

The Just Shall Live By Faith: An Overview Of Habakkuk

Background Information

- Habakkuk is part of the minor prophets
- He is prophesying during the divided kingdom period in Judah
- Judah was not following the Lord, and their sin was rampant. Their sin finally got to the point where they were going to be sent into Babylonian Captivity.
 - This potentially points to Habakkuk prophesying during the reigns of Manasseh (686-642BC), when God said that Judah had angered him enough that he would punish them (see 2 Kings 21.9), or the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598BC) because that is when Babylon was rising to power.
- Habakkuk starts a dialog with God where he questions both the persistent sin of his people, and how God will handle that sin.

Outline

1.1: Introduction of Habakkuk

- The book opens introducing us to Habakkuk as a prophet and the one giving the oracle of God.
 - The word oracle here can also be translated burden.

1.2–4: Habakkuk thinks God is allowing wickedness to thrive

- Habakkuk is sharing his observations of Judah. Their sin was rampant. They were ignoring justice, the law, and they were out numbing the righteous people.
- Habakkuk is confused as to why God can allow this wickedness to continue.

1.5–11: God tells Habakkuk how he's going to handle the sin

- God answers and says that he is not going to allow their wickedness to flourish. He is raising up an army from the Chaldeans (another name for the Babylonians) to serve his purpose.
- God also details how fierce and destructive they are, and because of how strong God is making them they will not have any problem destroying Judah.

1.12–17: Habakkuk thinks God is being inconsistent

- Habakkuk is confused by God's response. How could He use such a wicked people to bring judgment on His chosen race?
- Habakkuk seems to suggest that this response from God sounds like a contradiction with His nature because the Babylonians are so wicked.

2.1–2: Habakkuk waits for an answer from God

- After Habakkuk expresses doubt and frustration towards God, he does not just hold resentment towards him, but refrains to have faith that God will hear and answer his questioning.
- The Lord begins to give Habakkuk a vision that he wants transcribed for people to refer to later.

2.3–20: Woes to Babylon

- God does hear Habakkuk, and he assures Habakkuk that He sees how great the wickedness of the Chaldeans is, and that wickedness will not go unpunished.
- God also assures Habakkuk that a life of faith will sustain those that
- 2.4b: "the righteous will live by his faith." (NASB)
 - This phrase is quoted three times in the New Testament.
 - Rom. 1.17; Gal. 3.11; Heb. 10.38
 - You could say that this reframe is the central theme of the Bible, from Abraham leaving his homeland of Ur to Paul deciding to be baptized and convert to Christianity, and many others, they all had faith in the message of God and chose to follow.
 - Faith also isn't a passive thing here. It's not that the righteous is currently living in faith, but that they will live by their faith. It's a continuous active thing.
 - For Habakkuk here, that active choice looks like trusting in God's message.

- This also isn't a promise that no evil or wickedness will happen to the righteous. All those alive in Judah would face the destruction from Babylon, but the life that the righteous will have is one sustained by God to persevere through trials.
- God then details several "woes" to Babylon. Promises of future judgement because of the sins they are committing now.
 - These woes can be applied more generally as well to all people that exhibit the same pride and wickedness of the Chaldeans.

3.1-19: Habakkuk sings the praises of God

- After hearing what God says about Babylon, Habakkuk begins a lengthy Psalm detailing God's power.
- Habakkuk talks about how great God's power is, and how it makes him afraid, but also produces in him a reverence and awe for his great creator.
- Habakkuk also makes clear that he now sees God's power as a source of his own strength as well, which will help him and God's people find security and stability through future trials and the inevitable destruction from Babylon.

The Lessons of Habakkuk applied to the New Testament

- The narrative of Hebrews
 - The writers are communicating to Christians (potentially Jewish Christians) that are contemplating leaving Christianity to the life they had before because they want to be spared persecution.
 - The writer goes to great lengths to show Jesus as the fulfillment of all the previous prophecies and lessons taught with the Old Covenant, and that the New Covenant provides more than anything they had in their old life.
 - Part of the message of perseverance is exactly what Habakkuk is told in 2.4, but now with Christ, there is a clear vision of what the Christian is to be striving for.

The Key Takeaways:

- Know that God will not allow wickedness to go unpunished.
- We need to turn to God when we are confused with the world around us.
- God is all powerful, he's in control, and those that trust in Him will succeed and be protected.
 - We might not know what the future holds, but knowing God is in control can provide the same peace that Habakkuk experiences.
- The righteous will live by faith.
 - A consistent theme throughout the whole of scripture, is the need to hold on to faith.
 - There's also a need for faith to be active.