

THE MESSAGE OF HABAKKUK

In September 1939, American preacher, Donald Grey Barnhouse, was invited to speak at a church in Ireland. Earlier that week Hitler had invaded Poland, and the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, gave him an ultimatum. Unless he withdraw by Sunday morning at 11:00, England would declare war on Germany.

Just as Barnhouse arose from his seat to preach he was handed a note, "No reply from Hitler. The Prime Minister has declared war." The pastor of the church told him, "I hope you have a good sermon today. It may be the last that some of the men will ever hear." *Wow, talk about preaching under pressure.*

Barnhouse used as his text, Matthew 24:6, "You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled..." He went on to describe the horrors of war, and after each statement he added the words, "*Don't be troubled.*"...

"Millions of homes will be broken up. Don't be troubled! Children will be torn from their mothers. Don't be troubled! Husbands and brothers will perish in the field of battle. Don't be troubled! Innocent blood will flow like a river.

Don't be troubled! Children will be left orphans. Don't be troubled!" On and on he went.

The tension in the room mounted.

Finally Barnhouse looked to heaven and shouted, "*Don't be troubled?* These words are either the words of a madman or God. How can these words be spoken to men who have hearts that can weep...? Unless Jesus is God He has no right to tell us, *don't be troubled!*" Then Barnhouse went on to explain that Jesus is God.

He is the God of history. Jesus is in charge of every circumstance. All of life flows through a channel cut by God. Man's sin causes the horrors of war, but God still controls human affairs. He uses even our evil for His glory. Jesus is God, and He does not go to sleep... even in horrible times - like times of war.

Such is the message of Habakkuk's prophecy. Even in the face of calamity and tragedy God is still in control. And *the just*, those who trust God, will live by faith.

AN OUTLINE OF HABAKKUK

Habakkuk...

In chapter 1

he's *wondering and wrestling.*

In chapter 2

he's *watching and waiting.*

In chapter 3

he's *worshipping and witnessing.*

In chapter 1

he begins in *the valley.*

In chapter 2

he climbs into *the tower.*

In chapter 3

he ascends up *the mountain.*

In chapter 1

he *sighs.*

In chapter 2

he *seeks.*

In chapter 3

he *sings.*

In chapter 1

he starts in *turmoil.*

In chapter 2

he learns *trust.*

In chapter 3

he sings of *triumph.*

Devotion Box - When God's Work Doesn't Make Sense

God tells Habakkuk in 1:5, "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. For 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."

Habakkuk had assumed God was inactive. But God was at work. God says, "*Look at what I'm doing in the earth*" But God is working in a way Habakkuk would've never imagined.

Habakkuk knew it was time for Judah to be judged, *but why the Babylonians?* Why is God executing that judgment with a nation more wicked than the people being judged? Yes, Judah had sinned, but compared to the Babylonians they were saints. It doesn't seem fair, or right, to Habakkuk. He's thinking, "God may be at work in the world, but to me His ways don't make sense."

This is our problem. We too make assumptions. We want God to work, but in our way, at our time, according to our plan, to carry out our agenda. And when He doesn't, our faith is tested... *Do we trust God and His wisdom, or do we trust in our wisdom... our version of what He should or should not do?*

Oswald Chambers puts it, "Faith is the deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time." Faith is not always privy to God's means - nor does it even have to like them - but it trusts in God's motive. Never in a million years would Habakkuk have thought God would use a vile, idolatrous people like the Chaldeans (Babylon). It threw a wrench in how he thought God operated. But God's goal is always *our good and His glory.* Does Habakkuk still trust in *God's motive* despite *God's means?*

Devotion Box - Jump Or Climb ?

Chapter 2 begins, "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." Here's a vital question, *"What do you do when life doesn't make sense? When life goes haywire? When all your conclusions end in confusion? When you can't square horrible circumstances with the hand and plan of a loving God?"*

You have a choice... You can *jump to wrong conclusions* – "God has abandoned me." "God doesn't care." "God is powerless in the face of life's circumstances." "His hands are tied." Or you can *climb to the right perspective*. You can ascend to the tower at the top of the wall, and climb above your circumstances. You can sit on the ramparts, and seek the Lord. You can humble yourself. Admit that there's much about God you don't understand, *but that doesn't make Him any less God*. You can wait on God to work in your heart, and teach you lessons you wouldn't otherwise learn.

When life throws you a curve *you can jump or climb* - jump to faulty conclusions, or climb into a conversation with God. Habakkuk climbs to his knees (and that's the highest climb a man can make) - and he seeks God's perspective.

What about you? When life gets tough do you *fold your faith and give up on God* - or do you *fortify your faith, and grow in God*? Habakkuk chose the latter, *literally the ladder*... he climbs into the tower to wait on a word from God.

Devotion Box - Fulfilling A Vision

Habakkuk ascends to the tower to wait on God - and he doesn't have to wait long. In 2:2 he writes, "Then the LORD answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. 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, it will not tarry.'" What God tells him will come to pass, but it'll take a while. You don't reap the same season you sow. We need *faith and patience* to inherit God's promises.

This is the case with the vision God gives us. God shows us His plan... *but then poof, presto*... it doesn't just happen instantly. The vision God speaks to our hearts takes time, sometimes years - to unfold, and develop, and come together. It takes *faith and endurance* to hang on long enough for the vision to be fulfilled.

Devotion Box - Faith At Its Highpoint

In 3:17-18 Habakkuk's faith reaches a highpoint. "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls - yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In other words, I'll trust God in good times and bad.

When the crops fail - when the stock market crashes - when I lose my job - when the teenager wrecks the family car - when I'm diagnosed with cancer - when a friend dies - *even then*, "I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." I have read the end of the vision, and know that God will prevail.

TOWER POWER

In 2:1 Habakkuk ascends into the tower to wait on God. His attitude in doing so unleashes the power of God in his life. Here are four vital attitudes in Habakkuk's approach: 1) *determination*, 2) *isolation*, 3) *expectation*, 4) *humiliation*.

Notice his *determination*, "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart". The implication is, he's not coming down until he hears from the Lord.

Recall Moses fasted for 40 days before God spoke to him. Daniel prayed for 3 weeks before the angel broke through, and victory was won. We pray for 5 minutes and if there's no answer we turn on the television, or call a friend. When it comes to seeking the Lord we need some *determination*.

Waiting on God also involves *isolation*. Habakkuk climbs to the tower - away from the hustle and bustle in the streets. He ditches the distractions and gets alone with God.

I've been on the ramparts of Jerusalem. I've walked the walls, and it's a place that promotes serenity and quiet. In the background you hear noise in the streets, but on the walls you're above it all. There's nothing between you and God. It's a place to quiet your soul and listen to what God might want to speak to you.

Once a native American left the reservation to visit New York City. He and a friend were walking the streets when he stopped, and said, "I hear a cricket." His buddy responded, "That's impossible with all the shouts, and buses, and cars, and ambulances, and pedestrians." But he was insistent, "I hear a cricket." The Indian walked over to a planter, dug into the dirt, and pulled out a cricket.

His friend was impressed, "How did you hear a cricket in the midst of all this noise?" The Indian answered, "It's all in how you train your ear. *Watch this*..." He pulled from his pocket a fist full of nickels and dimes and quarters and dropped them on the pavement. Instantly, everyone within a block stopped what they were doing, and turned in their direction. Everyone recognized the sound.

The Indian was right; we hear what we train our ears to hear. This is why Habakkuk climbed the wall, and sought out a quiet place. He wanted to train his ears to hear the Lord. We need to follow his example.

Third, notice Habakkuk's *expectation*. "And watch to see what He will say to me" - The prophet expects God to meet him, and speak a word to his heart.

Let me ask you, *when you pray do you pray with a pen and paper in hand?* If not, why not? When I take time out of my busyness and get alone with God I always expect God to speak. I want to be able to write down the ideas and direction He gives me. God speaks to expectant hearts.

And fourth, pay attention to Habakkuk's *humiliation*. He says he's concerned about "what I will answer when I am corrected." Note, he expects to be corrected.

Whenever I approach God I remember I am the student, and He is the teacher. Not once have I enlightened God on a subject or situation. Not once have I told God something He didn't already know. Not once have I given God a piece of advice He appreciated. God is the coach. I am the pupil. God is the parent. I am the child. God corrects. I submit and learn.

"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH"

God says in Habakkuk 2:4, "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." In the end, God will see to it the proud are punished, and the just will live – but it takes faith – *"the just shall live by his faith."*

What a message to Habakkuk.

At the time he was living *by sight* (he couldn't see God's hand), *by logic* (what God was doing didn't seem to make sense), and *by emotion* (he screamed out his confusion and frustration). The situation didn't *look right, or seem right, or feel right* – but God says it doesn't matter... the just won't live by sight, or logic, or emotion. The true believer will live by faith.

We need to trust God's Word in our situation. Regardless of what we see, or think, or feel we need to base our attitudes and actions on what God has said.

Habakkuk 2:4 is one of the most strategic verses in the Bible. In the 3rd century AD a Jewish rabbi named Simlai noted that Moses gave Israel 365 negative commands, and 248 positive commands. The rabbi noted that in Psalm 15, David reduced these 613 commands to 11. In Isaiah 33:14-15 they're reduced further to 6. Micah 6:8 reduces them to 3 – *do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God.* And here

Habakkuk goes the final step, and reduces all 613 commandments into one, single, solitary statement, "the just shall live by his faith."

It's interesting that Habakkuk 2:4 is the verse that revolutionized the Apostle Paul. Three times he quotes it – Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38.

The emphasis in Romans is "the *just* shall live by his faith." The just person didn't make himself just and righteous. God declared him just because of his faith.

The emphasis in Galatians is "the just shall live by his *faith*." It's not the works of the Law that makes us just or right with God, but our faith in the work of Jesus. As Paul says to the Galatians, "*not the works of the law, but the hearing of faith...*"

The emphasis in Hebrews is "the just shall *live* by his faith." Rather than work, and grind, and perform to maintain a right standing with God – we're to *live* by faith, and trust in the power of the Spirit to keep us and make us more like Jesus.

Habakkuk 2:4 is the seed from which all the New Testament sprouts.

ZEPHANIAH

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago in a Maryland suburb a neighbor's burglar alarm went off accidentally. A screeching siren filled the neighborhood. Everyone expected the homeowners to arrive home quickly and reset the alarm. But all day long the siren blared. In fact, it continued through the night and into the next day. By now the neighbors were furious. They've called the police, but the cops refused to break into the house and turn off the alarm without the homeowners' consent. It took a week to contact the neighbors in Europe, and turn off the siren.

Zephaniah was a screeching siren. His words of warning woke up a sleepy neighborhood, but rather than take heed to his alarm, they were annoyed. They wanted to turn him off. Zephaniah also writes to warn Judah of coming judgment. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk. He was a part of that final flurry of prophets just before the Babylonian captivity.

THE MAN

Chapter 1:1 begins, "The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah."

In his commentary on Zephaniah, Walter Kaiser brings up a theory. Notice Zephaniah's father was named "Cushi". Cush was the Hebrew name for the country of Ethiopia. It's possible Zephaniah was an Ethiopian, and a black man.

To this day there are a large contingency of black Jews living in Ethiopia. For centuries they were cut off from the rest of the world, and were initially surprised that all Jews were not black. The form of Judaism

practiced by the Falashas of Ethiopian is closer to biblical Judaism than that of European Jews.

Deuteronomy 23:8 tells the people not to abhor the Egyptian, but let "the children of the third generation born to them... enter the congregation of the LORD." Perhaps Zephaniah lists his genealogy to the fourth generation to prove his Jewish identity.

THE MESSAGE

The prophecy of Zephaniah begins with a bang – verse 2, "I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land," says the LORD..."

Seven times Zephaniah uses the expression "*the day of the LORD*", which we know from other places refers ultimately to the end of the age when God will judge this wicked world. Like most of the Old Testament prophets, Zephaniah's prophesy has both an immediate and a future fulfillment. His words speak of the Babylonian invasion – as well as, Jesus' invasion of planet earth when He comes again to bring judgment. *There's a local and immediate fulfillment. There's a global and future fulfillment.*

Zephaniah 1:3 speaks of the judgment of God that will one day come upon the whole world, "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land," says the LORD." When Jesus returns the earth will resemble a battlefield. The carnage and corpses will be devastating.

J. Vernon McGee writes these words, "The book of Zephaniah is like a Florida hurricane, a Texas tornado, a Mississippi River flood, a Minnesota snowstorm, and a California earthquake all rolled into one." Zephaniah is a serious siren!

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - June 24, 2001 - The last Terrific Tuesday of the summer is this Tuesday June 26, 10am - 3pm, Grades 1-5; Men of the Cross, Friday June 29, 7-9 pm; Kid's Camp, FDR State Park, Grades 1-5, July 16-19, deadline for registration is July 1; Men's Retreat with Gayle Erwin, August 10-11; Please pray for our High School Mission Trip to Mexico, July 7-14; CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year.

Next Bible Scan - July 1 - Haggai 1-2, Zechariah 1-14

“ But the just shall live by his faith ” - Habakkuk 2:4

Bible Scan Memory Verse

ZEPHANIAH IN MODERN TIMES

THE REVIVAL OF THE HEBREW

Zephaniah 3:9 makes another interesting prediction, "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord." At the tower of Babel God confused the languages to drive men apart. But in the Kingdom age He'll reinstitute a global language. A universal language will unite us, and enable us to worship God in a single voice.

And what language will this global tongue be? Well, English, of course, and everyone all over the world will speak with a southern accent. *Just kiddin'.*

Some scholars see here a promise to restore ancient Hebrew, and make it the global language of all mankind. The restoration of the Hebrew language in Israel today is nothing less than a modern miracle. Prior to this century Hebrew had not been spoken since the 6th century BC, when the Jews were carried off to Babylon. When they returned the Jews spoke the Aramaic they picked up in Babylon. Only the religious leaders knew Hebrew, and soon it became a dead language.

Hebrew wasn't spoken again until the 20th century.

Devotion Box - Which Direction Are You Running?

Verses 2-3 hold out hope, "before the LORD'S fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger."

Every morning when the sun comes up on the African plain the gazelle knows it will have to run faster than the fastest lion, or be killed. And every lion knows it will have to run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will die of starvation. But every animal in Africa knows they'll have to run – either to eat, or be eaten.

And every person on earth is on the run. You are either running to God, or from God. Which direction are you running?

When Jews from all over the globe returned to their homeland they came speaking a zillion languages. Communication was difficult. A Jerusalem journalist named Eliezer Ben-Yehuda recognized the problem, and made it his personal campaign to revive Hebrew.

He started with a vocabulary of just 7704 words – all taken from the Bible. Today modern Hebrew contains over 100,000 words. Hebrew is the only dead language in history that has been restored to common, everyday usage.

OPERATION MOSES

Zephaniah 3:10 is another interesting prophecy, "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering."

In the late 70s and early 80s the Israeli military launched "Operation Moses" to airlift black Falasha Jews out of war-torn Ethiopia, and relocate them to Israel. Perhaps Zephaniah was a forefather – a Cushite, a black Jew from Ethiopia.

It's amazing though, a 2500 year old prophecy was fulfilled in our generation.

Devotion Box - God Is It!

From verse 5 through the end of Zephaniah 2 the Lord pronounces judgment on Judah's surrounding neighbors – the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria.

The Assyrians who live in Nineveh sound like a Coca-Cola ad, verse 15, "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in her heart, 'I am it, and there is none besides me.'" Before Coke was it, Nineveh thought she was it. She was proud.

How many people today have followed suit. They think they're it! Yet God said of Nineveh in His very next statement, "How has she become a desolation..." Guys, the Lord has ways of taking the air out of the arrogant. Only God "is it!"

"Zephaniah" means **"he whom the LORD hides"**, and God hides from His wrath the person who repents!