

## **Habakkuk: From Complaints to Praises** – Rev. Garen Pay

Habakkuk was a prophet of Judah around 600 BC. He was a prophet during the reign of an evil king – Jehoiakim. Imagine having his Call and Office, “Go to a king and people who are corrupt and idolatrous. Go to a people who mock and spurn God’s laws and preach the truth to them. Go to the few faithful people also, and tell them there is hope even though they are persecuted. Tell them that there is salvation, even though all they see is death and wickedness. Oh, and have fun!”

Habakkuk has a tough job. He must preach the law to people who don’t want to hear it. And Gospel to people who see no evidence of a loving God. This book naturally brings up questions of Good and Evil and God’s Work in History. But there are also beautiful promises of hope for his people, don’t miss them or their fulfillment in history and in Jesus!

Habakkuk means “One who embraces.” Would he embrace his difficult Call? Would he embrace God’s people, share their fears and sorrows, and deliver to them the comforting embrace of God’s Word?

### **Chapter 1: A Divine Debate**

#### **Read 1:1-4**

What is Habakkuk’s complaint?

*Complaining is easy.* What complaints do you have with you here tonight?

What complaints are others making about you?

**Read Colossians 3:12-17 and Ephesians 4:1-3** What does it mean to “bear with one another”?

Is every complaint worth fighting about?

Where can we find strength to “bear with others?”

Are some complaints worth voicing?

How can we tell?

Can we bring complaints to God? \_\_\_\_\_. Fair warning: A \_\_\_\_\_ is a complaint that comes from unbelief. Bring your laments and complaints to God in faith that He cares.

What complaints do you have for God?

Read Habakkuk 1:5-11

Is God doing something about the wickedness in Judah?

Who is he raising up?

The Chaldeans are the pre-cursors of the \_\_\_\_\_ Empire under King Nebuchadnezzar II who would conquer Judah in 597 and 587 BC.

Does that sound like good news to you?

Read Habakkuk 1:12-17

Does Habakkuk still trust in God?

Does he still have questions for God?

Can you relate?

Look at verses 15-17 again. Who does "he," the Babylonian king, worship?

Habakkuk is struggling with how and why God would use evil, bloodthirsty idolaters for His purposes.

Can you think of any other times God uses evil for His means?

*We cannot always discern how God is at work in history, or why He lets evil triumph at times. But we can be confident that God is still in control, works for the good of His faithful people, and, in Jesus, has promised payment for our evil and victory over evil for all His people.*

## Chapter 2: The Lord's Justice is Sure

Last session we saw that God will use evil for His purposes. This session, we hope to learn that God's ways, while not always clearly discerned by us, are higher than our ways and that our God will never forsake His people of *faith*.

Read Habakkuk 2:1 Do we *deserve* to hear from the Lord?

Why is Habakkuk bold to wait for the Lord's response?

Read Job 38:1-4 Should a Word from the Lord be heard lightly or the presence of the Lord be entered into lightly? Why or why not?

Read Habakkuk 2:2-3 Is it a mercy that the Lord responds to his prophet?

But is Habakkuk in charge?

How does God promise to speak to us?

Whose "fault" is it if God's Work and Word seem slow?

Read Habakkuk 2:4 Whose soul is puffed up?

- 1.
- 2.

What is the "state of the soul" for the person of *faith*?

True or False: The people in the Old Testament were saved by doing the Law, not by faith in God's promises.

Read Habakkuk 2:5-14

Will the evil Chaldeans triumph in the end?

Whose name will be hallowed in the earth and whose plans will always come to fruition?

Read Habakkuk 2:15-20

Will the wicked in this world prosper in the end?

Will the idols save the wicked from God's hand (even the real shiny ones)?

*Luther: Our god is whatever we fear, love, and trust in the most.* Does our world still have idols?

Do we have idols that tempt us?

*But the Lord lives! And He is not silent, no, the earth is silent before His presence! Will Habakkuk respond to this mighty God? Will he still question the Lord's justice?*

*Idols don't teach (verse 19), but the Lord does.* What can we learn about God's justice in a broken world?

*Theodicy* is the problem of the following three truths:

1. God is all-powerful
2. God is good
3. Evil exists

*Sometimes, when a tragedy happens, we try to deny one of the three truths.* Can you think of any examples? How about from Habakkuk?

How can we let the three truths stand? The \_\_\_\_\_! *God let evil and death come upon himself, but then he triumphed over it. So all things are in submission to Him and His will and He will use evil for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). That doesn't mean it is fun. It doesn't mean we will never lament, like Habakkuk, but it does mean that He is good, powerful, and victorious over evil - and He has promised that one day we will be too!*

### **Chapter 3: The fear and praise of the Lord**

Read Habakkuk 3:1 Habakkuk doesn't offer up another *complaint* to God, what does he offer up?

Is there a difference – even if subtle?

Read Habakkuk 3:2-15 Who does Habakkuk acknowledge is the most wise, mighty, and awesome?

Is it possible God knows more about the people of God's complaints than even they do?

Is it possible God knows what is best for His people, even if through suffering?

Is it possible God has a more lasting, more eternal vision for his people?

Is it possible God knows a bit more about your complaints than you do?

Does that change your perspective? How?

Read Habakkuk 3:16 Is Habakkuk still afraid?

But does he trust the vindication and mercy that God has promised? How can you tell?

Read Habakkuk 3:17-19

True or False: The earthly blessings God gives us are a direct indication of his love for us.

Why, in the midst of suffering, will Habakkuk still praise the Lord?

*Ever seen a deer or goat on a rocky cliff? Evil and danger surrounds them, but they walk nimbly. God will see us through evil and suffering to his Kingdom.*

*“Selah” is hard to translate, but it is an indication of a musical interlude. Why does chapter 3 have them and not chapters 1 and 2?*

*Habakkuk didn't get all his complaints answered exactly how he might have wanted, but he did find reassurance that the true God is mighty, yet merciful to hear his complaints, teach his prophet, and strengthen his faith that he might praise Him, even in the midst of a broken world. May this book remind us of God's power, but also his mercy.*

### **Review**

In a world of complainers, how can we seek to bear with one another, while still standing for the truth?

How can we, undeserving complainers, approach a Holy and Mighty God?

What praise can you offer God, even in the midst of your petitions, needs, and hardships?

*The Righteous shall live by his faith. - Habakkuk 2:4b*