

**Sermon, October 23, 2011**  
***“Questioning God”, Habakkuk 1:2-4;12-17***  
**Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy**

**The Books of Prophecy**

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, **Habakkuk**, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

**Overview of Habakkuk<sup>1</sup>:**

- The prophet Habakkuk is the likely author.
- Habakkuk means “one who embraces”.
- The time of the writings is around 605 BC.
- Contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zephaniah.
- Habakkuk prophesied during the final days of the Assyrian Empire and the beginning of Babylonia’s world rulership under Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar.
- When Nabopolassar ascended to power in 626 B.C., he immediately began to expand his influence to the N and W. Under the leadership of his son, the Babylonian army overthrew Nineveh in 612 B.C., forcing the Assyrian nobility to take refuge first in Haran and then Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar pursued them, overrunning Haran in 609 B.C. and Carchemish in 606 B.C.
- The Egyptian king Necho, traveling through Judah in 609 B.C. to assist the fleeing Assyrian king, was opposed by King Josiah at Megiddo (2 Chr. 35:20–24). Josiah was killed in the ensuing battle, leaving his throne to a succession of 3 sons and a grandson.
- Earlier, as a result of discovering the Book of the Law in the temple (622 B.C.), Josiah had instituted significant spiritual reforms in Judah (2 Kin. 22,23), abolishing many of the idolatrous practices of his father Amon (2 Kin. 21:20–22) and grandfather Manasseh (2 Kin. 21:11–13).
- Upon his death, however, the nation quickly reverted to her evil ways (cf. Jer. 22:13–19), causing Habakkuk to question God’s silence and apparent lack of punitive action (1:2–4) to purge His covenant people.
- **Overall Outline of Habakkuk:**
  - I. Habakkuk’s first questions (1:1-4)
  - II. God’s answer to the first questions (1:5-11)
  - III. Habakkuk’s second questions (1:12-2:1)
  - IV. God’s answer to the second questions (2:2-20)
  - V. Habakkuk’s prayer (Ch. 3)

**Major Themes of Habakkuk:**

- God is sovereign over all circumstances.
- God will always provide a righteous response.
- God’s ways are not our ways.
- God allows us to question Him so that our faith is strengthened..

***The message of Habakkuk is... God permits us to question Him, in order that you may gain a greater understanding of His ways, as you hear His response, and your faith is strengthened.***

**1. Habakkuk asks four basic questions to God. The first one is: Does God really hear my prayers?**  
**Habakkuk 1:2-4**

- Habakkuk has been praying to the LORD for a long time yet God seems like He does not hear.
- Sometimes we view prayer as a monologue. I speak and God should listen and act on what I want.
- We forget that it is a dialogue. You speak to God and He speaks to you!
- When you do not “hear” God respond it may be a result of one of three issues:
- Unconfessed sin in your life. ...or...
- You really do hear what God is saying, you just don’t like it...or...
- God is silent because He wants to bring you to a state of absolute dependence and trust in Him

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Hab 1:1

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2. **Habakkuk has a lesson to learn. His second question is another one we have all encountered; “If you do hear me, then why do you let my people do all this bad stuff around me?”**

**Habakkuk 1:3-4**

- Habakkuk is saying, “God, there is destruction, violence, strife, contention, law is ignored, no justice, wickedness surrounds me, my people are far from you, so...if you are God then your justice is perverted.”
- Why does God not seem to act sometimes? **Isaiah 55:8-9**
- God does answer prayers, and often He does so in a way you would not expect or see as the righteous solution to your problem...
- In Habakkuk’s case God will answer his prayer through the purging of the nation by an even more evil nation, the Babylonians.(1:5-11)

3. **God’s answer to prayer brings Habakkuk to his third inquiry, questioning even the holiness of God!**

**Habakkuk 1:12-17**

- Habakkuk is questioning the judgment, holiness and maybe even the existence of God.
- Have you prayed for deliverance from some circumstance, only to plunge further into the dismal surroundings of your original problem?
- Such circumstances can cause you to question God. To question if there even is a God. BUT...
- Can you be presumptuous on what you expect God should do?
- When God is silent, then when God does answer your prayers in a way that you think is totally opposite how you would do it, you are to be patient and know that He is God, that God loves you and will never forsake you, that God desires what is best for you. **Romans 8:28**

4. **Habakkuk’s fourth and last question concerns God’s motives and acceptance of evil behavior.**

**Habakkuk 1:13-17**

- Habakkuk is saying, “I don’t get it! You obviously must approve of evil behavior because you going to let these things happen and not do anything about it!”
- However, God does answer him (1) that justice will prevail (2:5-20) and (2) reminds the prophet how those who follow God shall live... **Habakkuk 2:4** -- *but the righteous will live by his faith*—
- **Habakkuk! Have faith!**
- God has plans for His people that you do not now see. He has plans for you that you have not even thought about yet. His ways are for your good and His justice will go forth and be realized.
- God wants you to have **faith** in Him in the middle of dire circumstances.
- **Jeremiah 29:10-14**

5. **Conclusion**

- Yes Habakkuk questions God’s silence, His allowance of evil, His holiness, His response to his prayers, His apparent approval of evil behavior...
- But, Habakkuk hears God and responds in chapter three with a passionate prayer of song with empowered faith...
- **Habakkuk 3:17-19** <sup>17</sup> *[No matter what happens in the circumstances around me],* <sup>18</sup> *yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.* <sup>19</sup> *The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*
- ***The message of Habakkuk is... God permits us to question Him, in order that you may gain a greater understanding of His ways, as you hear His response, and your faith is strengthened.***