

Message #3

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

One of the major theological questions people have is how can God permit certain things to happen? Why doesn't God prevent things and stop things from happening? This is one of the major arguments used in atheism. If you believe in God, how could your God allow horrible people to do horrible things? How could a just God allow unjust things to happen in this world?

Well let us say that first of all, justice from our perspective and God's perspective is very different. What we think is the just thing and the right thing may not actually be. For example, someone breaks into a woman's apartment and kills a woman with a knife. To all of us, this appears to be a totally unjust, senseless, evil murder. However, when it is later discovered that the woman had several abortions in which many different babies were killed with a knife, things don't quite appear to be the same anymore.

Another example is someone gets the dreaded HIV virus. To us that appears to be such a horrible thing. Our heart goes out to people who have it. In fact, I heard someone actually ask one time, "Why would God allow someone to get AIDS?" We don't specifically know. But when we learn that there had been immoral sexual activity or we learn that someone had taken a needle full of drugs and pumped it in his or her own arm, it does give you a different perspective.

When we see a tragedy, there is so much we don't know about it because we aren't God. We don't know all that is happening and we don't know all that God is permitting and we don't know the mind of God. The truth is we who know the Lord don't have a clue sometimes as to what God is doing, but what we do see from this book is that **we who know the Lord, live our lives by faith believing God completely knows what He is doing.**

When we come to this text, we learn something very important and that is when we have these questions and concerns, we do have every right to go to God and talk to Him about it.

This is a message we need. We need to learn to go to God. We don't need to be running around talking to everyone else; but we certainly have a right to go to God. That is what we learn right here in Habakkuk.

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT GOD IS ALLOWING TO HAPPEN, THOSE RIGHT WITH GOD GO TO GOD AND TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT; AND THEY CONTINUE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES BY FAITH BELIEVING THAT GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL.

Now let's set the context of this. God had just given a graphic description of the kind of people He was going to use as a means of judgment (1:6-11). God was in the process of raising up a group of people who were God-mocking, arrogant, godless and ruthless. They were power-crazed people who would butcher other people. They were irrational and evil and out of their minds. God said this is the kind of people I am going to use for My judgment purposes.

The problem Habakkuk had with what God told him was that he could not figure out how God could use such an unholy and ungodly group of people like the Chaldean-Babylonian-Arabs to punish His own people, when those people were far more godless and ruthless than God's people. How could God use a bunch of Arab terrorist-types to accomplish His purpose?

Habakkuk was a thinking prophet and he really struggled with the idea of this. He was a prophet, who was supposed to take the message of God to the people of God, but he did not like the message and he could not theologically figure out how God could let evil people and evil powers get away with doing bad and horrible things to His own people.

So in this part of the book, Habakkuk really decides to debate that point with God. Now there is much to learn from this text. There are three key observations we want to see from these verses from which we may glean a great deal:

OBSERVATION #1 – Habakkuk begins debating with God by acknowledging great theological truths about God. **1:12-13a**

Now the first thing we may observe from these verses is that Habakkuk is theologically sound. He has a true faith in God and a true faith in God's Word. He believes that when God says something, God will always do what He says. There are nine theological truths Habakkuk admits here:

Theological Truth #1 - God is the everlasting God. **1:12a**

Now Habakkuk begins this great section by acknowledging that God is the “everlasting God.” What he is admitting is that God has been the sovereign, eternal God throughout everything that has happened in time. In other words, all things that have happened in history have happened under the authority of the God of the Bible. God is the One who created time; He is over time and He is over everything that is happening in time. He is the everlasting God.

Theological Truth #2 - God is the LORD. **1:12b**

This noun Jehovah, which means that God is the Sovereign I am, who is in a covenant relationship with Israel. God had just revealed that He was going to raise up a power to destroy Israel and yet Habakkuk knew the theological reality that God is the covenant God of Israel.

Theological Truth #3 - God is my God. **1:12c**

Carefully observe how Habakkuk personalizes God. The Sovereign, Holy God is his God, “my” God. The noun “God” is Elohim, which means God is the Sovereign Creator who has plurality. He has all power to do all things, including create things out of nothing. Habakkuk knew he had a personal relationship with God. He knew God is “my God.”

Now this is comforting to know when horrible things are happening. It is good to know that the Sovereign, Triune Creator of all things is your personal God.

Theological Truth #4 - God is my Holy One. **1:12d**

This refers to the fact that God is majestically set apart as Holy unto Himself. Now what that specifically means in this context is that since God is Holy, He cannot lie; He cannot sin; He cannot do evil. So if He enters into a covenant relationship with His people and He promises them things like a Promised Land, a Righteous King and a Kingdom in which Israel is esteemed as the nation of God, His holiness demands that He do that.

If God promises I will pour out My wrath on certain people who are committing abominable sins, His Holiness demands that He do that. Now Habakkuk says this Holy one is My Holy One.

Theological Truth #5 - God has revealed “we will not die.” **1:12e**

Habakkuk knew of the unconditional promises that God had made to Israel. He knew of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants in which God made some amazing promises to Israel that one day she would have all of the blessings of God in spite of her failures and sin. So Habakkuk knew that even if God permitted His people to experience judgment, he would never permit them to experience annihilation.

God may allow His people to be severely punished, but He will not allow His people to be completely destroyed.

Theological Truth #6 - God has appointed Babylonians to judge. **1:12f**

Now this is where Habakkuk starts to zero in on his personal struggle. Habakkuk realized that God had appointed the Chaldeans/Babylonians to be used as judges against His own people. He is about to question the fact that God would use such a godless, ruthless and Bible-mocking people in a judgment against His own people.

Theological Truth #7 - God is the Rock. **1:12g**

What Habakkuk states here is that God is stable and unmovable in His Person and Work. God is a rock who cannot be moved from His promises so Habakkuk truly believes God is going to bring the Babylonians against Israel as a judgment and corrective punishment.

Theological Truth #8 - God has established them to correct us. **1:12e**

Look at the theology of this verse. Habakkuk clearly believed in divine election in every sphere of life, including the divine election of the lost, godless, heathen world.

He believed that God was sovereign over all things and all people and that He could choose to use horrible, evil people as a means of punishing His own people. Habakkuk believed that God could choose a guy like Hitler, and establish him to be a judgment tool to punish His own people.

Theological Truth #9 - God is too pure to approve evil or wickedness. **1:13**

Now **verse 13** presents the great theological issue. Since God is the Holy God, Habakkuk knew the theological truth that God is too holy and too pure to approve of evil or favor people who are wicked.

Habakkuk knew that God was sovereign and holy. He could not ever do evil, so he is struggling with the concept of how God could elect and sanction wicked, evil people to do such treacherous things to His own people.

Now herein lies the problem. The problem is how could God, who is totally and completely sovereign and pure, seemingly bless an evil, godless power who would do horrific things to His own people.

OBSERVATION #2 – Habakkuk continues debating with God by acknowledging several evil truths about the Babylonians. **1:13b-17**

Habakkuk is not questioning God's Person; he is questioning God's methodology in using the Babylonians. To Habakkuk, there appeared to be an inconsistency between God's actions and God's character.

Now Habakkuk asks God three questions:

(Question #1) - Why would you look with favor on people who deal treacherously? **1:13b**

Now the first couple of questions are aimed at the corruption that Habakkuk saw not only within Israel's political leadership, but also what he would see with the Babylonians.

This question was addressing the matter of God seeming to favor people within his own country who were God-mocking people. He specifically had in mind the corrupt politicians who were controlling the government. Why would God let political leaders win elections and get into power when He knows they don't care about Him or His Word?

(Question #2) - Why would you keep silent when the wicked people are devouring people more righteous than they are? **1:13c**

Habakkuk could not figure out how God could let a king get away with evil things and do nothing about it. He was permitting sinful, evil people to run things and it seemed like they were getting away unscathed.

(Question #3) - Why did you even make men like the fish of the sea? **1:14**

This is a very serious accusation against God; because Habakkuk is assuming that God has made all men and designed them in such a way that they swarmed all over the world in a ruthless, evil, independent way. Habakkuk is saying God, men all over the world refuse to submit to your authority and you made them.

Habakkuk could not believe that God would even allow a group of people who are ruthless and evil to live.

Now there are five evil truths that Habakkuk observes about the Babylonians:

Evil Truth #1 - The Babylonians literally take people captive with hooks. **1:15a**

The Babylonians literally did string people up on a line with hooks and take them captive. They made them march single file hooked together like fish on a line. This shows you how brutal they were.

Evil Truth #2 - The Babylonians literally drag people away with nets. **1:15b**

The Babylonians were conquering smaller nations and God seemed to be doing nothing about it. They literally would drag dead bodies of people by using hooks and nets.

Evil Truth #3 - The Babylonians rejoice and are happy to hurt and destroy people. **1:15c**

Most people are sad when they see other people hurt, but not these people. The Babylonians were so evil that they rejoiced over a good catch and slaughter of people. People to them were nothing more than fish to be destroyed.

Evil Truth #4 - The Babylonians worship their own works, not the true God. **1:16a**

The Babylonians were not interested in the true, Sovereign God. In fact, the Babylonians were so evil they worshipped their own tools and weapons of war. They worshipped their own achievements.

Evil Truth #5 - The Babylonians worship their own works because they are very successful. **1:16b**

They catch a large number of people and take them captive and they have all kinds of food to eat. Habakkuk could not figure out how God could use such a depraved group of people and permit them to get away with their evil. He was completely baffled.

In **verse 17**, Habakkuk says to God, are you going to permit this evil group to continue to slay people. Are you going to continue to permit them to take them captive and then kill them? God, don't you realize they will not spare anybody? Are you going to permit this to continue?

OBSERVATION #3 – Habakkuk informs God what he will do as he waits for an answer. **2:1**

Now Habakkuk had laid this out before God and he wanted God to answer, but as he waited for his answer, he would be involved in four actions:

Action #1 - He would stand his guard post. **2:1a**

Habakkuk was a prophet who saw himself as being responsible to guard the people of God. He saw his responsibility to carefully understand God's Word and communicate truth to people and he would not run away from his responsibility.

Action #2 - He would station himself on the rampart. **2:1b**

Now Habakkuk was not about to try and escape himself in light of what God revealed. He would take a stand and station himself as a watchman.

Action #3 - He would watch to see what God would say. **2:1c**

Habakkuk wanted to know truth so he could report it to the people. But before he would reveal all of the horrible things God would permit, he wanted answers. He would wait for God.

Action #4 - He would wait to see how he would reply to God's reproof. **2:1d**

Habakkuk assumed his thinking was way off. He assumed that God would reprove him for the way he thought and for the questions he asked. In fact, it is clear that Habakkuk thought he would be reprovved by God, and he was pondering how he would answer God. He did expect that his thinking was off; but what we see is that he went to God with what he was thinking.

How do we cope with things we see that God permits that we do not understand? What do we do when we see godless political leaders doing things that are completely opposite of what God wants?

(Lesson #1) - Don't panic.

(Lesson #2) - Do pray—talk to God. Take your questions and concerns to God.

(Lesson #3) - Don't quit—Do not abandon responsibilities because you are discouraged.
Habakkuk had questions but he did not quit.

(Lesson #4) - Stay faithful. Keep faithful in coming to services and in service as you wait for answers.

(Lesson #5) - Study God's Word—Real answers to difficult questions come from the Word of God.

But you can know this beyond any shadow of doubt—our God is in complete, sovereign control of everything, even the things we cannot explain and the just people live their lives by faith believing that.