

32. Jesus in Habakkuk

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The Book of Habakkuk is a Minor Prophet Book in the Bible due to its size, not because of the content. It was more of a journal of the conversation between God and His prophet Habakkuk than a typical prophecy Book style of "Thus says the Lord".

If you were like me, when you were young in the Lord, I wouldn't be surprised that you didn't know how to spell this prophet's name correctly the first time. And its pronunciation almost sounds like someone is gagging.

Habakkuk was a contemporary of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah, which places him in the reigns of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) and Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.). We don't know much about the prophet. But we can tell that he was a professional prophet unlike Amos who was a fig fruit picker and shepherd.

His name means "to embrace" or "to wrestle". In this Book, he did both. He wrestled with God concerning the problem of how God could use a wicked nation like Babylon to chasten the people of Judah. Then, by faith, he embraced the Lord and clung to His promises. In other words, the Book starts with a question mark for God and ends with an exclamation mark to His holiness, righteousness, and mercy for His people.

A. JESUS IN SOVEREIGNTY

Habakkuk 1:5-6 "Look among the nations and watch- Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.

I am sure that you've heard a phrase "too good to be true". But that is not what the Lord was doing here. It was "too bad to be true". God's plan to chasten the kingdom of Judah was so unbelievable and unheard of that even His prophet was shocked and couldn't believe it. God was planning to punish the idolatrous Jews by using the godless Babylonians. It would be like God is planning to punish the United States by allowing godless and murderous Iran to set off several nuclear bombs in this land.

That was NOT the answer Habakkuk was looking for. He was hoping that God would send a revival to His people and judge the evil leaders and establish a godly and righteous king in the land.

God had warned His people the Jews for generation after generation through His prophets, natural calamities, and various military defeats, only to be rejected. They'd rather turn to their worthless idols than their true God. It was time for God to say, "ENOUGH!"

Our God has a complete sovereignty over every element from before the creation to everlasting. And guess who is the Creator of all things? Jesus. Some might say, "No, Jesus was not completely sovereign while He was on earth. He obeyed the Father." Yes, during His earthly assignment. But before and after His assignment, He is the Son of God who is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In His sovereignty, if God chose to use the godless kingdom Babylon to chastise Judah, who are we to say to Him, "No, you cannot do that"?

B. JESUS IN EVERLASTING

Habakkuk 1:12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction.

You guys remember, a couple months ago, we studied Jesus' several claims of "I am" in the Book of John. One of them is in John 8. This particular one shows the timeless attribute of God.:

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

C. JESUS IN FAITH ALONE

Habakkuk 2:2-4 Then the Lord answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

Before you became a born-again Christian, you might have asked, "How can you believe that Bible? Have you ever seen this God? How could Jesus rise from the dead? How could He forgive me for my sins when I am not a bad person?" You might even challenge Him and His followers with some defiance.

If God had dealt with us with His holy judgment each time we foolishly challenged Him, no one would have survived. Our Lord's meekness and patience should not be considered as His weakness, rather His love and mercy.

Justification is the gracious act of God when 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 because none of us can.

We cannot justify ourselves before God, because we stand with the whole world, guilty and condemned before His throne. We are not only saved by faith, but we are instructed to live by faith.

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

I was saved in 1987. We attended a Four Square denomination church in the first year, then we moved to a couple of different Assembly of God churches in the following three years. But from 1990, we were at Calvary Chapel of Tucson until I started our church here in 2001. In those 14 years, our family has never been taught from any of the Minor Prophet Books of the Bible. This is not an isolated case of the four churches we attended. The majority of Christians don't get to study these Books due to the neglect of their pastors or the lack of interest of the Christians themselves.

Consequently, they don't realize that Habakkuk summarized the base of the entire NT theology in a mere seven words in chapter 2 verse 4.

Habakkuk 2:4b the just shall live by his faith.

This statement was quoted three times in the NT – Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrew 10:38. Let me expound it a little more.

1) "The just" in the Book of Romans

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

God does not ask men to behave in order to be saved, but to believe. It is faith in Christ that saves the sinner, not work that anyone can boast. Eternal life in Christ is one gift that is suitable for all people, no matter what their need may be.

When we put our trust in Jesus, His righteousness is imputed to us – that is, God counts us as righteous, even though we still sin, because Christ has given His righteousness to us.

The apostle Paul stresses that an unshakable belief in the Gospel message ultimately leads to salvation and eternal life. After referring to the Gospel of Christ as "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes", he cites Habakkuk 2:4 to back up his statement.

2) "Shall live" in the Book of Galatians

Galatians 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

The apostle Paul cites the same scripture to explain how faithful followers of Jesus Christ are justified which means "made righteous in God's sight" by exercising faith in Him in their daily lives. When we understand the Good News of the Kingdom of God, we are expected to repent by turning from our own ways and making the Kingdom our priority.

The key point is that the just "shall live" by faith. It is by faithfully living God's way that we come to a greater understanding of the Good News about mankind's future in the Kingdom of God.

3) "By his faith" in the Book of Hebrews

Hebrews 10:35-39 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The author of this Book of Hebrews was writing to the Hebrew Christians who were being persecuted by the Jewish leaders during that time. Some believers were reconsidering going back to Judaism due to the hard life they were going through. So the author reminded them of the faithfulness of our Lord and the faith that requires keeping focus on the Lord and not the immediate circumstances.

Can we handle the same kind of persecution? Don't be so quick to answer, "Yes." When you encounter the situation that the government and the people around actual-

ly kicking you out of your home with nothing and beating you and taking away your family members because of your faith in Jesus Christ, your answer might be different than the one you would answer now.

My brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus, let me remind you of this. Our home is not here. We just have temporary dwelling places for now. Our true home is in heaven where Jesus lives. We have the promises of God for us in this Book, the Bible, that no one can take them away as long as we choose to walk with Him.

Listen, we are not only saved by faith, but we also must live by faith, not by sight.

In case you wonder what would happen to those who backslide, the Bible is clear for the answers. If they come back to the Lord with truly repented hearts, the Lord will forgive them and restore them back to the family of God, but they still will go through the consequences of their actions. However, those who refuse to repent to their last breath, we also see a clear answer from v39:

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The Greek word for 'perdition' is "apoleia" which means more of "destruction" or "waste."

D. JESUS IN CONQUEST OF SATAN

Habakkuk 3:13-14 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, By laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah 14 You thrust through with his own arrows The head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.

With all due respects to many theologians and Bible teachers, they taught Christians that satan knew that Jesus' crucifixion would set the people free from their bondage and give them salvation through Him. I beg to differ. If satan knew the crucifixion of Jesus was a tool of our salvation, the devil would do anything to stop Jesus from being executed by the Roman governor. Satan really thought that killing Jesus would end God's way of salvation of mankind.

Thus, the Cross and Golgotha were satan's weapons against Jesus. With satan's own weapons, the cross, which looking like an inverted sword, wielded into Golgotha, satan's head was crushed as prophesied in Genesis 3:15:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.