

The Questioning Prophecy of Havakuk (Habakkuk) ~ Part 1

Havakuk poses the profound theological question that must nag at anyone who is seriously listening to the prophets. The question is this: how can a righteous and **Holy God** use a wicked nation like **Babylonia** to bring punishment against **God's** people, rebellious and sinful though they may be? How can **God** permit the wicked to prosper, often at the expense of the righteous? How can a righteous **God** permit evil to exist?

His answer is that evil, wherever it is found, always bears within the seeds of its own destruction. Only in righteousness is there life; sin always brings death. ¹

One of the **Minor Prophets**, the book of **Havakuk** is unique in its style. Rather than speaking to the people on **God's** behalf, **Havakuk** talked to **God** on behalf of the people. **Havakuk** struggled with how to understand **God's** actions in history, especially His use of an unrighteous nation as the instrument of His justice. **God's** answer to *Havakuk's* objection was that *"the righteous one will live by his faith."*

Should Evil Prevail?

1 ¹ This is the prophecy which Havakuk the prophet saw: ² Adonai, how long must I cry without your hearing? "Violence!" I cry to you, but you don't save. ³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing? Why do you permit oppression? Pillage and cruelty confront me, so that strife and discord prevail. ⁴ Therefore, Torah is not followed; justice never gets rendered, because the wicked fence in the righteous. This is why justice comes out perverted.

Havakuk lamented to **God** (*how long?*) about overt *violence ... wrongdoing*, and *oppression* during **Jehoiakim's** reign. **King Josiah** (640–609 BCE) promoted **God's** law (2 Kings 23:24), but his son and successor **Jehoiakim** (609–598 BCE) based his reign on injustice (Jeremiah 22:13) so that **God's law (Torah)** ceased to be honored.

Babylon Will Punish

⁵ "Look around among the nations! What you see will completely astound you! For what is going to be done in your days, you will not believe, even when you are told. ⁶ I am raising up the Kasdim (Chaldeans), that bitter and impetuous nation, who march far and wide over the earth to seize homes that are not their own.

God responded that He would punish the sins of **Judah** through an invasion by the **Chaldeans** (A.K.A. **Babylonians**).

⁷ Fearsome and dreadful they are; their rules and strength come from themselves.

The so-called **justice** of these invaders was human (**from themselves**) rather than divine.

⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at night. Their cavalry gallop in from afar, flying like vultures rushing to feed.

Comparisons with predatory animals (**leopards ... wolves, and an eagle**) illustrate the speed, brutality, and efficiency of the Babylonian military machine.

⁹ All of them come for violence, their faces set eagerly forward, scooping up captives like sand.

¹⁰ They scoff at kings; princes they deride. They laugh at any fortress; they pile up earth and take

¹ From the introduction of this book by F. LaGard Smith

it. ¹¹ Then they sweep on like the wind, but they become guilty, because they make their strength their god." ²

Violence is the punishment **Judah** will receive for its own violence (vv. 2–3). The mighty **Babylonian** army scoffed at all opposition. The phrase *"their strength is their god"* suggests they worshiped their own military power (v. 16), though the verse may mean they attributed their strength to their national god, **Marduk**.

If your spiritual life feels stagnant, like Habakkuk's discontent with how things were unfolding, initiate a personal retreat at home. Allocate a few hours during the weekend to disconnect from distractions - phones, television, and noise. Dive into prayer and scripture, specifically focusing on Habakkuk's reflections. Journal your thoughts and questions as you seek clarity from God. By laying your questions before Him, you open a pathway for growth and deepen your understanding of faith amidst uncertainty.

² Habakkuk 1:1-17.