:4-20.

7. Identify the 5 behaviours that God recognizes in Babylon and the punishment they will receive.

	Verses	Behaviour/ attitude leading to woe	Fitting punishment
Woe 1			
Woe 2			
Woe 3			
Woe 4			
Woe 5			

8. How do you respond to this judgment and how do you see similar attitudes/ behaviour around us today?

9. In Verse 4, Habakkuk is told that the righteous person will 'live by his faithfulness'. How is Habakkuk living by faith, different to us living by faith today? See also Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 11:1.

10. How can you live by God's faithfulness in the coming month? What parts of your life do you trust to God's care and what parts need to be changed for that to happen?

Pray about this together.

Study 4: Waiting with Faith (Hab 3:1-19)

How do you react when you have to wait for something?

Read Habakkuk 3.

1. What do verse 1, and verse 19b tell us about the purpose of this chapter? (Note: a 'shigionoth' is thought to be a literary or musical term.)
2. In verse 2, how does Habakkuk view God and what request of God does he have now?
3. What is the effect of the coming of God upon creation and the nations (refer to verse 3-7)?
4. How is God seen as a warrior and what is the impact of him coming (refer to verse 8-15)?
5. For what purpose (c.f. verse 13)?
6. How was this fulfilled in both Israel's past and future?

7. Verses 16-19 give some insight into Habakkuk's reaction to God's action. Is his reaction understandable and appropriate?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10.

8. The Thessalonians (and us) were living in a time of tension. How do Paul's words to them pick up what we've learnt in Habakkuk?
9. Habakkuk ends in waiting and rejoicing in God's character and salvation. How do you see this in Christians around you today?
10. What is the take home message for you?

Spend some time praying.

The Book of Habakkuk (NIV 2011)¹

1 The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.

2 How long, LORD, must I call for help,
but you do not listen?

Or cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not save?

3 Why do you make me look at injustice?
Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and conflict abounds.

4 Therefore the law is paralysed,
and justice never prevails.
The wicked hem in the righteous,
so that justice is perverted.

5 "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.

6 I am raising up the Babylonians,^[a]
that ruthless and impetuous people,
who sweep across the whole earth
to seize dwellings not their own.

7 They are a feared and dreaded people;
they are a law to themselves
and promote their own honour.

8 Their horses are swifter than leopards,
fiercer than wolves at dusk.
Their cavalry gallops headlong;
their horsemen come from afar.

They fly like an eagle swooping to devour;

9 they all come intent on violence.

Their hordes^[b] advance like a desert wind
and gather prisoners like sand.

10 They mock kings
and scoff at rulers.

They laugh at all fortified cities;
by building earthen ramps they capture them.

11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—
guilty people, whose own strength is their god."

12 LORD, are you not from everlasting?
My God, my Holy One, you^[c] will never die.

¹ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

You, LORD, have appointed them to execute judgment;
you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish.

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?

Why are you silent while the wicked
swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

¹⁴ You have made people like the fish in the sea,
like the sea creatures that have no ruler.

¹⁵ The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks,
he catches them in his net,

he gathers them up in his dragnet;
and so he rejoices and is glad.

¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net
and burns incense to his dragnet,
for by his net he lives in luxury
and enjoys the choicest food.

¹⁷ Is he to keep on emptying his net,
destroying nations without mercy?

2 I will stand at my watch
and station myself on the ramparts;
I will look to see what he will say to me,
and what answer I am to give to this complaint.^[a]

² Then the LORD replied:

"Write down the revelation
and make it plain on tablets
so that a herald^[a] may run with it.

³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time;
it speaks of the end
and will not prove false.

Though it linger, wait for it;
it^[a] will certainly come
and will not delay.

⁴ "See, the enemy is puffed up;
his desires are not upright—
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness^[a]—

⁵ indeed, wine betrays him;
he is arrogant and never at rest.

Because he is as greedy as the grave
and like death is never satisfied,
he gathers to himself all the nations
and takes captive all the peoples.

⁶ "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying,

"Woe to him who piles up stolen goods
 and makes himself wealthy by extortion!
 How long must this go on?'

7 Will not your creditors suddenly arise?
 Will they not wake up and make you tremble?
 Then you will become their prey.

8 Because you have plundered many nations,
 the peoples who are left will plunder you.
 For you have shed human blood;
 you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

9 "Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain,
 setting his nest on high
 to escape the clutches of ruin!

10 You have plotted the ruin of many peoples,
 shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.

11 The stones of the wall will cry out,
 and the beams of the woodwork will echo it.

12 "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed
 and establishes a town by injustice!

13 Has not the LORD Almighty determined
 that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire,
 that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of
 the LORD
 as the waters cover the sea.

15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbours,
 pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk,
 so that he can gaze on their naked bodies!

16 You will be filled with shame instead of glory.
 Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed^[a]!
 The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you,
 and disgrace will cover your glory.

17 The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
 and your destruction of animals will terrify you.
 For you have shed human blood;
 you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

18 "Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman?
 Or an image that teaches lies?
 For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation;
 he makes idols that cannot speak.

19 Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!'
 Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!'
 Can it give guidance?
 It is covered with gold and silver;
 there is no breath in it."

20 The LORD is in his holy temple;
 let all the earth be silent before him.

3 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On *shigionoth*.[Ⓜ]

2 LORD, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD.

Repeat them in our day,
in our time make them known;
in wrath remember mercy.

3 God came from Teman,
the Holy One from Mount Paran.[Ⓜ]

His glory covered the heavens
and his praise filled the earth.

4 His splendour was like the sunrise;
rays flashed from his hand,
where his power was hidden.

5 Plague went before him;
pestilence followed his steps.

6 He stood, and shook the earth;
he looked, and made the nations tremble.

The ancient mountains crumbled
and the age-old hills collapsed—
but he marches on forever.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in distress,
the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

8 Were you angry with the rivers, LORD?
Was your wrath against the streams?

Did you rage against the sea
when you rode your horses
and your chariots to victory?

9 You uncovered your bow,
you called for many arrows.

You split the earth with rivers;

10 the mountains saw you and writhed.

Torrents of water swept by;
the deep roared
and lifted its waves on high.

11 Sun and moon stood still in the heavens
at the glint of your flying arrows,
at the lightning of your flashing spear.

12 In wrath you strode through the earth
and in anger you threshed the nations.

13 You came out to deliver your people,
to save your anointed one.

You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness,
you stripped him from head to foot.

14 With his own spear you pierced his head
when his warriors stormed out to scatter us,
gloating as though about to devour

the wretched who were in hiding.
¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses,
 churning the great waters.
¹⁶ I heard and my heart pounded,
 my lips quivered at the sound;
 decay crept into my bones,
 and my legs trembled.
 Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity
 to come on the nation invading us.
¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud
 and there are no grapes on the vines,
 though the olive crop fails
 and the fields produce no food,
 though there are no sheep in the pen
 and no cattle in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
 I will be joyful in God my Saviour.
¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
 he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 he enables me to tread on the heights.
 For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Footnotes

- a. [Habakkuk 1:6](#) Or *Chaldeans*
- b. [Habakkuk 1:9](#) The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.
- c. [Habakkuk 1:12](#) An ancient Hebrew scribal tradition; Masoretic Text *we*
- d. [Habakkuk 2:1](#) Or *and what to answer when I am rebuked*
- e. [Habakkuk 2:2](#) Or *so that whoever reads it*
- f. [Habakkuk 2:3](#) Or *Though he linger, wait for him; / he*
- g. [Habakkuk 2:4](#) Or *faith*
- h. [Habakkuk 2:16](#) Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls, Aquila, Vulgate and Syriac (see also Septuagint) *and stagger*
- i. [Habakkuk 3:1](#) Probably a literary or musical term
- j. [Habakkuk 3:3](#) The Hebrew has *Selah* (a word of uncertain meaning) here and at the middle of verse 9 and at the end of verse 13.