

“Why Lord” - “How Long” by E A Terry Delivered 10 25 20

1st Peter 1:3 - 7; Romans 8:18 – 39; 2nd Peter 3: 1 – 18; Mark 4: 35 – 41; **Habakkuk 1:1 - 2: 4**

Habakkuk was a prophet in Judah 600 years before Christ.

And as you know, a prophet’ job was to bring God’s Word to the people.

However, the Book of Habakkuk is not like most of the other prophetic books.

Habakkuk is not directly addressed to the people but rather the Book of Habakkuk is a collection of Habakkuk’s prayers and God’s answers to Habakkuk’s prayers.

During the earlier part of Habakkuk’s life spiritual reforms had taken place in Judah under the leadership of King Josiah.

But when Josiah died in 609 BC spiritual decline set in and Judah reverted to ungodly, evil, worldly ways.

Habakkuk was frustrated that the Jewish people were not following God’s law.

The people of Judah were far from God and they disregarded God’s repeated warnings.

Habakkuk loved God and Habakkuk loved the people of Judah.

So, Habakkuk poured out his heart to God in prayer.

In verses 2 – 4 we have Habakkuk’s prayer.

Habakkuk said; ***violence, injustice, wrong doing, destruction, strife and conflict abound. There is no justice!***

It appeared to Habakkuk that God was indifferent to Judah’s sins of violence, injustice, and ungodliness.

In Habakkuk’s first recorded prayer, Habakkuk asks God two question, ***“How long will you allow violence, strife, iniquity, and injustice to continue?”***

Habakkuk also wanted to know ***“why God did not punish His people for disobeying God’s law and disregarding God’s instructions?”***

These two questions are age old questions and these are two current questions that many of us have asked.

We live in an unjust ungodly world where the odds seem to favor wickedness, violence, and terrorism.

All you have to do watch the 6 o’clock news because it is filled with shootings, stabbings, rapes, kidnapping, embezzlement, hatred, racism, abuse of power, and injustice.

We want to know why God doesn’t do something?

Doesn't God want a peaceful world?

And sadly, it seems like the guilty go unpunished.

So, we ask the same questions that Habakkuk did.

"How long will this continue?"

"Why don't you do something, God?"

Fortunately, we have the Book of Habakkuk to answer our questions.

The Book of Habakkuk helps us make sense of our world situation today.

First, I want to say that is OK to question God.

We all ask our earthly fathers "why" about a lot of things.

So why shouldn't we be able to ask our heavenly Father about things we want an answer to.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told us that we are to ask, seek and knock. (Matthew 7:7)

There is nothing wrong with asking God **why** about things as long as we do it respectfully and reverently.

In other words, we need to remember who God is and remember who we are.

We find God's answer to Habakkuk's questions of, "**How long**" and "**why**" in verses 5-11.

In these verses God tells Habakkuk that He is working even though Habakkuk can not see it.

In fact, God says that He is doing something so amazing and so incredible that Habakkuk would not believe God even if God told him.

God said "***I am going to send the Babylonians to strike my own people***". (verse 6)

In verses 5-11 we also read that the Babylonians were godless people.

The Babylonians were ruthless and they were a dreaded people.

Everybody was afraid of them and the Babylonians were not afraid of anybody or anything.

Our focal scripture goes on to describe their horses as having the speed of leopards.

The Babylonians were as ferocious as wolves and their troops swooped down on their prey like vultures.

The Babylonian army swept across the desert like the wind gathering and deporting prisoners.

The Babylonians had no respect for authority and when they came to city that was well fortified, they just laughed at it like it was nothing and they overran it.

The Babylonians served the god of power, not the all-powerful creator God of The Bible.

The Babylonians seemed unstoppable.

The Babylonians were a people with one purpose in life and that was to conquer and enslave other people.

This led Habakkuk to raise other questions to God.

Why would God allow such a horrible thing to happen to God's own chosen people?

And why would God use a nation more evil than Judah to punish Judah? (verse 13)

Although Habakkuk could not comprehend the workings of His God, in verse 12 Habakkuk declares his complete faith and his total trust in His God.

As Habakkuk recalls the unchangeable, holy character of God, Habakkuk assures himself that Judah would not be completely destroyed.

Habakkuk understood that God would use the Babylonians discipline Judah, but God would not let the Babylonians completely destroy Judah. (verses 12 – 17)

So, what lessons can we learn from Habakkuk?

First God is control of the entire universe, the nations of the world, and all people.

God is all powerful and all the nations of the earth and all authorities are under God's sovereign rule.

We see this in God's reply to Habakkuk where God said; "*I am raising up the Babylonians*" (1:6a).

Every nation on earth is under the hand of God.

There is absolutely no authority or government that is not ultimately controlled by God.

Things are not always what they appear to be to us.

It appeared that the military ability of the Babylonians had brought them to power.

But that was not the case.

God had raised up the Babylonians for a specific purpose and God would bring the Babylonians down when they had fulfilled God's purpose.

Our God is The Lord of all!

God created the universe and all the people on earth.

God controls the universe and we all are accountable to Him.

We must never ever lose sight of this crucial truth.

After God answers Habakkuk's first question of "***Why don't you do something***" in verses 13-17 Habakkuk asks another question.

"Why would The Lord use a wicked nation like the Babylonians to judge Judah which was a more righteous nation?"

Habakkuk thought that Judah was more righteous than the Babylonians but Habakkuk forgot the extent of Judah's sins that he complained about earlier.

As Christians we often make the same mistake when we compare ourselves with other people.

Jesus is the standard we need to use in determining the degree of our righteousness.

We must never forget we have all sinned and fallen short of God's standard of righteousness.

(Romans 3:23)

"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10)

Sin is sin and God punishes all sin. That is the second lesson for us.

God is at work in our life but it is not always easy for us to see that.

Habakkuk got God's answer but it was not the answer Habakkuk wanted to hear.

We all question why God allows things to happen in our lives?

Many times, we just do not know why and I do not think we are supposed to know all the answers.

That is the third lesson we can learn from Habakkuk.

We are not supposed to understand everything God does.

None of us are mentally capable of understanding everything God does.

If we could understand everything God does, we would be God.

God's answers to our prayers are not always what we wanted to hear.

But we can always be assured that God loves us and God wants the very best for us.

After Habakkuk asks his second question Habakkuk waits on God's answer.

In verse 1 of chapter 2 Habakkuk compares himself to a watchman on the city wall.

This speaks of Habakkuk's persistent watching and expectantly waiting for God's answer.

That is the fourth lesson we can learn from Habakkuk.

We are to go to The Lord in prayer and then we are to wait patiently but also expecting God's answer.

God's answer to Habakkuk's second is in verses 2-4.

God told Habakkuk to write down His answer so that all who read it would surely know that God is in control of the universe and so everyone would know that God's Word would come true.

God said He would also judge the Babylonians for their evil.

From history we know this is true.

God raised up the Meds and the Persians to destroy the Babylonians.

God's final judgment will come when Jesus will establish His eternal kingdom on earth.

At that time God will right all wrongs.

God will restore the goodness to human life that God planned from the beginning of time.

The fifth lesson we can learn from Habakkuk is that God's time is not our time.

The world is on God's timetable, not on our time schedule.

If we are honest with ourselves, we all tend to tell God how He should answer our prayers.

When we see a certain situation, we think that God should act in a particular way.

And we wonder why God does not follow our advice.

The sixth lesson we can learn from Habakkuk is that sometimes God allows allowing things to become much worse before they become better.

God may do the complete opposite of what we anticipate.

God may overwhelm us by confronting us with a Babylonian army or another terrorist attack or another natural disaster, or another pandemic.

Habakkuk asked some tough questions that many people are asking today.

"Why does God seem to be so unconcerned?"

"Why doesn't God do something about all the evil in the world?"

"Why does God allow the persecution of Christians today?"

I recently read that churches are being burned in India and missionaries are being killed in Afghanistan.

Religious freedom is under assault throughout the world.

The seventh lesson we can learn from Habakkuk is in the last part of verse 4 which tells us how we are to live until Jesus comes again.

“The righteous will live by his faith.”

This is the same message we can read in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

No matter what the situation, no matter how much evil, violence, and how great the injustices are around us, as Christians we are to remain faithful and we are to trust in The Lord.

We are to remain faithful by loving our God, obeying our Lord’s commandments, and trusting in His promises.

We are to remain faithful by walking with The Lord and letting our light shine in the evil dark world around us.

As Christians we are not take things into our own hands by participating in rioting, looting, and burning.

As Christians we are not to return evil for evil.

Romans 12:21 is clear; ***“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** (Romans 12:31)

I do not know all the answers to our Nation’s problems but I do know The Lord does.

1st Peter 5:7 reminds us that we can bring all of our concerns, all of worries, all of our questions, as well as all of our dreams to The Lord in prayer because He cares for us and He loves us.

I believe God’s promises and I trust The Lord with my life.

Habakkuk’s message is a message of hope for us today.

Hope does not change the situation but hope does change our attitude, as well as changing our actions.

We must never forget God’s wonderful promise to us recorded in Romans 8 :28 ***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”***

And in Romans 8: 38 – 39 ***“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.***

We also need to focus on Jesus’ wonderful promise in Hebrews 13:5;

We all have a choice; we can choose hope or we can choose despair.

We can choose to praise and thank The Lord in our circumstances or we can get angry and choose to take things in our own hands.

The choice is ours.

We may never understand what is going on in our in our life, or in our country, or in the world, but our outlook on life will change when we realize that both good times and bad times are opportunities for us to grow closer to Jesus!

AMEN