

BOOK OF HABAKKUK

1. This is a small book of 3 chapters only. It is pretty obscure and many people use the verses from the book out of context.
2. It is a unique prophetic book. Usually, prophetic books are warning messages that God gave to His prophets to warn the people. But here, Habakkuk complained or lamented to God, just like Prophet Jeremiah did in the book of Lamentations. Habakkuk was telling God about His people's sufferings and asking God why there was no action from Him. Habakkuk was asking for God's attention and answer.
3. The setting of the book:
 - a) Habakkuk lived in Judah where the conditions were bad. There was so much corruption and violence that it was not even safe to walk in the city any more.
 - b) So, Habakkuk argued with God, and he basically said, "If You are good and powerful, why do You let good people suffer and evil people prosper?"
 - c) This is a key question that everyone asks. If He is holy, good and powerful, we cannot understand why God does not act. Most of us are too polite to question God and think it is not right to do so, especially so in the Asian culture where we are trained not to question authorities.
 - d) But God allows such questions and complaints. God wants us to process such emotions, not suppress them, otherwise these emotions may become stumbling blocks to our faith.
 - e) Habakkuk received his answer in Chapter 3 and praised God.
 - f) If you have questions as a Christian, check the Scriptures or ask God directly. We have a personal relationship with God. God will show you his answer, either by the Scriptures or a person or circumstances. As long as we come humbly before God and with confidence (i.e. with balance), we can ask God about our doubts. You see a new view of God, a loving Father who allows us to come to Him boldly, see Hebrews 4:15-16. Also see Daniel 10:12.

Chapter 1

1. Habakkuk 1:2-4. This is an interrogatory prayer. It was Habakkuk's Complaint #1.
 - a) Habakkuk interrogated God. He asked God how long should he cry and yet there would be no answer from God.
 - b) Why did God let him see such iniquities and injustice in Judah? Everyone was quarrelling. People who were wrong got the advantage. And why did God do nothing?
 - c) This seems to be especially the case today in many third-world countries.
2. Habakkuk 1:5-11
 - a) This was God's reply to Habakkuk's question in verses 2 to 4.
 - b) God said He would raise the Chaldeans (i.e. Babylonians) to punish the people in Judah (the Southern Kingdom of Israel).
 - c) At that time, Babylon was the rising power while Assyrian was declining in power. Babylon adopted a scorched-earth policy and hence the country they attacked would just surrender to avoid a total destruction by Babylon.

- d) To Habakkuk, this was a shocking reply from God, and it was not what Habakkuk expected to hear.
 - e) But God's way is higher than our way, see Isaiah 55:8. His time frame is longer than ours because God lives in eternity. God always use one evil nation to destroy another evil nation. As an empire became corrupted, it declined and then was conquered by another. No earthy kingdom can last. We have to look to the eternal Kingdom of God.
 - f) Habakkuk, like us, only saw what he wanted to see. So, he complained to God about what he saw and asked God why He did not see the happenings.
 - g) All of us have tunnel-vision (ie, a very narrow view).
3. Habakkuk 1:12-17. This was Habakkuk's Complaint #2.
- a) Habakkuk was shocked! He could not understand why God would raise an evil nation like Babylon to punish Israel. God is holy but why did He raise the nation of Babylon, which is more wicked than Judah, to punish His own people? Why would God allow evil men to do evil things? Why would God use unholy people to punish His own people?
 - b) Habakkuk 1:13. Habakkuk maintained that the purer eyes of God does not behold evil. This verse is often misquoted by pastors. It is not that God does not see all our sins. He sees every murder, rape, etc. He looks at it in detail.
 - c) Habakkuk 1:14-17. Babylon killed people like fishermen using dragnet to fish. These are poetic verses expressing how wicked Babylon was. Humans do not have feelings for fishes in dragnet unlike trapped animals. That is what cruel men do to others. They see slaves like fishes and have no feeling for them as humans, just like in the Nazi's Holocaust which killed many Jews! Another example, is how the wicked people make drug addicts out of others, etc. We see the evil of human hearts.

Chapter 2

1. Habakkuk 2:1. Here, Habakkuk was waiting for God to answer His question in Habakkuk 1:12-17. He said God is holy, yet would He do this? He would stand watch and see if God would really do it. He did not believe God would send in the Babylonians.
2. Habakkuk 2:2. God replied and said what He had decided to do was NOT going to change and asks Habakkuk to write the vision down in black and white. Messengers were to run with these written words to tell the Israelites to either repent after reading it, or be frightened and run away.
3. Habakkuk 2:3.
 - a) The appointed time might look delayed but it would surely come! God told Habakkuk that there was no need to stand and wait to see. It would surely come in His appointed time.
 - b) Not only do we have a narrow view but have a short time frame as well. Humans only live 70 to 80 years unlike God's eternity which has no time element.
4. Habakkuk 2:4.

- a) This verse is most quoted by the Protestant Reformation. “The just (or righteous) shall live by his faith”.
 - i. It was used by Martin Luther to fight the Catholic Church which taught salvation by works.
 - ii. We, Christians should live by faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross and it will result in good works.
 - iii. But the context is different here, it is not about saving faith.
 - b) God told Habakkuk that though he would not see it yet, but he must believe that God would send in the Babylonians to punish Israel.
 - i. We must have faith in God’s Word. Just as in Romans 4:21 which says, “Believe that what He had promised, He will also be able to deliver or perform”.
 - ii. Habakkuk 2:4 is not about “Justification by Faith” but “Sanctification by Faith”. This means living day by day in faith, as in Galatians 2:20, after we have trusted in Christ.
 - c) Trust what God says, not what we see. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “Walk by faith, not by sight”. Hence the righteous (or just) shall live by faith. The righteous here refers to those who are already saved by believing in Christ and trusting in Him.
5. Habakkuk 2:5-6.
- a) It is the nature of sinful man and his bottomless greed. Even billionaires want more.
 - b) A bottomless pit is like Sheol which is filled with dead bodies, but is never full and want more dead people to go there. The problem with Sheol is that even if you throw in more, yet nothing good comes out of it, it only results in more dead bodies.
 - c) The richer you get, the more problems you will face in your family, e.g. family members will fight over wealth, etc. Money brings more problems and miseries. The rich people do not realise that they are filling their bottomless greed with misery.
6. Habakkuk 2:7-8.
- a) Woes (or curses) to those who take from others the things that do not belong to them.
 - b) The remnant of those whom they killed would take revenge one day and plunder them back.
7. Habakkuk 2:9. Many people think the richer they are, the more secure they will be. Their security is in money but actually their riches are the targets for attacks. It is the perverse thinking of the rich fools.
8. Habakkuk 2:10-13. People weary themselves with these works for possessions. It is a pure waste of time.
9. Habakkuk 2:14. This verse seems to be out of the blue. But it means that what people gathered will be useless when they die, like what Job said in Job 1:21-22.

You cannot bring a single cent with you in death, but the knowledge of the glory of God lasts forever and it covers the Earth as the waters cover the sea.

10. Habakkuk 2:15-16. People make others drunk so that they will behave shamefully. They make them drunk to gaze at their nakedness (e.g. rape drunken women). One day these people will expose themselves also in drunkenness. This is the folly of man.
11. Habakkuk 2:18-19. Woe to idol makers.
12. Habakkuk 2:20.
 - a) This verse is often used to prepare people for worship. But the context is that Babylonians would turn to their idols for help when God judges them, but their dumb idols would not be able to help them.
 - b) This verse tells us that God is always there. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that God is always there".
 - c) You want an answer in the midst of troubles? Know that God is still on the Throne; He remembers His own people and is in control. What is God going to do next? We do not know. Why is it happening? We do not need to know.

Chapter 3 - Song of Praise

This chapter is very different from Chapters 1 and 2 (which are full of complaints). There was no more question or complaint from Habakkuk. Habakkuk realized that God is always on the Throne (Habakkuk 2:20).

1. Habakkuk 3:1-16.
 - a) The word "Shigionoth" is a musical term. This is a prayer or a song of praise written by Habakkuk. "Selah" is just a pause.
 - b) He sang about the wonderful things God did for Israel in the past. He trembled in amazement.
 - c) Therefore, we must realise that kingdoms come and go but God is still on the Throne. We can trust Him by looking back at the good He did for us when we were in fear or in trouble. Look back at how God showed His power in the past and then you can trust Him for the future. He can do it again.
2. Habakkuk 3:17-19.
 - a) Habakkuk said, "Even if there is no food and no flock, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, the God of my salvation. He is my strength."
 - b) "To the Chief Musician" means "to my Choir Master".
 - c) Habakkuk, in verse 17, described Babylonian's scorched-earth policy. But even then, Habakkuk rejoiced because he knew that God had a bigger plan than this immediate crisis. God would make him like that deer which could stand on small high ledges of the hills and yet be totally stable.
 - d) You will be stable and not fall if you know God is still on the Throne, see Psalm 139:165.

Summary

Habakkuk is a poetic and beautiful book.

1. We always complain and ask God, "Why is it like this?" But we must remember God has a bigger plan for us. We don't need to know His plan but only remember He is on

His Throne. Rest assured! Let your feet stand and be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10).

2. The book of Habakkuk tells us that life is full of problems and injustice, and wicked men are everywhere. Why should we be perplexed?
 - a) Genesis Chapter 3 says that God already cursed the Earth due to Adam's fall. But God has a redemption plan and we can live by faith and await the eternal Kingdom of God which will have eternal righteousness and justice. It will be a renovated and much more glorious Garden of Eden.
 - b) We will not see His plan until the appointed time intended for us, see Hebrews 9:27-28. God will reveal Christ to the Israelites in due course but Habakkuk would not see it yet.