

Habakkuk 1

Read chapter 1 (only).

1. The structure of this chapter is complaint (1-4), answer (5-11), complaint (12-17). (The second answer comes in the next chapter.) Summarize the first complaint.
2. On what grounds is this complaint made? Is it a reasonable complaint?
3. Summarize the answer YHWH gives. How does this answer present a solution to the complaint?
4. If you were God, what would your solution be to the first complaint?
5. To that degree does the description in the first complaint of 6th century B.C. Israel also describe 20th century America? How would we expect God to answer the same complaint made today?
6. To what degree are we responsible for the injustice and oppression in the U.S.? What concrete things can we do in the next week to fight against these things?
7. Without reading ahead, what do you think YHWH's answer to the second complaint be?
8. A prophet is one who speaks the words of God delivered by Habakkuk in harmony with the message of God delivered by (and in) Jesus?

Habakkuk 2

This chapter is a response to the second complaint of chapter 1, which asked why God would use an evil tool to accomplish his aims. The outline of the chapter is, given in terms of Babylon's sins and punishments,

4-6	greedy, arrogant, didn't trust God, took other nations captive, destroyed lands and cities, shed blood	Will be taken captive by other nations, will be called to account by them
9-11	Built their empire on unjust gain to escape their own ruin	The very stones will cry out their shame
12-14	Built their empire on crime, violence	The empire will burn and their labor will have been for nothing
15-17	They shamed and took advantage of others	They will be shamed and disgraced by others, will receive the same violence back that they sowed
18-20	They worshipped false idols	

Prologue to 1: Hab 2:4 ("The righteous will live by faith") is quoted in Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11, Heb 10:37.

1. Rom says this is our "power" because faith → righteousness → salvation.
2. Gal says that this is why we should not be putting our trust in the law: because no one is capable of satisfying the law, but rather God intended the righteous to live by faith.
3. Lastly, Heb says that we should hold firm, trusting in God's salvation when we suffer or are persecuted, since it displeases God when we shrink back, but if we hold on to our confidence in him we will receive what he has promised.

The Babylonians did not do this: instead of trusting in God, they trusted in their own might.

- 1) For what do we trust in God each day?
- 2) What happens to us if we choose not to trust in God, as the Babylonians did?

Prologue to 3: This analogy is important because it drives home that what you sow doesn't necessarily come to fruition right away. This it may be immediately obvious that we are sowing the wrong seeds.

- 3) The message of this chapter is a primary message of the bible: "What you sow, so shall you reap" (Gal 6:7; see also Hos 10:11-14, Gal 6:7, Lev 26, Dt 19:21). How long did it take for the Babylonians to see the seeds they sowed come to fruition?
- 4) Give an example of a way in which this principle is true for individuals such as ourselves – that we may not see the effects of our actions for some time?
- 5) In what ways are we sowing seeds of sin and death with respect to
 - a) God
 - b) our colleagues
 - c) our families
 - d) our pets
 - e) our houseplants
- 6) What is one concrete way in which we can sow life instead of death in one of these milieus (if you will)?
- 7) Last week we discussed concrete ways in which we could fight against oppression. Have we actually carried through any of these? What can we do in the following week, however small, to fight against oppression?

Hee-Byu-Kook 3

This concluding chapter is a prayer of praise and acceptance offered by Hab. in response to God's revelations to him.

Vv. 1-2:

- 1) Sing the tune (or the rhythmic inflection pattern of) Shigionoth.
- 2) Hab.'s response in v. 2 may indicate the following: final acceptance of God's plan, a desire for God's purposes to be revealed to Israel as well as the Babylonians during the course of the ensuing events, and a desire for God's mercy even in the middle of judgement.
 - a) Do you agree?
 - b) Is it our first inclination in the middle of trouble or judgement to respond in prayer?
 - c) Should the content and attitude of our prayers in analogous situations mirror that of Hab.'s? Do they?
 - d) What does it mean to appeal for mercy in the process of judgement? For what was Hab. asking? Is such a petition merely "procedural," or can it effect some change in God's planned dealings with mankind?

Vv. 3-15:

These verses relate a theophany (an appearance of God) accompanied by the features of a violent storm. Vv. 3-4 describe God's approach as that of lightning due to a distance storm from Teman and Mount Paran, two elevated areas in the south. This may be significant due to the fact that the Babylonian invaders are to rage in from the North.

- 3) Where could a set of parentheses appropriately be placed in these verses?
- 4) Many of the calamities which Hab. envisions befalling the Babylonians sound suspiciously like events from Israel's past. Find all such references, no matter how obscure. You may be responsible for next week's study questions if you fail to identify at least one! :-)
- 5) A person less cynical than myself might outline Hay-bay-cake in the following way:

Ch 1	I.	Hab.'s lament: How long will the wicked practices of Israel go unpunished?
Ch 1	II.	God's response: I've got it covered – the Babylonians will take care of that problem pretty soon.
Chs 1-2	III.	Hab.'s response: That's not what I had in mind!
Ch 2	IV.	God's response: Don't worry, they'll get what's coming to them.
Ch 3	V.	Hab.'s response: Yeah, sick it to them Babylonians!

Would you disagree? Explain. Remember mercy in your time of judgement.

Vv. 16-19:

- 6) V. 18 is a powerful statement of faith and trust. It might just be the definitive act of carrying the admonition of 2:4. We do not always "exult" in the Lord in the good times, let alone the bad. What are some concrete ways we can exult in the Lord during times of judgement and suffering?
- 7) What types of hinds' feet has God given us recently? To what new personal high place has God taken us in the past? Do you see new high places on your horizon?