

Habakkuk (2)

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[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Well, the third section of this verse that's helpful for us is these last two words, did see. It is the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

Now, the Old Testament prophets were often referred to as seers. God opened their eyes to understand his message in a way that was unique.

[1 : 04] And at times, this was a literal vision. And it's possible that what Habakkuk is writing for us in this message was actually a literal vision that he saw.

And we maybe can sense that as we read chapter 3, especially when he writes this psalm of worship. It seems to be based on a very vivid picture of what was actually going to happen to the nation of Judah.

And so this was not just something that he heard that he preached. It was something that he saw. That could just mean that he understood it. But it could be that God allowed him to physically and literally see this is what's coming.

This is the Babylonians destroying the nation. This is me pouring out my judgment on Judah. In either case, it's a reference to the message itself.

And it was a specific revelation from God. Now, listen. Listen, this was not conjecture on the part of Habakkuk. This was a divine message of certain judgment, definitive judgment.

[2 : 11] It was coming. It wasn't going away. It was coming. And it served as a warning to the people. And it was a call for repentance. Now, even if they repented, the judgment was coming.

God had determined that long before Habakkuk even came into the picture. Years and years and years before he had said that this judgment was going to come. But this was an opportunity for repentance. And so when we see that this was the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see, we understand that what that means is that this was not a guess on Habakkuk's part.

This was not speculation on his part. This was the divine message of God. This was going to happen. And just as the message of judgment that we carry as a part of the gospel is one that is going to happen.

Every single person will be judged. Every person will be judged. And God is gracious in forbearing our sin for a time and giving us this time for repentance.

But ultimately, every single person will be judged. The Babylonian, so to speak, of judgment will be coming for each and every one of us. Let me just give you a quick survey of the book so that you can kind of see, even if you study ahead, exactly what it is that we're going to see over the next few weeks.

[3 : 33] The first four verses show us Habakkuk's first question to God. And it really has more to do with why are you allowing this sin, but specifically, why are you not judging this sin?

Habakkuk was holy enough to recognize the sinfulness and desire God's judgment in it. But what Habakkuk was expecting God to do was provide another revival to the nation like he had experienced growing up in Judah.

He didn't anticipate that God's judgment was going to actually come through a captivity. And so the first question has to do with, how long, Lord, are you going to sit by idly and not do something about the sin of the nation?

Verses 5 through 11 is God's response to Habakkuk's first question. And essentially, God says, I am going to judge this sin.

I'm just not going to judge it in the way that you thought I was going to judge it or the way that you're hoping that I'm going to judge it. He was raising up the Chaldeans. We know them as the Babylonians.

[4 : 35] And when we get to that passage, we're going to look at exactly what points to the fact that this was God's hand that was raising this nation up because it only lasted for a very short amount of time.

This was the reason God raised up the Chaldeans. It was to bring them to Judah. They were a wicked and vile people, but they were going to take Judah captive for 70 years. And they were going to decimate Jerusalem and many of the other towns. Well, verse 12 of chapter 1 through the first verse of chapter 2 is Habakkuk's response to God's first answer.

Now, it's not that he had a problem with the judgment. He had prayed for the judgment. What now becomes Habakkuk's issue is why God was judging the nation the way that he was.

Why wasn't God sending revival? Why was he sending a wicked people to judge a people that, even despite how awful the nation of Judah was, they were still a more righteous people than Babylon, than the Chaldeans?

[5 : 34] And so he cries back out to God and says, why are you doing it this way? Why, God, are you allowing it to happen in this way? Why can't you just stop the wickedness?

Why can't you just bring revival? Why can't you just change it? Why can't you just adjust it? But that wasn't God's method. And so God's first answer to Habakkuk actually brought more perplexity to his heart.

Well, the rest of chapter 2, verses 2 through 20, God actually affirms to the prophet that all sin will ultimately be judged. Just because he was using the Chaldeans as his instrument of judgment didn't mean that he was okay with their wickedness.

He actually announces five woes, not on Judah, but five woes against the Chaldeans, against the Babylonians, for what they were going to do to Judah.

And this brings in an amazing dynamic and juxtaposition that we find often in the scriptures. And that is God's sovereign hand at work, despite the wickedness and vileness of man's actions.

[6 : 46] And how those two things come together, and God uses even the wickedness of man for his glory and for his purposes. The emphasis in that chapter is on God's holiness.

He will judge all sin in all people, and that's true today as well. Every person will be judged. You will stand before the judgment of God. The only people that will be considered righteous in God's eyes at the moment of judgment will be those according to chapter 2 and verse 4.

This is the entire book hinges on this verse. It's quoted twice in the New Testament. It's very important. He says, So in opposition to this wickedness and judgment is the mercy that comes, not on our good behavior, but the mercy that comes as a result of our faith that leads to the faithfulness of following the God of the Bible.

The first 16 verses of chapter 3 is a psalm. Habakkuk writes this psalm as he reflects on this vision that God has given him, and he instructed that it be sung among the nation.

And there's a big reason for that. We remember things in music. We remember things in psalm better than we do just in sermon or even in reading. It's one of the reasons that music is so important in the church and that you commit yourself to it daily so that you can memorize the truths of the Scripture, that you can memorize who God is and allow that to permeate your heart through song.

[8 : 31] And Habakkuk follows that. Well, then he brings a conclusion to the whole book in verses 17 and 18 of chapter 3. And his conclusion is one of worship. And it's a trust in God's sovereign hand.

Now, God never provides the answers that Habakkuk was specifically looking for. He didn't provide the answers to the whys of why he was seemingly idle and why he was using a wicked nation to judge a nation that was more righteous than they.

God never answered the why. And so that's not the point of our study, to find the why. What Habakkuk ends up with at the end of this book in form of worship is a renewed and strengthened trust in God's Word and in God's promise.

He knew that God is always right even when we are perplexed by his methods. Now, in conclusion, let me say this. There's a goal to our study of Habakkuk, and it's a specific goal.

There's three characteristics of God that we must give attention to as we go. James Montgomery Boyce, in the preface to his commentary on the minor prophets, stated that there are three characteristics of God indicative in all 12 of the minor prophets, not just Habakkuk, but all 12 of the minor prophets.

[10 : 02] And after preaching through these books for 10 years, here's what he observed. I'm just going to read it to you. He said, The locust plague of Joel was his doing.

The destruction of Nineveh, just as its earlier repentance, was from him. When Israel was invaded by Assyria and Judah by Babylon, it was the Lord who did it.

Whatever problems the prophets may have with the specific nature of God's actions, and then he puts in there, Habakkuk is one who had great problems. They never doubt for a second that the Almighty God is in charge of history.

So as we study through this book of Habakkuk together, we want to specifically be looking for the characteristic of God's sovereignty, that everything comes about because of the determined will of our sovereign God.

The second great attribute of God seen in the minor prophets is holiness. An awareness of holiness was the driving force behind their sharp denunciations of sin.

[11 : 33] It made no difference where the sin was found, whether in foreign lands or among God's people. It was still an offense to God and called for judgment.

Nowhere in the Bible are there stiffer denunciations of sin and heartier calls for a deep and pervasive repentance. Apart from repentance, judgment falls.

So as we study through this book, we're looking specifically for God's sovereignty and we're looking specifically for God's holiness. And then third, the prophets speak of God's love.

It is because of God's great love for his people, even his love for Nineveh, that he sends prophets with the message of judgment and indeed eventually sends the judgment itself.

Even as we look at our responsibility as the church to proclaim this message of judgment that accompanies the gospel of Jesus Christ, we understand that it's because of God's love that he does this.

[12 : 44] It is because of God's love that he pronounces judgment. He could have just come in and destroyed the nation without any warning, but he gave them this season of repentance.

And right now, if you're watching this and you don't know Christ, he is giving you this season right now for repentance. Believe me, judgment is coming. It's coming.

And only those who have turned away from their sin to follow after Jesus Christ will escape the judgment and inherit eternal life. But judgment is coming for all of us.

And right now is a season that God is giving for repentance. And we as the church must be faithful to carry the burden of this message and proclaim it to those while they have an opportunity to turn to God.

Whenever possible, as we study through, I'll endeavor to bring these characteristics to the surface, hopefully in each sermon. Now, here's the main point of the book of Habakkuk.

[13 : 45] We'll quickly find that this book is amazingly relevant, if you haven't noticed already. And you'll probably find that you have asked the same questions that Habakkuk asked.

And you'll likely struggle with understanding God's answers in the same way that Habakkuk struggled with understanding God's answers. But the point of this book is not to answer all of your questions, but to drive you to deepen your faith in our sovereign God.

If all you're looking for as you approach this study is to be able to finally connect all the dots of who God is and why He acts and the way He does, you'll be sorely disappointed. But if you'll approach this book, in addition to seeking answers, looking for your faith to be strengthened as you come to understand more of who God is, then it will accomplish its purpose in your life.

Owen Robertson again said, trust in the purposes of the Lord, despite confusing perceptions of precisely what He is doing, lies at the center of the thought of Habakkuk.

And by the time we conclude our study, it's imperative, not that we suddenly have a complete understanding of the infinite God, but that we have learned to trust Him fully.

[15 : 13] As He says for us in chapter 2 and verse 4, Behold, His soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in Him, but the just shall live by His faith.

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