

1:1-1:11 First Prayer and Response

1-4 Habakkuk's Prayer

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1:12-2:1 Habakkuk's Prayer and Posture

2:2-20 God's Response

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Does God Care about Injustice?

Habakkuk, Part I

Habakkuk 1:1-11

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I. Introduction

II. Historical Setting

A. Josiah the Righteous King (2 Kgs 23:25)

B. Jehoiakim the Unrighteous King (Jer 22:13-19)

Jehoiakim was an unrighteous king. He embraced idols and the people followed him in his idolatry. Jeremiah speaks of Jehoiakim's evil reign:

¹³“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work, ¹⁴Who says, ‘I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling it with cedar And painting it with vermilion.’ ¹⁵“Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. ¹⁶He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then it was well. Was not this knowing Me?” says the LORD. ¹⁷“Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence.”

III. The First Prayer and Response

A. Habakkuk's Prayer: Don't you care about injustice, Lord? (1-4)

¹The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. ²O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save. ³Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. ⁴Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

B. God's Response: Of course, and I am acting even now! (5-11)

⁵“Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. ⁶For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. ⁷They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. ⁸Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. ⁹“They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. ¹¹Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.”

God answers Habakkuk's prayer but notes that the answer will not initially satisfy Habakkuk. He will judge Judah's injustice by using an _____ instrument to judge injustice.

IV. Application

A. The Propriety of Prayer (Ps 13:1-4)

When we are struggling with God's silence in the face of _____, it is fitting to raise our voice on high and cry out to God. God loves justice and He loves it when His people cry for justice. As we sing in Psalm 13:

¹ How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? ² How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Such prayers of petition are existential reminders that injustice is not “*normal*” or “*acceptable*.” Our cries against injustice reveal that we know in our hearts that justice exists – and, if justice exists, then God exists.

B. God's Concern for Justice (Ps 7:10-16; 50:21-23; 73:16-20)

God sees injustice; He marks it; He cares about it; and He will judge it.

¹⁰My defense is of God, Who saves the upright in heart. ¹¹God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day. ¹²If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready. ¹³He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts. ¹⁴Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood. ¹⁵He made a pit and dug it out, And has fallen into the ditch which he made. ¹⁶His trouble shall return upon his own head, And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown. (Ps 7)

God is angry with the wicked *every day* (11). He is patient with them, granting them time to _____ (12a). But if they refuse, then He will bring upon their own heads the injustice that they perpetrate on others (15). We must never forget this, particularly when the unjust seem to be prospering. As Psalm 73 reminds us:

¹⁶When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me— ¹⁷Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. ¹⁸Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. ¹⁹Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. ²⁰As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

C. The Mystery of God's Providence (Is 10:5-11)

The way God upholds justice in the course of history will often shock, astound, and befuddle us as human beings. God often uses _____ instruments to accomplish justice in the world. And we are not in a position to judge Him or His ways. God declared to Assyria in the days of Isaiah the prophet:

⁵“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. ⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations. ⁸For he says, ‘Are not my princes altogether kings? ⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? ¹⁰As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, ¹¹As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?’”

V. Conclusion (Rom 3:26)