

## **Habakkuk #2: God Speaks & Habakkuk Silenced** Glory International by Ps. Paul Kim

**Types of Faiths:** (a) Atheism has a great faith to believe this orderly world came out of nothing or by sheer chance without any intelligence behind it (agnostics). (b) Deism believes in God, but they believe that God no longer controls history much like a watch He wound up and left to unwind on its own. (c) Theism believes that God, not only created this world but He is still actively involved with the world – i.e. God controls history – i.e. history: His Story. If Theism is true, then: (a) What God thinks and how God feels are the most important factor that determines history; (b) *Then logically I have to believe that there is a purpose of God behind every part of history including the good and the bad (injustices) - Deist does not have such problem.* This was the problem Habakkuk had with God. Habakkuk could not reconcile the character of God that he already knew of and the actions (inaction) of God in life.

### **Habakkuk argues with God the second time (1:12-2:1)**

1. “Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.” (1:12a) – (a) the implication is YHWH who is holy, is in complete control of human history throughout the ages [Theist]; (b) Israel can never be exterminated because of God’s covenant. [True] (2 Sam 7:16 c.f. Jer 31:35-36).
2. “O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment. O Rock, You have marked them for correction.” (1:12b) – The holy God who is in complete control of human history must judge and destroy a wicked nation like Babylon – i.e. *‘Israel must survive but the wicked Babylon shall not survive.’* [True] (2:5-20)
3. “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on wickedness.” (1:13) – God being so pure He cannot endure watching the wicked Babylonians come and destroy Israel who is better than them. This is an apparent contradiction with God’s nature. *“God, I bet You cannot possibly stand to watch such atrocity done to your people by such wicked & godless people!”* [Not True]. The truth is that God could watch the wicked do horrible things to other people. God sees and feels every bit of evil in this world day after day. God beholds every mugging, murder, rape, molestation, etc. (a) *We don’t have to see them, but God sees them all, (b) and it affects God very deeply. “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”* (Gen 6:5-6)
4. “Why do You look on those who deal treacherously and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?” (1:13b) – Habakkuk is gutted and argues with God that He cannot stand still. Habakkuk complains that it is *immoral for God* to cure the problem of violence, immorality, and injustice in His people by those who are the worst in all these vices than Israel. *The Babylonians were the ‘epitome of lawlessness and idolatry’ (1:6-11 c.f. Is 47:12-13)* – i.e. *‘You are a moral God who cannot employ immoral means to teach You people how to live righteously. Surely you cannot stomach it.’* If you bring Babylonians to destroy Israel, where is Your testimony in it before the nations?
5. “Why do You make men like fish of the sea, like creeping things that have no ruler over them?” (1:14) – (a) I know you are holy and everlasting God, but why do you act as if you are absent in history? God’s inaction explains our world by ‘deism’ more than ‘theism.’ *‘The world history looks just like a bigger fish eating a smaller fish and nothing more.’* (b) The Babylonians were the worst lot that emptied the whole ocean of the fish (humans) by use of their nets (1:15-16) – i.e. *“some use hook; others use nets, but the Babylonians use the ‘dragnet’ to destroy the entire fish stock in the ocean only to turn around and worship their dragnets!” – aggressive, selfish & idolatrous!* C.f. Some Babylonian monuments depict: (a) the Chaldeans dragging the captives with a fishhook on their mouths in a single line; (b) Babylonian gods dragging a net in which their captured enemies squirm – i.e. The Babylonians had as little regard for human life as fishermen have for fish. *‘Will you still fold Your arms and watch them glee as they repeat this destructive cycle until not only Israel, but the entire nations are annihilated?’ (1:17).*
6. “I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.” (2:1) – Habakkuk has climbed up on the post as a watchman on a city wall to watch God if He will actually do this and see what God will say to Him – i.e. Habakkuk is preparing his thoughts to have another round of argument with God. C.f. 2:1 is full of “I (my)” (x 6). *God responded to Habakkuk who was willing to wait until He spoke. Ps 73:17.* How long did he wait?

### **God’s Answers Habakkuk Again (2:2-20)**

1. “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.” (2:2) – ‘Habakkuk, get down now and go to your people and tell them your vision and what is coming upon them. I have given

you a very important message that could mean life or death to many. You must tell your people and warn them immediately so they can prepare for it.' Habakkuk was not happy as Jonah in Nineveh.

Two possible translations: (a) "He who reads may run" – i.e. Let the vision move people into immediate action; (b) "He who runs may read" – i.e. Let the vision be read by those who are busily going somewhere but nowhere in life. *Let the prophetic revelation move the people to action (Prov 29:18)*

2. "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. I will not tarry." (2:3) – Habakkuk, you are in the wrong time scale. It will not be the next week or next month. My judgment through the Babylonian invasion will surely come, but it is at an appointed time in the future. Timing is one of the most difficult concepts to understand in prophetic revelation: "My [David] times are in Your hands." (Ps 31:15).  
Two interpretations of judgments: (a) Babylonian invasion of Judah (Hab 1:5-6); (b) The judgment on all evil and the coming of the Lord (Hab 3:1-15). The justice of God is coming to Judah in the future within Habakkuk's lifetime (586 BC). *What about the nations of the world?* Surely God's justice will be served to all nations and individuals at His coming! God is not inactive! God has a different time scale.
3. God answers two moral problems in judging Judah by Babylon: (a) *What about the good people in the city of Jerusalem?* Will they survive? The Babylonians will not make a distinction when they come in like the floods. (b) *How can God use wicked Babylonians to judge us?* Will the scale of justice be balanced?
4. Answer (a) "But the just shall live by faith" (2:4) [Motto of Reformation!] – 'I will protect those who are faithful to Me.' – i.e. They will survive the coming judgment. E.g. Noah, Enoch, etc. God always has His remnants. 7,000 in Elijah's day. "Habakkuk, don't worry, many will be destroyed, but those who are faithful will survive." NT & OT word used for 'faith' is the same as 'faithfulness' (loyalty). This word is often used to describe faithfulness in marriage – i.e. 'until death do us part.'  
3 NT quotations: "Just shall live by faith." (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). NT emphasis falls on 'going on believing with perseverance until the end!' The Babylonians will come and destroy Jerusalem, but the righteous who remain faithful to God will survive and go on as God's remnant. So also NT saints.
5. Answer (b): God will severely judge the Babylonians for their pride (2:5-19). Those who are driven by pride and greed / selfish ambition (Babylonian spirit of stupor, Dan 5) are diametrically opposed to a life of faith and humility that attracts God's blessing (2:5). In the end the people of the nations who fell victim to their vices will taunt them with juicy proverbs: 5 'woes' = cursing words. Jesus said 'woe' as much as 'blessed'. In Jesus' day, there were 250,000 people living on the shores of Galilee in 4 major towns. Jesus said woe to 3 of them - Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin [a.k.a. evangelical triangle] (Matt 11:21-24; Luke 10:12-15). Today, only one of them have survived – Tiberius. God says, "Woe to you for [specific vice] What you have done to others will be done to you." (x 5). – i.e. God has built this world with His laws = physical laws + moral laws. "If I jump off a cliff, I do not break the law of gravity, you illustrate it." "We cannot break God's laws. We break ourselves upon it." "Whatever a man sows that he will also reap." (Gal 6:7) [Babylon destroyed 539 BC] – Not 10 commandments. Inhumanity/cruelty.
  - a. Injustice (2:6-8) – stealing wealth by dishonest dealings. "The plunderers will be plundered."
  - b. Impropriety (2:9-11) – corrupting justice by unjust gain (bribery) "The crooked will be discovered."
  - c. Imperialism (2:12-13) – pillaging resources of other nations. "The slave drivers will be enslaved."
  - d. Inhumanity (2:15-17) – exploiting the vulnerability of others: Slavery, sexual-predatory acts, human trafficking, violence done to trees (Lebanon), animals, land, and the city, etc. "shamers will be ashamed & destroyers will be destroyed."
  - e. Idolatry (2:18-19) – the worst sin of all as it robs God's glory. The idolatrous people fashion a god of their own imagination and worship it. God of love and not justice? "Idolators will be humiliated."Purpose of human history: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Hab 2:14) – structural centre of the taunt #3.  
Turning Point: "But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him." (2:20) – "Habakkuk be quiet. I am in charge of the nations and the history, and I will fill the earth with the knowledge of My glory." Then Habakkuk got quiet and thought about God. Habakkuk saw from God's perspective. He is now a changed man, no longer arguing angrily but singing happily. He looks back at the past and he looks forward to the future. He now knows that God reigns gloriously in His temple.