

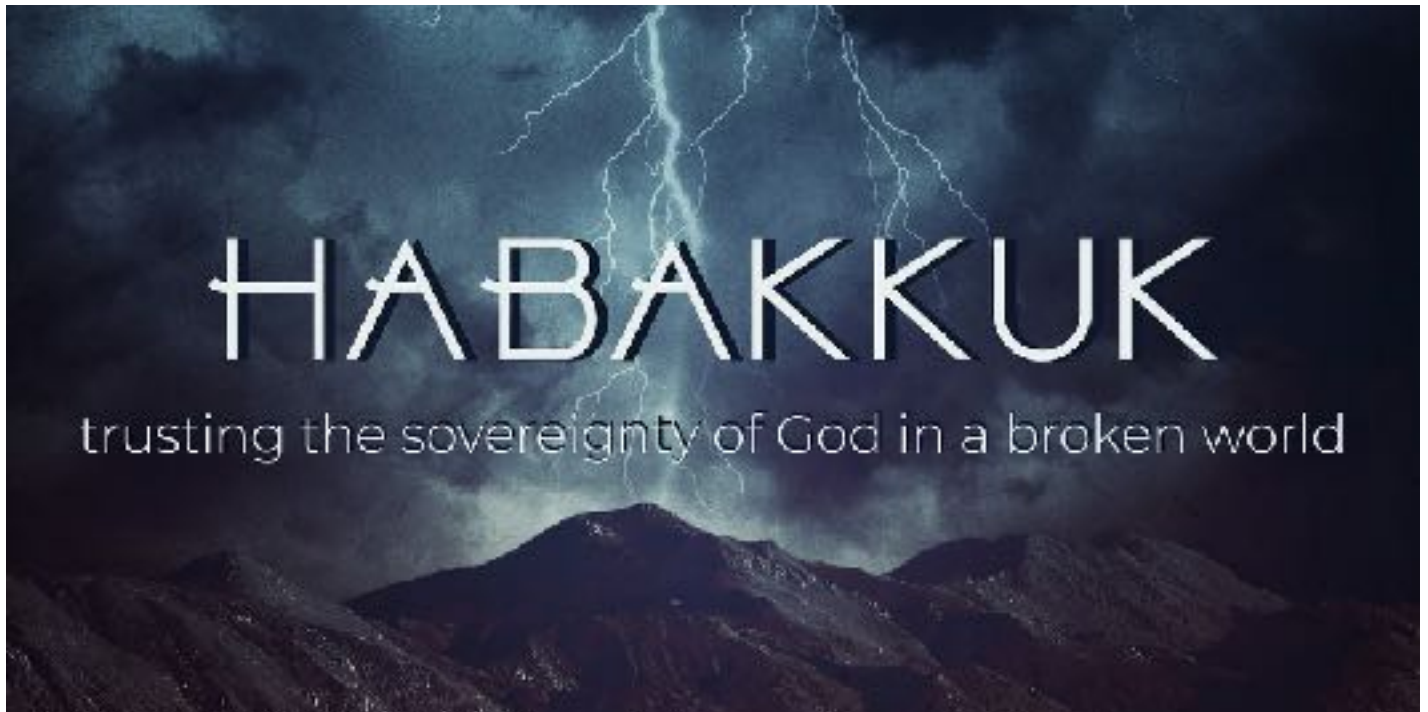
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# Habakkuk

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Trusting the Sovereignty of God

In a Broken World



# Introduction

Don't let the brevity of this book fool you. The Old Testament book of Habakkuk has a very important message, even in our day. Why does God seem so indifferent to what's going on in the world? Why do the wicked continue to prosper? Why do the righteous continue to suffer? Why isn't there any justice? Why doesn't God do something about all of the suffering and violence. Sound familiar? Those aren't new questions. They've been around for thousands of years. Those were hard questions Habakkuk asked about God and the world of his day.

Although it's included in the minor prophets, Habakkuk is unique among the contemporaries (Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah) of his day because his book doesn't really contain any prophecy. It's more like personal journal of his experience with God. Some have considered him to be the doubting Thomas of the Old Testament because he asks God a lot of questions.

Habakkuk also has a very important relationship to the New Testament. The theme and central passage of Habakkuk is found in 2:4, "the just shall live by faith." When we think of which New Testament books are rich in doctrine, Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews usually come to mind. It's interesting to note that they all quote from Habakkuk (Galatians 3:11, Romans 1:17, and Hebrews 10:38).

As is normally the case, names are significant in the Bible and normally have something to do with the overall message of the book. Habakkuk's name means to "embrace" or "wrestle." That's exactly what we find him doing, wrestling with some difficult questions, much like we do today.

This is what Martin Luther had to say about Habakkuk:

*"Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another, takes him into his arms. He embraces his people, and takes them to his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God wills, it shall soon be better."*

When we are first introduced to Habakkuk we find him wrestling through some difficult questions, and wrongly accusing God of being indifferent to what was going on in the world around him. But he doesn't end that way. There's a transformation that takes place. He moves from question mark to exclamation point. He begins by questioning God, but he ends by trusting God. He begins by worrying about the world, but he ends by worshipping God. He begins by being discouraged with all the doom and gloom, but he ends by being overwhelmed by the glory of God.

# The Background and Setting

In 722 BC, almost a century earlier than the time of Habakkuk, God would use the Assyrian Empire to discipline the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Their continued rebellion and disobedience towards God eventually lead to their overthrow and being taken away into captivity. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, would soon suffer the same fate from the Babylonian Empire.

Judah was a nation that was spiraling faster and further out of control and into wickedness. They had embraced pagan religion, were engaging in pagan worship, to include witchcraft and child sacrifice. They had rejected God's word and His prophets. Violence and crime were on the rise. The legal system was falling apart and justice wasn't anywhere to be found.

The Assyrian Empire, who had ruled the ancient Near East for 300 years, was now being threatened by the emergence of the next dominant world power, Babylonia, also known as the Chaldeans. Habakkuk was written during a time when the Chaldeans were gaining significant power. They were a Semitic people living in southeastern Babylon (modern-day Iraq) after they had migrated from Aram (modern-day Syria).

The decline of one empire, the rise of another. In the late seventh century BC Habakkuk finds himself in the midst of some incredibly turbulent times of international crisis and national corruption.



# The Man

We don't know much about Habakkuk with any certainty. Outside of the book that bears his name, there are no known records that give us any clear insight to his life. We don't know who his father was, what tribe he came from, or exactly where he was born. Although he was likely born and raised in Judah, the only thing we really know is his name and profession. He was both a prophet and musician.

Habakkuk's prophetic activity was somewhere around 609-606 BC., during the reign of the Judean king Jehoiakim. Not only was he a contemporary of other Old Testament prophets (Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah) who were also writing to warn God's people and sound the alarm of judgment around the same time period, but it's possible that he knew Daniel and Ezekiel before they were taken captive to Babylon. It's clear that he had a profound love for God, a keen sense of man's sinfulness, and God's holy character.

# The Outline

## I. Introduction (1:1)

A. Method Of The Writing (1:1)

B. Man Doing The Writing (1:1)

C. Source For The Writing (1:1)

D. Position Of The Writer (1:1)

## II. The Prophet's First Complaint (1:2-4)

A. Why Do The Wicked Always Seem To Prosper? (1:2-4)

## III. God Responds (1:5-11)

A. God Will Use Babylon As An Instrument of Discipline (1:5-11)

## IV. The Prophet's Second Complaint (1:12-2:1)

A. How Can God Use A Wicked Nation To Accomplish His Will? (1:12-2:1)

## V. God Responds (2:2-20)

A. The Just Shall Live By Faith (2:2-5)

B. Warning To Babylon (2:6-19)

C. Call To Worship (2:20)

VI. The Prophet's Hymn (3:1-19)

A. The Prophet's Petition (3:1-2)

B. The Prophet's Praise (3:3-15)

C. The Prophet's Faithful Expectation (3:16-19)

# Theological Message

Habakkuk is theologically rich and provides a number significant insights for God's people.

I. God alone is worthy of our faith and deserving of our worship.

A. God is the only true and living God (2:18-20)

B. God is just, will judge sin, and deliver the righteous (1:5-6, 2:3-4, 3:12-14)

C. God is eternal and sovereign over His creation (1:12, 2:7-8, 3:6-7)

D. God loves His people, hears their cries, cares for their needs (1:5-6, 2:2-3, 3:3)

E. God is Savior of everyone who trusts Him (2:4, 3:18)

F. God is personal and relates to His people (1:2-5, 2:1-2)

G. God provides His people hope (2:3, 3:3-16)

# Major Themes

The two dominant themes are injustice and faith.

# Parallel Passages

I. Quotes and Allusions in the New Testament

A. Hab 1:5 - Acts 13:41

B. Hab 2:3 - 2 Pet 3:9, Heb 10:37-38

C. Hab 2:4 - Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11

# Additional Resources

<https://bible.org/seriespage/8-habakkuk>

<https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Habakkuk+1:1>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/habakkuk/1/messages>

<https://www.gty.org/library/resources/sermons-library/scripture/1?book=35&chapter=0>