

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk 1:1-17

Prophet to the Southern Kingdom

Of the twelve Minor Prophets none wrestled more earnestly with the problem of evil in society than Habakkuk. Habakkuk was the “thinking” prophet who raised deep questions about the workings of God in history—why God does what He does—why He does it in the way He does—and why He sometimes does nothing. Habakkuk was a kind of Job of the prophets; like the afflicted patriarch he wrestled with the hard problem of permitted evil and also like Job he found peace through an overwhelming vision of the greatness of the LORD.

Open Your Heart: Holy God, cause our faith in You and Your inscrutable ways to run deeper still as we explore Habakkuk’s soul searching questions and ponder Your awe-inspiring response.

Getting Started

Reflect on “Points to Ponder” from Lesson 1—in light of your study of Amos, Joel and Nahum.

Review your observations concerning the book of Habakkuk from Lesson 1.

Locate Habakkuk and his contemporaries on the Timeline.

Read Habakkuk 1:1 from the NASB translation.

Understanding Habakkuk’s World

The Seventh Century B.C. was a critical time in the history of the Hebrew people. It was the prelude to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity for the people of Judah. After the fall of Assyria, Babylon became the imperial center of Mesopotamia for the first time in over a thousand years, leading to the New-Babylonian Empire. The ministry of three Minor Prophets falls in this period: *Nahum*, *Zephaniah* and *Habakkuk*. From Habakkuk’s writings we can determine that he prophesied sometime after the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. and before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

This was also a significant time in the religious life of Judah. In the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah he began to repair the temple which had been allowed to fall into ruin. In the process of this repair, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law of the LORD which had been missing for years. When Josiah and those who were with him heard the Words of God they were convicted of their sins and wept before the LORD.

Read the entire account in 2 Chronicles 34:14-33. (Notice especially verses 27-28.) Then **read** 2 Chronicles 35:20-25.

1. What do we learn from these portions of Scripture that are essential to understanding Habakkuk’s world?

Heart Check: What do you do when you face hard questions and uncertainties in life? Do you work through them with God in prayer as Habakkuk did?

Some people think that believers should never question God. That we should just sit and wait faithfully and patiently. But one thing we can learn from Habakkuk is that this is a misconception. All thinking Christians will wrestle with the problem of evil. (See Psalm 73 for instance.)

6. **How can you use your struggles with the problem of evil to go deeper with God?** Give an example of how you have experienced this truth in your life; or provide an example of how you need to work through some of these issues with God in prayer—waiting on Him for answers.

The dialogue began with Habakkuk's cry of despair to God because nothing was being done to straighten out the perverse evil of his day: the people of Judah continued in their sin, God continued in His long-suffering, and the prophet was baffled!

Now the LORD responds to His prophet: (verses 5-11) and Habakkuk records it for time and eternity. **Reread** these verses several times.

7. What was the wonder that God was going to do in Habakkuk's day (1:5-6)?
8. What do you think Habakkuk had been hoping would happen?
9. Find all the words that describe the Babylonians in verses 6-9. What kind of people were they?
10. Of what were these conquerors guilty (verses 10-11)?

