

Habakkuk's First Question About the Problem Evil **Habakkuk 1:1-11**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There is the legitimate question concerning evil.

2. God uses evil to punish evil.

Practical Application

1. It's not wrong to question God in the right way.

Questions

1. What do we know about the life and times of Habakkuk?
2. What was Habakkuk's main concern?
3. How did the Lord answer Habakkuk?
4. What was Habakkuk's reaction to God's answer?
5. What right thing did Habakkuk do?

Answers

1. He was a pre-exilic prophet (before the exile of the Jews to Babylon). He prophesied a short time before King Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem (605 B.C.). He was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah.
2. As he looked around, he saw unchecked and unjust evil. He saw the wicked surrounding the righteous. The wicked were getting away with their iniquity and violence, and there didn't seem to be any justice.
3. God told him that He was about to discipline Judah by raising up the Babylonians (Chaldeans) to siege Jerusalem and take it.
4. He was even more concerned and confused, wondering how a holy God could allow the pagan Babylonians to discipline His own people.
5. He went directly to the Lord to express his concern. He asked the Lord why this evil was happening and why He wasn't doing something about it. He was not a skeptic or a critic, but he was confused with legitimate questions.

Discuss / Consider

1. The problem of evil is sometimes called the "Achilles' heel" of the Christian faith. There is no simple answer. That is, if God is all-good and the creator of everything, where did evil come from? And, if God is all-powerful, then why does evil continue? These are legitimate questions, and it is not wrong to wonder. Habakkuk had these questions. Do you have these questions as you look at today's world? To whom and how are you asking these questions?
2. Why does God allow evil and violence to go on, both then and now? Consider the evil ways of the Babylonian Empire (see Habakkuk 1:6, 7, 9-11). What does it mean, "God allows evil to punish evil?" Where else is this truth taught in the Bible?
3. Evil sowed is evil reaped. See Psalm 76:10 and Galatians 6:7. Has God ever used the evil of mankind to punish and discipline you? Has some unfair treatment or evil deed been perpetuated on you? Did you learn from it? How did you deal with it?

Challenge

1. Be sure that you have the right attitude when you question God. Remember that He is not unfair or wrong in any way. Remember that you are seeking answers; not questioning God's character or His ways. God gave Habakkuk answers because he didn't come as a doubter, skeptic, or critic.

Habakkuk's Second Question About Evil

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. God's purity is not affected by the evil He allows.**
- 2. God's providence is not affected by the evil He uses.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's wait on our watchtower.**

Questions

1. What is the parallel between Habakkuk's concern and Asaph's concern in Psalm 73.
2. What had happened to the nation of Judah during the reign of King Josiah?3. How soon after this revival did Habakkuk prophesy? What were the conditions then?
4. The Lord was allowing the pagan nation of Babylon to rise up and conquer Judah. Give a brief history of the warfare of Babylon.
5. What was Habakkuk's second question to God?
6. What did Habakkuk do after he asked this question?

Answers

1. Both Habakkuk and Asaph looked around them and wondered why God allowed the wicked to prosper and evil to apparently to go unjudged.
2. There was a great revival in the nation of Judah around 621 B.C. (See 2 Kings 23).
3. About fifteen years later. The revival was short-lived and the people soon returned to their evil ways. Habakkuk looked around and saw violence and moral corruption. The wicked were prospering and the righteous were suffering.
4. Babylon had overthrown Nineveh, the capitol of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. It went on to defeat Egypt in 605 B.C. Next, Babylon would move toward Jerusalem.
5. He asked God, who was righteous and holy, how He could let the evil nation of Babylon punish His own people, Judah.
6. He waited patiently for God's answer. See Habakkuk 2:1.

Discuss / Consider

1. God allows evil or it wouldn't exist, but it does not affect God's purity and holiness. See 1 John 1:5. How can you explain this? Review God's plan of free will for both angelic and human beings. Review the use of free will in your own life. Does your free will impinge on God's moral perfection?

2. God used the Babylonians as a tool to discipline and correct His own people. But Habakkuk knew on the basis of God's promises that Judah would not be annihilated. God's providence is not affected by the evil He uses. Consider the example of Joseph in Genesis 50:20. Consider another example that came out of the evil of the Nazi Holocaust & the nation of Israel was reborn after almost 2,000 years. God's providence is not affected by the evil He uses. This is true in nations and in our lives today. Believe Romans 8:28. Believe that God's providence is working in your life.

Challenge

1. Standing on a watchtower gives the big picture, an overall view of the surroundings. Habakkuk stood on his watchtower to wait and see what God would do concerning the evil around him. Habakkuk was not bitter, skeptical or critical. Are you willing to wait on your watchtower for God's answers?

The Answers to Habakkuk's Second Question **Habakkuk 2:1-4**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Evil is scheduled for termination.

2. Evil is scheduled for judgment.

Practical Application

1. Let's live by faith in the midst of evil.

Questions

1. Habakkuk was concerned about the iniquity and violence all around him. He questioned the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. What was God's answer to Habakkuk?
2. God's answer to Habakkuk prompted another question. What was Habakkuk's reaction to God's answer?
3. Describe Habakkuk's attitude in questioning God.
4. What did Habakkuk do after taking his questions to God? What did Asaph do in a similar situation? (Psalm 73:16-17)
5. Drawing from these examples, what are we to do when we are perplexed about the evil around us?

Answers

1. It was an answer that Habakkuk neither expected nor appreciated. God told him that he was going to do something about the iniquity and violence in Judah. He told him that He was raising up the pagan Babylonians (Chaldeans) to invade the land and punish the people of Judah for their evil ways.
2. He was confused, wondering how God could allow the pagan Babylonian nation, a nation even more wicked, to come in and punish God's people.
3. He had the right attitude. He didn't criticize, question, or doubt God. Because Habakkuk didn't understand and needed answers he went directly to God.
4. Habakkuk waited in the watchtower to see how God would answer. Asaph went into the sanctuary to try to understand the problem of evil.
5. We, too, are to go the watchtower on the sanctuary to see how God will answer us. We are to watch and wait.

Discuss / Consider

1. The book of Habakkuk is a vindication of God in light of the suffering and evil that exists in the world. We are to believe God when He tells us that evil is scheduled for termination. God wants us to know what He has prophesied, and then to spread this truth. We are to practice the R & R of Habakkuk: Read and Run. Are you familiar with God's prophesies? Are you sharing the good news with others?
2. The earth cannot be filled with the knowledge of the Lord while there is unjudged evil (see Habakkuk 2:14). In Habakkuk 2:3, the end mentioned here is both the end of Babylon and the end of times when all evil will have run its course and will have been judged. See Revelation 17 and 18. Does this knowledge give you a peace and security in God's promises?

Challenge

1. Look up Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:38, and Galatians 3:11. As iniquity, violence, and evil of every sort surrounded Habakkuk, so we are surrounded by evil. The proud and wicked prosper while the humble and righteous suffer. This wrong will be corrected. In the meantime, let's live by faith in the midst of evil.

Five Woes Pronounced Against Babylon **Habakkuk 2:5-20**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. God pronounces woe for illegal gain.
2. God pronounces woe for stepping on others.
3. God pronounces woe for vain glory.
4. God pronounces woe for perversion and pillage.
5. God pronounces woe for idolatry.

Practical Application

1. Let's not pull Habakkuk 2:20 out of context.

Questions

1. Habakkuk had raised the question of evil before God. He asked, "How could a holy God allow evil and wickedness to go unjudged in Judah?" What was God's answer?
2. Habakkuk was confused by God's answer. How did God assure Habakkuk concerning evil?
3. List the five woes pronounced against Babylon for their evil ways.
4. Are the woes pronounced on Babylon applicable for others?
5. What kind of a song are these woes?

Answers

1. God answered that He was going to use the Babylonians to conquer and punish Judah for their sins.
2. By telling him that evil was only for a limited time, and that it would be judged. Babylon would be judged as well as Judah.
3. God pronounced woe for:
 - a. Illegal gain
 - b. Stepping on others
 - c. Vain glory
 - d. Perversion and pillage
 - e. Idolatry
4. Yes, both for nations and individuals.
5. They are like verses of a taunt song.

Discuss / Consider

1. Babylon was merciless in the way they plundered smaller nations and forced them to pay exorbitant amounts of tribute. This was wrongful gain. But they would reap what they had sown. The proud and arrogant Babylon was conquered by the Medes and the Persians about seventy years after this prophecy was written. Have you ever been guilty of illegal gain?
2. Read in Daniel 4:30-31 how King Nebuchadnezzar bragged before he was cut down. God pronounces woe for vain glory (building for self-glory and not for God's glory). How is this true in our nation today? How about in your own life?
3. Babylon trusted in idols that they had made. Idols are lifeless and they delude people. What are some of the idols that are worshipped today? How about your idols?

Challenge

1. In contrast to all idols, God is living and all-powerful. He is completely sovereign, so let all the earth keep silent before Him. Let's obey this command, and stop complaining about God's timing in dealing with sin. Let's stop doubting God's sovereignty over all things. Let's stop questioning His ways. Let's remember Habakkuk 2:20.

Habakkuk's Prayer of Praise

Habakkuk 3

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Worship is praising God for His holiness and His mercy.**
- 2. Worship is praising God for His glory and His power.**
- 3. Worship is praising God for His acts and His anointed.**
- 4. Worship is praising God for His sovereignty and His strength.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't live life without some "Selahs."**

Questions

1. What do both the beginning and ending of this chapter have in common?
2. What does Shigionoth mean?
3. When would this psalm have been sung?
4. What is a doxology?
5. What should be our response when God answers our questions?
6. Define "worship."

Answers

1. They both have liturgical notes.
2. It probably has something to do with the liturgy of worship in the temple.
3. A number of the Psalms were used in the temple courts for public worship. That's why many of the Psalms have musical or liturgical indicators in their titles. Probably Habakkuk chapter 3 was used for public worship in the temple after the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon.
4. A praise-prayer of the Bible.
5. Prayer-praise-worship.
6. Worship is acknowledging who God is and what God does, to God Himself with an attitude of praise.

Discuss / Consider

1. "In Your wrath remember mercy." Habakkuk's response to God's revelation of Himself and His plans was one of submission. When judgment comes into your life, do you remind God of His mercy, and are you responding submissively to His plans for your life?

2. When Habakkuk saw a theophany (a visible manifestation of God), he was visibly moved. He trembled. Then he praised God for His glory and power. Habakkuk knew there would be hard times ahead, but he rejoiced in the Lord. Do you praise God for His glory and power? Do you look to Him for strength in hard times? Can you say with Habakkuk, in the midst of difficult times, that you will rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of your salvation?

3. Habakkuk catalogued a number of acts that God did on behalf of His people. He also prophesied about the coming of the Lord Jesus as Savior and Judge in the end times. Do you praise God for the great work done on the cross for you? Are you praising God for what He has promised for the future?

Challenge

1. "Selah" means to pause and reflect on what God has revealed. Note the "Selahs" of Habakkuk 3:3, 9, 13. Do you pause and meditate daily on the promises of the Bible? Live life with Selahs!