



Habbakuk: Difficult Questions Allowed

Background

The prophecy of Habbakuk is set between the rise of the Babylonian power (626 BC) and the fall of Jerusalem. Little is known of the prophet Habbakuk, although his name may be connected with Hebrew root meaning 'embrace' (hbq) or with an Assyrian plant name, 'hambakuku'. The Greek form of his name is 'Hambakoum'. It is clear, however, that Habbakuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah and a man of vigorous faith rooted deeply in the religious traditions of Israel.

The Message

Among the prophetic writings, Habbakuk is unique in that it contains an oratory between Habbakuk and God, rather than a direct prophetic message to the people of Israel. (The book of Jonah, while narrative, presents an account of conflict between the Lord and one of His prophets.)

In the first two chapters, Habbakuk questions the ways of God and when confronted with God's reply he responds with a beautiful confession of faith (Chapter 3). This tells us that we should not be afraid to enter into such dialogue with God - a God whose answer speaks to all believers who at times may share these troubled doubts.

The question of why evil people prospered burned in Habbakuk's mind as the brutal Babylonians were dominating his nation of Judah. Nevertheless, we learn from Habbakuk's experience that a Sovereign God is not angered or intimidated by our questions. These questions are very real questions that we frequently encounter, particularly among non-Christians, e.g. If God is so good why does He allow suffering?, and sometimes among ourselves. We need to explore our own faith struggles and turn them into very honest, humble and heartfelt prayers.

Perhaps the words of Job also come to mind when we think of his response to God:

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42: 2).

This is a truth that we need to speak into our hearts time and time again.

For the remainder of this study we have presented a series of questions that take you through the book, and we pray that these may bless and encourage you in your faith. The study finishes with time for meditative reflection and prayer.



Questions

Habbakuk 1

1. Read verses 1-4 to yourself. Think about how you would write these verses in your own words;
2. Look at God's answer in verses 5-11. Do you find any words of comfort there?;
3. What do Habbakuk and the people have to look forward to?;
4. Look at verses 12-13. What about God's actions seems inconsistent to Habbakuk?;
5. How would you answer the questions he raises?;
6. Do you agree with the prophet's description of the wicked in verses 14-17? If not, what would you add or change?

Habbakuk 2:2-14

1. How does God indicate that what he is about to say is important?;
2. What encouragement is found in verse 3?;
3. List the sins described by God in these verses?;
4. How will the wicked pay for what they have done?;
5. In short, how has God answered Habbakuk's hard questions?

Habbakuk 3:1-3, 3:16-19

1. Describe the tone of Habbakuk's response;
2. Do you think he is satisfied with God's answer? Explain;
3. What expressions of faith and hope do you find in these verses?;
4. What is Habbakuk confident of?;
5. Does he expect all of life's problems to be solved? Explain.

Meditation and Prayer.