

Habakkuk

Trusting God When You
Don't Understand Him

Study Guide

For McMicken Heights Church

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May 2020

Introduction

Imagine this conversation:

On your third century in heaven, a bearded man walks up to you and says, "Hey, how did you like my book?"

"Yes, your book. Uh... well, uh, er....it was ...good. What was the name of it again?"

"Habakkuk."

"Of course. Great book....I ordered it off Amazon, didn't I?"

"Yes....along with the rest of the Bible. You never read my book, did you?"

"Is it that obvious? But I'm sure it was good....wasn't it?"

"Ever read the words in the Bible, "The just shall live by faith"? Those words were in my book first. And so were "He makes my feet like hinds' feet on high places.""

"That was you, huh? I've heard those words. What's your name again?"

"Habakkuk. Same as the book."

"Oh....ok. So, have you seen Obadiah or Nahum anywhere around here?"

"No, why?"

"I didn't read their books either and I don't want them asking me about it."

Habakkuk. It's one of the twelve books in the Bible we call the Minor Prophets. "Minor", not because they're not important, but because they are shorter than the "Major Prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.).

Here's what you want to know about the man and the book, Habakkuk, before you start reading it.

Habakkuk: the Man

We know nothing about this man other than that he was a prophet of God in the country of Judea some time before the Chaldeans/Babylonians invaded the land in 586 BC. Anything else about Habakkuk we know only by reading between the lines his book. From his book we see this man has great sensitivity. His deep concern about injustice and his prayer in chapter 3 show that Habakkuk had profound faith-driven convictions and was very aware of what was going on in his day. His use of some technical musical notations in chapter 3 suggest he may have been involved in the Temple worship ministry which would have required that he be of the tribe of Levi.

Habakkuk: Why it was written

It was somewhere between 626 B.C. and 590 BC. East of Judah, the former world power, Assyria, has recently become overshadowed by a rising nation of Babylon. Though Judah had been warned by God's prophets to repent of their sins and align themselves with God, it just wasn't in them to do so.

So, Judah lived in sin characterized by injustice against those in their society whom the powerful typically oppress. Apparently, Habakkuk's preaching to turn back to God had met only hard hearts and deaf ears.

So, Habakkuk says to God, "You gotta do something about these children of yours, God. Can't you see they're misbehaving?" The rest of the book is about the ensuing interactions between Habakkuk and God, and Habakkuk's reactions to God's surprising answers.

Habakkuk: What it may say to us

This book speaks to our heart. It asks the very questions of God that we want answers to: "Why?" "and How long?". It shows how God's answers to our questions are not always the answers we're looking for, but also reveals how as believers we may respond to those situations. It describes what trusting God in a storm looks like, and how those who resign themselves to trust God can express that trust.

And, you'll be glad you read this book because when Habakkuk asks in heaven whether you read it, you'll be able to say, "Yes, I *did* read it, and I even know how to spell your name!! One 'B" and three 'K's, right?"

Habakkuk: Using this Study Guide

This Guide will prepare you to think about each short section of this book before the Sunday that the sermon about it is preached. Each section has a few questions to write answers to, so you can get all that you can out of Habakkuk's well of truth. Each week's sermon will be drawn from the same passage you looked at the previous week. So, please keep up weekly.

Set aside a few minutes during the week to read the passage identified and write brief answers to the questions. Some will do this in 10 minutes once during the week. Others may choose to dig deeper a couple of times prior to Sunday to discover more. Do whatever will help you grow through this study.

Week 1, May 4-10

Habakkuk 1:1-4 *Let the Questioning of God Begin*

Most Christians at some time have longed for a chance to dialogue with God, or even to complain to Him about His behavior. Habakkuk is one of the few who has been given the chance. This book starts with the prophet calling a time out to question and complain to the divine Coach on the sidelines. The rest of the book largely consists of Habakkuk responding to the answers which he received.

What are the actual questions that Habakkuk asks God?

What does Habakkuk see in his world that drives him to ask these questions?

What is going on in your world that breaks -or should break-- your heart like Habakkuk's was broken?

Put yourself in Habakkuk's sandals. What do you think Habakkuk actually expected God to do? What do you think he expected God's action to look like?

The Habakkuk Commentary
from the Dead Sea Scrolls



Week 2, May 11-17

Habakkuk 1:5-11 *A Silent God Speaks Up*

What kinds of things in life would you want to know before they happen?
What kinds of things would you *not* want to know before they happen?
Are you *sure* on both of these?

Describe what God says he plans to do to answer the request Habakkuk made of Him in verses 2-4.

What kind of people do these verses say the Babylonians are? What do the verses say they do?

Describe a time that God answered a prayer of yours but then you turned around and said to Him, “What? *That’s* your answer, God?!? Not that?”

Trust His Heart (by Babbie Mason)

*God is too wise to be mistaken
God is too good to be unkind
So when you don't understand
When don't see His plan
When you can't trace His hand
Trust His Heart*

Week 3, May 18-24

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1 *Anything, but That!*

So, how is Habakkuk feeling about God’s solution to the prayer he prayed in verses 2-4? How would you feel if you got that kind of answer?

If you could know nothing about God except what is described in these seven verses, what all would you know about God? (That is, write down everything you can know about God that is described in these verses?)

Why do you think Habakkuk uses so much ink to describe so much about God here?

How do you think God feels about Habakkuk talking to Him in this way?

Week 4, May 25-31

Habakkuk 2:2-5 *Living by Faith*

Habakkuk has now climbed up into a tall tower by himself to have it out with God (see 2:1). And now, God speaks.

What does God say in 2:2 should always be done with whatever God says?

Two kinds of people are identified in verse 4. Describe what makes each unique.

Here's a much more challenging question: Verse 4 is quoted twice in the New Testament: Romans 1:16-17 and in Hebrews 10:32-38.

How are the two NT writers applying the words "the just shall live by faith"? Here's another way to ask that question: How would the two NT writer put the words "the just shall live by faith" into different words?

My Faith has Found a Resting Place (by Don Moen)

*My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device nor creed;
I trust the Ever-living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.*

*I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

Week 5, June 1-7

Habakkuk 2:6-20 *How to Ruin Your Life*

These verses can be divided into 5 sections which all begin with the word "Woe." As I see it, these describe five ways a person can ruin their life.

Put into your own simple words the five ways that Habakkuk says a person can bring "woe" on themselves", that is, can ruin their life. I'll give you what I see the first one could be. You take a stab at the rest.

vv. 6-8 –

Accumulating stuff without actually paying for it.

vv. 9-11 –

vv. 12-14 –

vv. 15-18 –

vv. 19-20 –

Week 6, June 8-14

Habakkuk 3:1-15 *Do it Again*

Oh, for the good old days. They always seemed better. But in this passage of Habakkuk, when he longs for the good old days, they really were better. Or, at least what happened in them was better.

What is Habakkuk asking God to do in verse 2.

Answer that by rewording verse 2 in your own words?

Is there anything like this you would want to ask God to do in our day?

Verses 3-15 suddenly turn very strange. They are using poetic language to describe a well-known event. So, without looking it up in any commentaries, can you figure out what event Habakkuk is writing about in these verses?

Now, look it up somewhere in a Bible commentary or on-line Bible help and reread the verses with that understanding in mind.

Do it Again (by Elevation Worship)

I've seen You move, You move the mountains

And I believe, I'll see You do it again

You made a way, where there was no way

And I believe, I'll see You do it again

Your promise still stands

Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness

I'm still in Your hands

This is my confidence, You never failed me yet.

Week 7, June 15-21

Habakkuk 3:16-19 *It All Comes Down to This*

These final verses of Habakkuk are among the greatest descriptions of what faith looks like in the entire Bible. Yes. It's that profound.

What is it that makes Habakkuk's heart, lips, legs and bones all tremble (verse 16)?

How would you put verses 17-18 in your own words?

There are three names for God in verses 18 and 19. What are they? Do you know what makes each name unique from the others?

One final question:

If someone came up to you this week and asked you, "I hear you're an expert on the book of Habakkuk. What's that book about anyway?" After correcting their pronunciation of Habakkuk, how would you answer them in one sentence? What *is* Habakkuk about?

*The Sovereign Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer.*

Habakkuk 3:10