

Habakkuk

Synthetic reading

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Shock at the Instruments God Uses!

The opening lines of Habakkuk seem just as apropos now as they were when written in the waning days of the southern kingdom of Judah.

² O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not hear?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?

³ Why do you make me see iniquity,
and why do you idly look at wrong?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

⁴ So the law is paralyzed,
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
so justice goes forth perverted.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Habakkuk, as you can see from these opening verses, looked upon the injustice of the world and of his nation, the southern kingdom of Judah, and rightly recognized something troubling – the counter-covenant conduct of the people was antithetical to the holiness of God. When Habakkuk saw this, the narrative of the 8th book of the Minor Prophets and the 35th book of the Old Testament doesn't depict the prophet crying out to the offending people. Instead, Habakkuk cried out to the supposedly offended God. Habakkuk wondered why God didn't do something about the oppression, devastation, destitution, and injustice. God responded to Habakkuk in a way that blew the prophet's mind and shocked his sensibilities! God was going to do something but the prophet wasn't going to like it. God declared that God would bring judgement against injustice in Judah and that God would use the unjust Babylonians to bring it!

**Rev. White's reading notes
based on synthetic reading of the book**

Habakkuk was both astounded and appalled. How could this be? The Babylonians were arrogant, wicked, evil, oppressive, and unjust. That was almost the unanimous opinion of the *united nations* of the time. That was also the assessment of the Babylonians according to the standards of God! With that being the case, how was it that God could use the most arrogant and most oppressive of nations as a tool of God's judgement against the nation of Judah? Judah was the covenant people of God, even though they were doing wickedly and acting arrogantly and operating unjustly. Doesn't membership have its privileges?

God demonstrated both irony and sovereignty by using the unjust to judge Judah's injustice. God used oppressors to judge the oppression conducted by the covenant children of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob! Judah herself was violating God's covenant and was operating in injustice with a spirit of oppression! However, God's sovereignty and power are so absolute, God's ownership and opportunities are so comprehensive, that God showed that God could choose and use *whosoever* to be an instrument in God's sovereign hand! Once God chooses, God can use even the unlikely to accomplish what God deems appropriate and just! Then God revealed that after God used the "unclean" instruments of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to judge the people of Judah, God would also clean the instruments themselves by judging the nation that God used to judge Judah. When Habakkuk got over his shock, he submitted.

How do you react when God shocks your sensibilities? God used the unpopular to accomplish the unexpected! That was the reason that *the vision* had to be written and that it had to be made plain. Running with this vision and living by faith meant that even when the worst that could imaginably happen did actually happen, the people of God were still exhorted to trust in God and exercise their faith to persevere with hope and endurance. They were to recognize that it was still right to hang right in there with the God who would see them through and who also would ultimately exercise judgement and justice to all who deserve it at just the right time!