

## Major Messages from the Minor Prophets

Studies in the Minor Prophets

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Jersey Shore Baptist Church

Pastor Phil Erickson

Began November 15, 2017

### Message Seven – *Habakkuk*

Memory Verse

*"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." -*

(Habakkuk 2:4)

#### Other Important Verses:

*"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" - (Habakkuk 2:15)*

*"O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." - (Habakkuk 3:2)*

*"The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." - (Habakkuk 3:19)*

#### Review

This would be a good time to review the Minor Prophets that we have studied so far:

<u>Prophet</u>	<u>Approx. Date</u>	<u>Nation</u>
Hosea	750 BC	Israel
Joel	820 BC	Judah
Amos	760 BC	Israel, and the nations surrounding Judah
Obadiah	840 BC	Judah (Prophecy against Edom)
Jonah	760 BC	Israel (Prophecy to the city of Nineveh)
Micah	720 BC	Judah (Prophesied to both kingdoms)
Nahum	660 - 620 BC	Judah (Prophecy regarding the destruction of Nineveh)

Note – Habakkuk and Zephaniah were contemporary to Nahum, and were also around the same time as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Jeremiah.

The final three prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) are all post-exilic prophets (after the Babylonian captivity)

## Introduction

Habakkuk, whose name means “to embrace” or “to wrestle”, was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Jehoiakim, and possibly began in the reign of Josiah.

A lot of conjecture has surrounded the significance of the meaning of his name:

His name has meaning, and conjecture about that meaning runs free. Most scholars trace the name “Habakkuk” to the Hebrew verb ḥāḇāq, “to fold one’s hands or to embrace.” But is it to be considered active or passive? Is he an “embracer” or the “embraced”? Luther took it in the active sense and saw Habakkuk as one who embraced his people to comfort and uphold them. Jerome saw Habakkuk as one who embraced the problem of divine justice in a wicked world. Others prefer the passive sense and picture Habakkuk as one embraced by God as His child and messenger. More recently the word ḥambaququ has been found in Akkadian literature in texts from Mesopotamia which indicate it was the name of a garden plant. So some scholars contend that the prophet’s name shows the influence of Assyria and Babylonia on the Israelites, or that Habakkuk was of a mixed Israelite and Assyrian marriage.<sup>1</sup>

He was contemporary with Jeremiah, and followed closely behind Nahum and Zephaniah. His prophetic ministry began either shortly before or after the death of King Josiah who was the last good king that Judah had. Habakkuk wrote just prior to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, which started in 605 BC, and was consummated in 586 BC.

The northern kingdom had been conquered and taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The southern kingdom of Judah experienced periods of revival through Kings Hezekiah, and Josiah; but after Josiah’s death at the hands of the Egyptians in 609 BC, the nation was in very bad shape spiritually, and was ripe for the judgment of God. (see 2 King 23:28 – 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 22)

Note – Josiah died trying to intervene with Pharaohnechoh and the Egyptians as they were headed to Carchemish to join the Assyrians in battle against the Babylonians. Babylon conquered both the Assyrians and Egyptians when the battle was over in 605 B.C. Nineveh of

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<sup>1</sup> Blue, J. R. (1985). Habakkuk. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1505). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the Assyrians was previously conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Habakkuk is prophesying at the time when Babylon had just become the new world power. Babylon would soon begin her destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

Habakkuk demonstrates a good knowledge of the Word of God. It is believed based on the writing of the psalm portion of this Book (Habakkuk 3) that Habakkuk may have been a priest, particularly responsible for the leading of worship in the temple. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were also both priests who were called to be prophets. However, not much beyond speculation is known about the prophet.

Harry Ironside write this:

Of Habakkuk, personally very little is known. Like John the Baptist, he is “the voice of One,” himself hidden; though the exercises of his soul are vividly portrayed in his vigorous and soul stirring prophetic poem. Jewish tradition asserts that he was of the tribe of Simeon, and he is commonly supposed to have been contemporary with Jeremiah during the latter part of “the weeping prophet’s” ministry. His book would seem to evidence this, as it was written in view of the Chaldean invasion. Of his birth or death, we have no record. He is said to have remained in the land when the mass of the people was carried away by the triumphant armies of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>2</sup>

Note – if Ironside is right about Habakkuk being from the tribe of Simeon, he could not have been a priest.

The BKC says this regarding Habakkuk’s lineage:

In the apocryphal book, Bel and the Dragon, Habakkuk is described as the son of Jeshua, of the tribe of Levi, in a legend of fantasy in which the prophet supposedly was commanded by an angel to take a meal to Daniel, who had been cast a second time into a lions’ den. When Habakkuk complained that he did not know the location of the lions’ den, the angel allegedly transported the prophet by a lock of his hair on the appointed journey.

It has been suggested by Rabbinic tradition that Habakkuk was the son of the Shunammite woman mentioned in 2 Kings 4, whom Elisha restored to life. This is apparently based solely on the meaning of Habakkuk’s name, “embrace,” and Elisha’s words to the Shunammite, “You shall embrace a son” (2 Kings 4:16).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ironside, H. A. (1909). Notes on the Minor Prophets. (p. 272). Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers.

<sup>3</sup> Blue, J. R. (1985). Habakkuk. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 1506). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Habakkuk has a lot of questions in this Book, and each question that he brings to God yields an answer that only leaves him more perplexed. Finally, God states that the just man needs to trust God (“live by faith”), even when he does not understand. We can certainly relate to Habakkuk in our day. We watch the news reports, and we see all of the evil that is taking place. The wicked and godless seem to be having their “heyday”. We want to know “why God, are You allowing this?”, and we want to know, “when are You going to do something about it?” Why would God allow all of these shootings that we have experienced in America lately, especially the ones that took place in the churches? We want to know, why are there still babies being murdered by the millions? According to Chuck Harding, it is estimated that Hitler may have exterminated as many as 12 million innocent people; but, America has put its stamp of government approval on the murder over 60 million innocent babies. Why is God allowing this and when will it stop? This is the type of questioning that Habakkuk had on his mind.

Again, quoting Blue and the BKC in regard to the parallels we see in America today:

While the stage is set for a global holocaust, an unsuspecting home audience fiddles a happy tune. The nation’s moral fiber is being eaten away by a playboy philosophy that makes personal pleasure the supreme rule of life. Hedonism catches fire while homes crumble. Crime soars while the church sours. Drugs, divorce, and debauchery prevail and decency dies. Frivolity dances in the streets. Faith is buried. “In God We Trust” has become a meaningless slogan stamped on corroding coins.<sup>4</sup>

Habakkuk’s two main questions are:

- 1 How can God let the wickedness in Judah go unpunished? (Habakkuk 1:1 – 3)

God’s answer indicates that He won’t let it go unpunished and will, in fact, use the Babylonians to accomplish the judgment that Judah deserved. This left Habakkuk more confused than before.

- 2 How could God use a far more wicked nation, like Babylon, to chastise His people? (Habakkuk 1:13)

In response to this question, God assures Habakkuk that the Babylonians would be judged as well. Habakkuk, however, still does not fully grasp God’s reasoning, but God tells him to just trust Him.

**Practical Point** – God does not owe us an explanation, and neither will we always understand or agree with God’s ways. God expects us to not lean unto our own understanding, and trust Him.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Habakkuk 2:4 is arguably one of the most important verses in the Bible, proven by the fact that it was quoted three times in the New Testament, all three times by the Apostle Paul, but in each place an emphasis is placed on a different part of the verse. In Romans, the emphasis is on “the just”; in Galatians, the focus is on “shall live”; and, in Hebrews the writer stresses “by faith”.

MacArthur says this about this important verse:

The queries of the prophet represent some of the most fundamental questions in all of life, with the answers providing crucial foundation stones on which to build a proper understanding of God’s character and His sovereign ways in history. The core of his message lies in the call to trust God (2:4), “the just shall live by his faith.” The NT references ascribe unusual importance theologically to Habakkuk. The writer of Hebrews quotes Hab. 2:4 to amplify the believer’s need to remain strong and faithful in the midst of affliction and trials (Heb. 10:38). The apostle Paul, on the other hand, employs the verse twice (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) to accentuate the doctrine of justification by faith. There need not be any interpretive conflict, however, for the emphasis in both Habakkuk and the NT references goes beyond the act of faith to include the continuity of faith. Faith is not a one-time act, but a way of life. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will habitually persevere in faith throughout all his life (cf. Col. 1:22, 23; Heb. 3:12–14). He will trust the sovereign God who only does what is right.<sup>5</sup>

Habakkuk 1:5 also has a sister passage in the New Testament:

*"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."* (Acts 13:40-41)

Also, Habakkuk 3:17 and 18 seem to closely resemble the language used by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:

*"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."* (Philippians 4:4)

This prophecy is unique in that it begins as a dialogue between Habakkuk and God. As we said before, Habakkuk is very confused in the beginning, and though he may still not completely comprehend God’s will, he concludes with a magnificent psalm of praise to God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says this regarding this dialogue:

This is not merely a little on-the-street interview with God, however. Habakkuk went beyond that. The dialogue developed in chapter 1. The prophet’s complaints were then

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). The MacArthur Study Bible (electronic ed., pp. 1316–1317). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

met with the Lord's command, "Write down the revelation," in chapter 2. God's declaration included a lengthy dirge, or taunt-song, of five woes on the evil Babylonians. Chapter 3 climaxes with a magnificent doxology of Praise. The ever-present "Why?" is best answered by the everlasting "Who!" Though the outlook may elicit terror, the uplook elicits trust. The prophet's complaints and fears were resolved in confidence and faith. This is the heart of the message of Habakkuk: "The righteous will live by his faith" (2:4).

Habakkuk's book begins with an interrogation of God but ends as an intercession to God. Worry is transformed into worship. Fear turns to faith. Terror becomes trust. Hang-ups are resolved with hope. Anguish melts into adoration.

What begins with a question mark and ends in an exclamation point. The answer to Habakkuk's "Why?" is "Who!" His confusion, "Why all the conflict?" is resolved with his comprehension of who is in control: God!<sup>6</sup>

## I The Problems of the Prophet (Chapter 1)

Habakkuk has questions, which have caused some to refer to him as the "doubting Thomas" of the Old Testament. However, I feel that this is an unfair characterization, for though Habakkuk had questions, and wanted to know "why?", he at least took his problems and questions to God.

Habakkuk thought that because God didn't appear to be doing anything that He wasn't working at all, but God was working. God was preparing an instrument of judgment against Judah, and when the judgment came, I think Habakkuk was sorry he asked about it. I wonder what kind of judgment God is raising up right now against America?

### A Question 1 – Why is God doing nothing about the evil in Judah? (vs. 2 – 11)

#### 1 Habakkuk's Complaint (vs. 2 – 4)

Habakkuk had apparently been complaining to God about the spiritual condition of Judah for some time. He claims that the righteous were completely surrounded by wickedness. Notice the words that are used in these verses to describe the condition of the land: violence, iniquity, grievance, spoiling, violence, strife, and contention.

Note – we live in a place that is permeated throughout with wickedness also, and the sin is even penetrating into the church. We can either "curse the darkness or light a candle". By lighting a

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<sup>6</sup> Blue, J. R. (1985). *Habakkuk*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1505). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

candle, however, we may just be able to reach some lost people who have had enough of the wickedness also.

Notice the phrase – “how long” in v. 2. This phrase was used frequently (15 times) in the Psalms:

*"My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?" (Psalm 6:3)*

*"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalm 13:2)*

We are very impatient by nature, and God is very longsuffering. He is always working, but He does not always work on our timetable, or according to our wishes.

Notice the reference to “the law” and two references to “judgment” in v. 4. This is speaking about the authority in Judah. Both the religious leadership and political authorities were tainted with corruption, and it skewed their judgment. The “Law” was slacked, which means it had ceased or at least was very feeble. The leadership had quit enforcing God’s Law.

Habakkuk was sensitive to the spiritual condition of Judah. It grieved him to see the moral and spiritual decline. How does the moral and spiritual decline of America make us feel?

Habakkuk had probably lived during the time of good King Josiah, but now Josiah was gone and his wicked son, Jehoiakim was in power. The nation was rapidly declining, and Habakkuk could not believe what he was witnessing. He was appalled at God’s apparent lack of concern over what was happening. Wickedness was prospering and the few who attempted to live for the Lord were mocked and oppressed.

Asaph had a similar dilemma in [Psalm 73](#), but he realized that God will judge the wicked, and he will also reward the righteous:

*"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." (Psalm 73:17-19)*

Because, God does not judge immediately when people sin, it causes them to think that God either does not care, or He doesn’t exist at all:

*"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecclesiastes 8:11)*

Judah had clearly broken God’s covenant and according to Deuteronomy 28, God needed to do something about it, and Habakkuk was upset because He wasn’t.

Habakkuk did the right thing by bringing his questions to God. Questioning God is in itself an expression of faith. In order to ask God a question, you have to believe that He is real.

Wiersbe states:

But keep in mind that there's a difference between doubt and unbelief. Like Habakkuk, the doubter questions God and may even debate with God, but the doubter doesn't abandon God. But unbelief is rebellion against God, a refusal to accept what He says and does. Unbelief is an act of the will, while doubt is born out of a troubled mind and a broken heart.<sup>7</sup>

## 2 God's Comeback (vs. 5 – 11)

God's answer begins in v. 5, a verse which was also quoted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:41. The work that God will perform as described in verses 5 – 11 is a merciless, heathen army from Babylon that will utterly consume the nation of Judah.

Notice in v. 8 – evening wolves. They were fierce because their hunger was not satisfied during the day and they would desperately and viciously attack their prey at night.

Notice in v. 11 that the Babylonians attribute their success to the their "god". Some have claimed that the Babylonians worshipped their power.

Habakkuk had not received the answer that he wanted. He was hoping that a revival would come, and perhaps God would judge only the leaders; but he hoped the people and the city would be spared. However, Judah had been warned and spared many times in the past, and God's patience had run out.

Note - God rarely solves our problems the way we want or the way we expect.

## B Question 2 – Why would God use a nation like Babylon to judge Judah? (vs. 12 – 17)

First, in v. 12, Habakkuk declares his confidence in God. He defers to God's wisdom, but as we will see, he still has questions.

Again, quoting Wiersbe:

The prophet needed to remember two facts: (1) God had used other tools to chasten His people—war, natural calamities, the preaching of the prophets—and the people wouldn't listen; (2) the greater the light, the greater the responsibility. Yes, the Babylonians were wicked sinners, but they were idolaters who didn't know the true and

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<sup>7</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be amazed* (p. 112). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



living God. This didn't excuse their sins (Rom. 1:18ff), but it did explain their conduct. The Jews claimed to know the Lord and yet they were sinning against the very law they claimed to believe! Sin in the life of a believer is far worse than sin in the life of an unbeliever. When God's people deliberately disobey Him, they sin against a flood of light and an ocean of love.<sup>8</sup>

### Related Questions

1 v 13 – why would God use a nation more wicked than Judah to judge them?

There is an awesome picture here in this verse of our Lord Jesus as he hung on the Cross. Habakkuk says that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” and when Jesus was on the Cross, He cried out “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) The Father could not look upon the Lord Jesus as he bore the sins of the world and had to turn His face away from Him, causing Jesus for the first and only time in the Bible to call His father “God” instead of “Father”. On the Cross also, God used a more wicked nation (The Romans, Israel, Mankind) to punish someone more righteous than they.

2 vs. 14 – 16 – would God allow the people of Judah to be captured (“caught”) like fish?

3 v. 17 – will God eventually put a stop to Babylon?

Question to us – if God used the godless to judge His people in Judah, could He use the godless today to judge us?

In chapter 2:1, Habakkuk waits for God's reply.

## II The Perception of the Prophet (Chapter 2)

Notice vs. 4, 14, and 20 – they contain great nuggets of truth about our God. It is interesting that these verses almost seem as if they are isolated from the overall context of the Prophecy. Verse 4 speaks of God's grace; verse 14 of God's glory; and verse 20 of God's governing over all the Earth.

### A The Prophet Awaits (v. 1)

Verse 1 clearly indicates that Habakkuk was waiting for a reply of reproof from God. He was “watching” for God's reply. He was waiting upon the Lord. He was also considering what he would say to God. It is wise to wait and consider before continuing to speak. Sometime we, like

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<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 113). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Habakkuk, are guilty of judging something before we fully understand it. It is wise to ask God about those things and wait until He enlightens us.

Notice he refers to the “tower”. Prophets in the Old Testament were considered watchmen:

*"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." (Ezekiel 3:17; also 33:7)*

Most of Israel lived within walled cities. The watchman was responsible to watch for any approaching enemies in the night and warn the people. In this case, Habakkuk was “watching” for a reply from the Lord.

## **B The Lord’s Answer to Habakkuk (vs. 2 – 4)**

What proceeds in this chapter is the Lord’s answer to Habakkuk’s second question.

God instructed Habakkuk to write the prophecy permanently upon stone tablets, and then to wait patiently for the fulfillment.

Notice the phrase, “that he may run that readeth it”. This has the idea that the people would be able to clearly see what the Lord was going to do, share it with the rest of the nation, and act upon it. Some have interpreted the meaning of this phrase as the writing was to be so clearly visible, like a sign, that no one could miss it, even somebody running by it.

God tells Habakkuk that this prophecy regarding Babylon would not come to pass immediately, but it would happen just as He said. Again, we see an illusion to an even more distant fulfillment of this prophecy well beyond the time of Babylon:

*"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Hebrews 10:35-39)*

The first part of verse 4 is likely a reference to Babylon, but is applicable to everybody. Pride is the enemy of faith. Babylon was not only very proud, they were also without integrity. Living a life of dependence upon God requires humility. We have to be brought low in order to come to faith in the first place, and humility is also necessary for us to walk by faith.

Notice that verse 4 is quoted in three of the most important doctrinal discussions in the New Testament. (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) Romans emphasis is on “the just”;

Galatians emphasizes how the just shall “live”; and Hebrews emphasizes “by faith”. “It takes three books to explain and apply this one verse!” (Warren Wiersbe)

Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous and gives that believing sinner a perfect standing in Jesus Christ. The “just” person isn’t someone who has met all of God’s requirements by means of good works, “For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”<sup>9</sup>

### **C God’s Anger Against Babylon (vs. 5 – 20)**

In addition to Babylon’s pride and deceitfulness, they were also excessive. They drank too much, they couldn’t settle down and be content at home. Babylon wasn’t satisfied, they lusted for more – more territory, more wealth, more power. It was because of these spiritual conditions that God would pronounce judgment against them.

In this section, there are five woes directed against Babylon. (vs. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19) These woes apply in the immediate context to Babylon, but are also applicable to any, even today who are guilty of these. Harry Ironside points out: “The woes that follow have their application not only to the king of Babylon, and his cruel, relentless armies, but they declare the mind of God regarding any who are in the same unholy ways.”<sup>10</sup>

#### **The Sins of Babylon**

- 1 Stealing (vs. 6 – 8)
- 2 Covetousness (vs. 9 – 11)

Harry Ironside gives a very good definition of covetousness:

What, then, is covetousness? And how is it to be distinguished from honorable thrift and a proper use of opportunities whereby to provide things honest in the sight of all men? In our English Bibles four words are used to express the one sin—“covetousness,” “concupiscence,” “lust,” “desire.” Believers are exhorted to be “content with such things as ye have” (Heb. 13:5); we also read, “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8). Covetousness is the very opposite of this. It is the unsatisfied craving of the heart for more than God has been pleased to give. “Covetousness,” we are told, “is idolatry!” Then it is plain that the covetous man is the one who puts gain

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<sup>9</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). Be amazed (p. 119). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>10</sup> Ironside, H. A. (1909). Notes on the Minor Prophets. (p. 288). Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers.

between his soul and God. Anything that turns us from heart-occupation with Him is an idol. By this we may readily test ourselves as to where we stand.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 Violence (2:12 – 14)

Notice v. 14 – God says that His glory will fill the whole Earth. The Babylonians were violently trying to fill the Earth for their own glory, but God will not share His glory with any nation. Notice that the Babylonians were in direct opposition to what God says would exalt a nation:

*"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."* (Proverbs 14:34)

### 4 Drunkenness and Immorality (2:15 – 17)

We already saw that the Babylonians were guilty of drunkenness themselves, but here we see that they were also guilty of promoting drunkenness. According to this verse, God will hold accountable, not only the drunkard, but also the person that supplies the alcohol.

Notice that drunkenness is associated with immorality. A lot of immoral acts have taken place due to people being drunk.

According to The Centers for Disease Control, there were 88,000 alcohol related deaths in the United States, making it the number three cause of preventable cause of death in the United States.<sup>12</sup> One third of all traffic fatalities (9,967 in 2014) were alcohol related.

- 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes.<sup>13</sup>
- 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.<sup>14</sup>
- 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.<sup>15</sup>

### 5 Idolatry (2:18 – 20)

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<sup>11</sup> Ironside, H. A. (1909). Notes on the Minor Prophets. (pp. 289–290). Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers.

<sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Alcohol and Public Health: Alcohol-Related Disease Impact (ARDI). Average for United States 2006–2010 Alcohol-Attributable Deaths Due to Excessive Alcohol Use*. Available at: [https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH\\_ARDI/Default/Report.aspx?T=AAM&P=f6d7eda7-036e-4553-9968-9b17ffad620e&R=d7a9b303-48e9-4440-bf47-070a4827e1fd&M=8E1C5233-5640-4EE8-9247-1ECA7DA325B9&F=&D=](https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH_ARDI/Default/Report.aspx?T=AAM&P=f6d7eda7-036e-4553-9968-9b17ffad620e&R=d7a9b303-48e9-4440-bf47-070a4827e1fd&M=8E1C5233-5640-4EE8-9247-1ECA7DA325B9&F=&D=)

<sup>13</sup> Hingson, R.W.; Zha, W.; and Weitzman, E.R. Magnitude of and trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24, 1998–2005. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (Suppl. 16)*:12–20, 2009. PMID: 19538908

<sup>12</sup> Hingson, R.; Heeren, T.; Winter, M.; et al. Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24: Changes from 1998 to 2001. *Annual Review of Public Health 26*:259–279, 2005. PMID: 15760289

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

McGee points out that idolatry is not just the bowing down to some statue somewhere:

The downfall of a nation begins in idolatry; it begins in turning away from the living and true God. We would like to think that idolatry has gone out of style, that no one today in this country is bowing down to an idol. That, of course, is not true. Many a man today is worshiping the almighty dollar. Many a man worships sex. Many a man worships pleasure. Many a woman has given her virtue in order to become a famous star or in order to be promoted. May I say to you, anything that you give yourself to, anything that takes all your time or energy, anything that takes all of you is what you worship. That, my friend, is your god, that is your idol, and that is what God condemns. God says that He is a jealous God. God says, "I made you. I created you. I have redeemed you. And I want you." When a man turns his back on God, he is doing the worst thing any man can possibly do.<sup>16</sup>

Notice v. 20 – The Lord is in sovereign control of the universe. He sets nations up, and takes them down. God is reminding Habakkuk that He had things under control, and Habakkuk needed walk by his faith in God, and trust Him. God has spoken, it is time for man to just shut up and be in awe of His Word.

### III The Psalm of the Prophet (Chapter 3)

Habakkuk goes from a sob in chapter 1, to a song in chapter 3; from gloom to glory; from problems to praise. This was also the prayer of Habakkuk.

Notice the word, Shigionoth, in 3:1. This word is also used in Psalm 7:

*"Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite"*

[From my notes on Psalm 7:]

The word "Shiggaion" – appears only here and in Habakkuk 3:1 (in its plural form) – the meaning is unsure; but many believe it to mean a song that is sung with extreme emotion. According to verse 19, it is to be sung along with a stringed instrument.

Notice also the word, "Selah" in vs. 3, 9, and 13. This word is also used throughout the psalms. "Selah" means "to pause". Remember, the Psalms as well as this third chapter of Habakkuk were originally set to music. This is a musical rest. For us it means stop, look, and listen.

### A Habakkuk Prays for God to be Merciful and Bring Revival (v. 2)

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<sup>16</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 853). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In v. 2 Habakkuk hears God and he is afraid. He had some questions for God and now recognizes that God truly did know what was best. He asks God to be merciful, especially to Judah.

God is always merciful. It is one of his attributes. He is not willing that any should perish.

*"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer."* (Isaiah 54:7-8)

God is always gracious and longsuffering; but God is also just. There are times when God's justice will seem to overshadow his longsuffering, mercy and grace.

Our country is also in great need of revival and mercy. Unfortunately, God will often have to bring judgment first before a revival can happen. God may have to bring America to her knees.

God's people often go through a spiritual cycle.

- 1 Revival
- 2 Blessing – Provision and Protection
- 3 Complacency and spiritual laziness
- 4 Carnality and worldliness
- 5 Total Rebellion
- 6 Judgment
- 7 Revival

## **B Habakkuk Publishes God's Great Power from the Past (vs. 3 – 15)**

In vs. 3 – 15, Habakkuk seems to be describing the awesome work of God as he delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

There are two un-named men in view here: (Note – McGee states that vs. 3 – 6 could also be a reference to Abraham)

### **1 Moses – vs. 3 – 10**

Habakkuk seems to be recalling the deliverance from Egypt into the Promised Land.

V. 3 - Teman – an Edomite City; Paran – in the Sinai Peninsula

V. 4 – "his brightness" – probably a reference to the Shekinah glory of God.

V. 7 - Cushan – Midianite territory

### **2 Joshua – vs. 11 - 15**

Notice the reference to the sun and moon standing still in v. 11. (See Joshua 10:12 – 13)

### **C Habakkuk Proclaims His Fear Regarding the Prophecy (v. 16)**

In v. 16, Habakkuk states that the vision terrified him. In chapter one, Habakkuk was indignant because of what God was apparently not doing. Now, he is very afraid because he has seen what God was actually going to do.

*"My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments."* - (Psalm 119:120)

Compare Habakkuk's experience with that of Moses (Hebrews 12:18 – 21); Joshua (Joshua 5:13 – 15); David (1 Chronicles 21:16); Daniel (Daniel 8:27; 10:11); Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:6); John (Revelation 1:17)

### **D Habakkuk Praises God for Salvation and Strength (vs. 17 – 19)**

In vs. 17 – 19, Habakkuk declares that even though God will destroy Jerusalem, he will continue to trust and rejoice in God.

"Hinds' Feet" carries the idea of surefootedness, which enables the doe to travel safely in the mountaintops. He started this Book complaining to God from a deep valley, and he concludes with a song from the mountaintop; and his actual situation had not changed. He just got alone with God, and God assured him that He had everything under control. His circumstances hadn't changed, but he had changed. That's what God wants to do through the situations and difficulties of your life and mine.

There will be times when the people of God will have to endure very difficult times, sometimes through no fault of their own. Good people often suffer because of the consequences of the decisions of others. There were some righteous people in Judah, such as Daniel and Ezekiel and, no doubt, many others, who would lose some of their family and friends, not to mention their homes.

What can we do when faced with life's difficult circumstances:

- 1 We can pray
- 2 We can seek God's will and wisdom through his Word
- 3 We can trust that He knows what He is doing
- 4 We can walk by faith