

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Tonight we are going to start a new book.

The book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is considered one of the Minor Prophets –

You had Major Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel and bunch of Minor Prophets –

They are considered Minor Prophets simply because the length of their books is smaller in length than the Major Prophets.

So in our bibles, the major prophets are listed one after another and then we have smaller books of the minor prophets.

So Habakkuk is a minor prophet –

The book of Habakkuk is unusual to the other prophetic book in **that it is not directed at a particular nation.**

In scripture, we find that Hosea and Amos books were addressed toward Israel while many of the other prophetic books are addressed to Judah.

However, Habakkuk is different in that instead of Habakkuk speaking to the people on behalf of God – which was the role of a prophet was, he speaks to God on behalf of the people of Judah.

I find that the book of Habakkuk is very similar to another book in the Old Testament where the protagonist is seeking answers from God?

Does anyone know of the book where the main character is seeking answers from God?

The book of Job –

After everything is taken away from Job, the entire book revolves around him trying to figure out why???

Job's friends come by and give him all these wrong reasons as to why God has done this to him. However, it is not until later in the book that God answers Job.

And it is the same question that Habakkuk asks, why God???

And if you ever read the book of Job, you will find that God answers Habakkuk in the same way that He answers Job.

Let's pray...

From the time I was a little boy until now, I have always been a big superhero fan.

And of all the superheroes, Superman stands above them all, as my favorite.

Whether it was the Old TV series, to the Christopher Reeve movies of the 70's and 80's, I have watched them all.

However, in one of the more recent movies featuring Superman, there is a dialogue between Superman and his arch nemesis that really caught my attention –

Lex Luthor, in the movie makes this statement -

I figured out way back if God is all-powerful, He cannot be all good.

And if He is all good, then He cannot be all-powerful. And neither

can you be (talking to Superman).

Now, I don't think it is a stretch to say that Lex Luthor is not a believer.

I don't know what gives it away, maybe it's his never-ending ambition to take over the world.

This shouldn't be a surprise coming from him.

The quote that he speaks is actually one quoted by a famous philosopher – Epicurus who was an atheist.

You see, the argument from an atheist is the following...

"If God exists and is loving, He would put an end to evil.

If He is all-powerful, He could put an end to evil.

Since evil persists, the all-loving, all-powerful God described in the Bible must therefore not exist."

Church this statement – is referred to as a theodicy.

And what theodicy is - its the study (emphasis on man's attempt) to understand or explain how evil can exist at the same time as an All-Good, All-Powerful God.

In other words, it's the study of why???

The same thing that Job and Habakkuk are seeking.

So let's look at our text,

[Hab 1:1-17 NKJV] 1 The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. 2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear?

Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause [me] to see trouble? For plundering and violence [are] before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. 5 "Look among the nations and watch--Be utterly astounded! For [I will] work a work in your days [Which] you would not believe, though it were told [you]. 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places [that are] not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle [that] hastens to eat. 9 "They all come for

violence; Their faces are set [like] the east wind. They gather captives like sand. 10 They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen [mounds] and seize it. 11 Then [his] mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, [Ascribing] this power to his god." 12 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. 13 [You are] of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, [And] hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A [person] more righteous than he? 14 [Why] do You make men like fish of the sea, Like creeping things [that have] no ruler over them? 15 They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore

**they sacrifice to their net, And burn incense to their dragnet;
Because by them their share [is] sumptuous And their food
plentiful. 17 Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue
to slay nations without pity?**

The prophet Habakkuk lived in the southern kingdom of Judah.

You might remember that last week, I explained that the 12 tribes eventually split into two kingdoms. The Northern kingdom consisted of 10 tribes and the southern kingdom had two – Judah and Benjamin.

All of the kings that arose in the northern kingdom were evil. Every single one of them was wicked in the eyes of the Lord. They instituted the worship of pagan gods. They sacrificed their newborns.

And God brings judgment to the Northern Kingdom through the Assyrians.

In the Southern Kingdom, there were a few good kings but there were also many bad kings.

And judgment has not come upon the Southern Kingdom up to this point,

And it appears that Habakkuk is living in Judah during the reign of a bad king.

How do we know that?

Because of the burden that has been placed upon him.

When we think of a burden, we tend to think of something bad?

But a burden can be something that drives you as well.

God placed a burden in my heart when I started to come down here.

And it was the burden that kept me coming down here even when it was just me at the Starbucks.

The people of Judah is the burden that Habakkuk has.

Habakkuk cares for the wellbeing of Judah, but he can't figure out why God hasn't done anything.

Everywhere that Habakkuk looks – all he can see is the violence around him.

Is God not listening?

Does He not care?

Why is He allowing this wickedness to proceed?

I am pretty sure that there might be times when we ask these same questions especially with what is going on in our own country.

A few days ago, the state of New Jersey passed a law that mandates LGBT history in the classroom.

Other states have been pushing to eliminate restrictions on late term abortions –

Sometimes I feel like they are rubbing it in the face of God – going against His statutes.

Just when we think it cannot get any worse, it does get worse.

Why doesn't God intervene?

It was the wife of Billy Graham, Ruth Graham, who after reading about how perverse our country had become – made the statement, “If God doesn't judge the United States – He owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah”

Let's understand that it is only by His grace that we haven't been judged as a nation. At least, not yet.

Verse 4

[Hab 1:4 NKJV] 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

Things were so bad that the judges had become corrupt.

The prophet Jeremiah writes about what they were doing in Jer 22,

[Jer 22:13-17 NKJV] 13 "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, [Who] uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work, 14 Who says, 'I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling [it] with cedar And painting [it] with vermilion.' 15 "Shall you reign because you enclose [yourself] in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then [it was] well with him. 16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then [it was] well. [Was] not this knowing Me?" says the LORD. 17 "Yet your eyes and your heart [are] for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence."

The judges were ripping the people off – they were getting richer, building bigger homes for themselves.

But the root cause for them doing this was that they had walked away from the Lord.

The same root cause for all the wickedness and violence that was occurring in Judah during the time of Habakkuk.

And it is the same root cause of what is happening in our country. We have walked away from the Lord.

So the first four verse consist of Habakkuk asking God why He hasn't intervene and from verse 5-11 God answers Habakkuk.

So let's look at the response from God.

[Hab 1:5 NKJV] 5 "Look among the nations and watch--Be utterly astounded! For [I will] work a work in your days [Which] you would not believe, though it were told [you].

Translation: Habakkuk, I am going to tell you what I am about to do – and when I tell you, you are not going to believe Me.

[Hab 1:6 NKJV] 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places [that are] not theirs.

“Chaldeans” is another name for the Babylonians.

Up to this point in history, the Assyrians were the empire that dominated the world – they were the ones that conquered the northern kingdom – they were the big kid on the block, but things are going to change.

Notice how it says – I am raising the Chaldeans –

God is in the process of grooming Babylon to judge Judah for their wickedness.

And God raises them to be a military powerhouse that will rule over the area.

In verse 6 God says that they are a bitter and hasty nation.

They don't mess around.

They get things done.

They are efficient in their conquering of nations.

In verse 8 God says that their horses are swifter than leopards, and more fierce than evening wolves.

Babylon would attack and just be unrelenting sending wave after wave of soldiers until the Kingdom had been defeated.

Babylon was one of the first military forces to use a cavalry in the way they fought battles.

They were ruthless –

In verse 9, God is telling Habakkuk that the Babylonians will use violence to combat the violence that came from Judah – remember,

that I what Habakkuk was complaining about the violence that he saw everywhere he turned in Judah.

God gives an insight into the military ingenuity of the Babylonian army in verse 10 as it says that they would overcome the city walls by building earth ramps to the top of these walls. Imagine the resources it would take to do something like this during this time period.

Babylon was driven, fearless and ruthless in their ways and this freight train is headed right for Judah. Nothing is going to stop them.

The last thing Habakkuk thought God was going to do was to utilize the Babylonians to bring judgment upon Judah.

The reason, the Babylonians were even more evil than the people of Judah...

Be careful in what you ask for...

Verse 11,

[Hab 1:11 NKJV] 11 Then [his] mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, [Ascribing] this power to his god."

Even though the Babylonians will be used to bring judgment on Judah, they too will be guilty of sin.

Their sin will be in thinking they are invincible, that their power is their "god".

And we will see that in two weeks when God judges Babylon as He lifts up another nation to bring judgment upon them.

So God provides Habakkuk with His plan to use Babylon and Habakkuk responds with another question.

[Hab 1:12-13 NKJV] 12 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them

**for correction. 13 [You are] of purer eyes than to behold evil,
And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those
who deal treacherously, [And] hold Your tongue when the
wicked devours A [person] more righteous than he?**

Habakkuk's response is one of disbelief.

God truly You cannot use Babylon – I know we are bad but,
Babylon is worse than we are.

But, despite the fact that he simply doesn't understand this work
that God is doing, Habakkuk is confident of the character of God.

Habakkuk does something here that I believe is important for us to
do whenever we question God or His methods.

He declares what he knew to be true about God.

He acknowledges that God is everlasting.

**[Psa 90:2 NKJV] 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or
ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from
everlasting to everlasting, You [are] God.**

Not only has God always existed but He has, is and will be constantly working to accomplish what He has set forth in His word.

For the Jews – that meant that God will not allow them to be destroyed.

For the believer, it means that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it.

No, God wasn't going to allow the Babylonians to destroy the inhabitants of Judah – He had marked them for correction meaning that God was going to simply use them to chastise the nation for its many years of rebellion.

From verses 14-17 Habakkuk, in a last ditch effort, reminds God about how ruthless the Babylonians are.

He uses the analogy of fishing to compare how the Babylonians would come into a land and simply treat the inhabitants as if they were fish and all they had to do was to cast their nets around them.

Conquering Judah was going to be like shooting fish in a barrel for the Babylonians and Habakkuk knew it.

In closing, I remember someone asking me the question as a young Christian as to why the God of the bible doesn't intervene.

They saw what was happening in the world...back in the early 90's with the riots and everything else that was going on.

At that time, I was very unprepared – I was unable to answer the person's question. In fact, I have lost contact with that person. I

don't even know where that person stands spiritually now?

However, if you ever come across anyone who is struggling with discouragement and they ask you, Why doesn't this God of the bible do something?

We need to be able to proclaim, that the God of the bible **has** done something and share with that person the meaning of what Jesus Christ that day on the cross.

We need to be able to proclaim that the God of the bible **will do** something and point to His second coming and judgment.

And we also need to proclaim that the God of the bible **is** doing something and that is He is showing kindness on those that are to receive His wrath, in order to buy time for them so that they might come to repentance.

This is what is called grace church. In the end, this is why we wait upon His perfect timing.

Lex Luthor was wrong in his proclamation.

An all-powerful, All-good God can allow evil in order to obtain the greater, eternal good. This is what we find in this wonderful book of Habakkuk.

I mentioned at the start of the study that Habakkuk and Job each go to God with a why???

In both instances, God never answers their why's

And in both instances, He answers their questions with the revelation of who He is.

God doesn't owe us an explanation for what He does. After all – He is God. Our job, is to submit to His will, and not forget who He is.

Amen...

Let's pray.

