

Answers

Introduction.

Habakkuk

What do you think is the message and value of Habakkuk for today, especially considering Habakkuk 2:4 quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11-12; and Habakkuk 2:3-4 in Hebrews 10:37-38?

The gospel.

Those who will be made righteous by faith, in the answer the LORD provides, shall live.

The LORD's answer to evil is a person. This revelation must be made visible to all the world to see.

Study 1. YAHWEH's Mysterious Ways

Habakkuk 1:2-11

1. What was Habakkuk's cry against the LORD? 1:2

Why does wickedness go unpunished, and why are Habakkuk's cries for help unanswered?

I call you do not listen. I cry out, you do not save. If the Lord indeed did see and hear, why was he not doing anything? Why was God tolerating evil and injustice? In the midst of suffering, it may seem, and it will at times seem, that God is far from us. As if God does not see, hear, answer or save.

Habakkuk 1:2 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but **you do not listen**? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but **you do not save**?

2. Did Habakkuk understand why the LORD did not answer his cry for help? 1:3

No, he does not.

Habakkuk 1:3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? **Destruction** and **violence** are before me; there is **strife**, and **conflict** abounds.

3. What was Habakkuk's conclusion? 1:4

⁴ Therefore **the law is paralysed**, and **justice never prevails**. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that **justice is perverted**.

The law is paralysed; justice never prevails. i.e., the wicked get away with their evil and wicked ways. The righteous are shut in, and justice is perverted.

4. What was Habakkuk's main problem? 1:2

Habakkuk felt that the Lord did not see, hear or save.
Habakkuk felt as if he was crying out in vain.

5. Why would the LORD not act and put an end to the violence? Would he not thwart the wicked? Would he not save the oppressed?

You may ask this when looking at world affairs, the wars, the suffering of the Christians and the confusion in the church. Perhaps a boss at work is making life miserable for you, or you are battling with a debilitating disease, a husband, wife, or child which is making life difficult for you. Why does God not give you relief? In the Word it says, e.g. Psalm 34, the LORD's eyes are on the righteous, his ears are attentive to their cry. Yet Habakkuk's experience and your experience may be different.

The answer lies in the fact that God's time is not our time. God's way is not our ways. As he sees the end from the beginning, he will deal with evil in the right manner and at the right time.

6. What was the LORD's unbelievable answer? 1:5-6

Habakkuk 1:5 "Look at the nations and watch--and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. ⁶ I am raising up **the Babylonians**, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling-places not their own

The LORD is going to raise up a ruthless and impetuous people, even more wicked than the wicked in Judah, to punish those perhaps less wicked than themselves.

7. How are the Babylonians described? Name nine characteristics. 1:7-11

- (1) ⁷ They are a **feared** and **dreaded** people;
- (2) they are a **law to themselves** and
- (3) promote their **own honour**.
- (4) ⁸ Their horses are **swifter** than leopards, **fiercer** than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They **fly** like a vulture swooping to devour;
- (5) ⁹ they all come bent on **violence**.
- (6) Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather **prisoners** like sand.
- (7) ¹⁰ They deride kings and **scoff** at rulers.
- (8) They **laugh** at all fortified cities;
- (9) They **build** earthen ramps and **capture** them.
- (10) ¹¹ Then they **sweep** past like the wind and go on—guilty men, **whose own strength is their god**."

8. Was the LORD's answer to evil a greater evil?

The LORD does answer Habakkuk eventually. We don't know after how many years. But the answer of the Lord was not one that was to be expected. In fact, the LORD tells him that he would be **utterly amazed and perplexed**. The LORD was going to do something **that he would not believe, even if he was told**.

What was that? Answer: **That the suffering would get worse!**

9. What was the LORD's answer to how he was going to deal with wickedness?
1:6

The evil and wicked Babylonians, even more so than the Jews, would appear on the world scene. He calls them a fierce, bloodthirsty people. They would sweep across the earth to seize that which was not their own, and then there follows a description of these terrible people.

10. Do we have any indication of what the Babylonians did to the Jews? cf. Lamentations

The atrocities the Babylonians committed against Jerusalem and Judah are commented on in Lamentations, for example. Jeremiah describes the terrible suffering of the Jewish people. The total desperation of Jeremiah is felt in passages such as Lamentations 3. We know that the Babylonians surrounded and besieged Jerusalem for one and a half years. People died of hunger and even ate their own children. The Babylonians burnt the Temple and reduced it to rubble; thousands of people died.

11. What was the reason these things came upon Judah?

The prophets tell us that this was God's judgment against the evil of Judah. We know that the Lord dealt decisively with idolatry, paganism, bloodshed and injustice. We know that in 605 BC, many Jews were deported to Babylon. First 10 000 nobles, leaders, and intellectuals such as Daniel and his 3 friends. Then again, in 597 and 587 BC, another 45 000 artisans, builders, skilled people, craftsmen. Those who remained behind were the poor, the disabled, the blind and the aged.

12. What good will come out of all this?

Well, the people of Judah went to Babylon as idolaters, pagans, occultists, and worshippers of false gods. We know that the people who came back believed in only one God, the God of the Bible. We also know that pagan Nebuchadnezzar eventually confessed the Name of YAHWEH. He commanded the people of Babylon to worship the God of Daniel. How are we to understand all this? There are a few things we do have to know.

13. What did Habakkuk need to learn about the LORD's dealings with the nations?
1:5-6

Habakkuk 1:5 "Look at the nations and **watch--and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something** in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. ⁶ **I am raising up** the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling-places not their own.

Notice that the LORD God is in sovereign control.

14. Do bad circumstances mean that the LORD has lost control?
 Bad circumstances do not mean God has lost control.
Look and be utterly amazed... I am going to do something you would not believe, even if you're told. I am raising up the Babylonians ...
 We don't know why God uses the bloodthirsty Babylonians in this way, but He does! We don't know why God allows bloodthirsty people such as ISIS to wreak the havoc they are committing against Assyrian Christians, but also against other people of Iraq. We do not know whether he is purging the Christians, or punishing them, or whether he is using this in the advance of the gospel under Islam.
15. Does this mean that God is not all-good, or not all-loving?
- It does not mean that God is evil, or that God condones evil. God has used the Babylonians for his own purposes. We know God allowed Judas to betray Jesus. We know that Satan was the force behind Judas, but even his evil was overcome in the goodness of Christ's work. We know that the death of Jesus was to accomplish God's great redemption of His people.
16. What is the conclusion regarding suffering and glory that we can learn from this?
- Suffering precedes glory! *Suffering now, glory later.*
 Example: Sport: Think of the hours an athlete trains. Or the extreme exhaustion of a rugby player pushing a scrum machine.
 Academics: Think of a PhD student. Their hours of study and all the fun they miss.
 Think of Jesus' suffering, then the glory of his rule (Daniel 7:13-14).
 The same goes for the Christian. It is suffering now, glory later.
 Suffering gives a genuine ring of truth to our gospel witness.
 Suffering is not enjoyable, but it gives a note of authenticity.
17. What can the believer know through suffering? Matthew 5:10-11
- By the response of the Christian through suffering, he shows that his faith is real. The suffering of the early church made her an entity with which the pagan world could find no answer. And only in seeing crucified lives will people see Christ
18. Is justice deferred or justice denied? cf. Revelation 6:9-11
- It is justice deferred and deliverance and glorification deferred. Think of Cain and Abel.
- Revelation 6: 9** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to

wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

19. Will God's plans be thwarted?

The aim of God's plan is always fulfilled. In modern times, the greatest persecution was under communism. Yet the church of Jesus Christ is stronger now in China than at any time before. We may not understand God's plans. You may not understand the why and how, but God is actively busy working out his plan for the world.

Reflection & Application _____

1. Will we have peace in our day? Matthew 24:6-7

Peace will not come in our day! Jesus makes it clear in the eschatological discourse in Matthew 24, as well as the Mission Discourse.

Matthew 24:6 You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but **the end is still to come.** ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

That peace between nations will not come before Jesus returns. There will be wars and rumours of wars, and it will get worse. "*The enemies of a man will be the members of his own household*", Jesus says in the Mission Discourse (Matthew 10:36)

2. What does Jesus mean by, "*I have come not to bring peace but the sword?*" Matthew 10:34

Matthew 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. ²⁵ **See, I have told you ahead of time.**

Yes, we may not understand fully why God allows the suffering of Christians in the world. We also definitely cannot just say it is **God's will** that they suffer and leave it at that. For it is not his Sovereign will.

Example: If I sin, I cannot say it is God's will! Just as we cannot ignore suffering in our lives. But we need to understand that the Bible teaches: ***Suffering now, glory later!***

3. What shall the believer do without ceasing?

We must keep on praying. We must call out to the LORD. We must weep for those in persecution. We must help in any way we can. We must call out to the LORD for strength and for his presence. We must call out for insight so that the LORD will show us the future

4. What can we be absolutely sure of?

We may rest secure that the LORD's sovereign plans will prevail in the end. The LORD will achieve his purposes for us and for the kingdom and for the world. The peace we must pray for is the **peace in people's lives**. Peace with the Prince of Peace. This peace may be experienced even in persecution and suffering.

5. What do crucified lives tell the world?

Crucified lives display the real Christ to the world. The **blood of the martyrs** shows that **our faith is real**. Especially when we suffer unjustly. Especially when we don't react in anger or violent retaliation. The early Christian church grew and conquered **Rome**, with the blood of its martyrs. The Church in **Communist Countries** grew beyond all expectations. Maybe the people of Islam will grow tired of the blood of Christians being shed. Maybe like Rome, they will wake up and see that what **Islam** is offering is radically undesirable. Maybe they will experience the love of Christ and of forgiveness. Maybe this is **the way the church of Jesus Christ will make a way into Muslim countries**.

Study 2. YAHWEH's Answer to Evil: a Person Habakkuk 1:12-2:5

1. What was Habakkuk's response to the LORD's answer regarding the Babylonians? 1:12

Habakkuk accepted the Babylonians as the LORD's instrument of judgement, despite the fact that they were so wicked.

Habakkuk 1:12 O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, *we will not die*. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. ¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.

2. What is always a good place to start when facing suffering? Which attributes of YAHWEH does Habakkuk recognise? 1:12-13

A correct doctrine of God to inform our theology of suffering.

Habakkuk recounts what he has learned about God's character:

- **YAHWEH is eternal, as He** is from **everlasting**. His Name is also **YAHWEH**. I am who I am. Always in the present, outside of time.
- **YAHWEH is the Holy One**. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. God is too pure to look upon evil.
- **YAHWEH is sovereign**. You have **appointed** and **ordained** them. You have said so yourself! If you control all historical things and all else. Even when they intended things for evil, he still uses it for good, e.g. Joseph and his brothers, the Pharisees and Jesus.
- And **YAHWEH is faithful**. YAHWEH's eyes are too pure to look on evil. YAHWEH is also his covenant Name

3. Considering the attributes of God, what is Habakkuk's conclusion? 1:12

Habakkuk can only conclude, **“We will not die!”**

4. Does this solve Habakkuk's perplexity? 1:13
This still does not solve Habakkuk's perplexity, for people are dying!

Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

5. Regarding God's character and what is happening, what does not seem to add up? 1:13

If the LORD is all good, why does God allow this evil to flourish?

6. What happens to men when the wicked flourish? 1:14-15

Habakkuk noted the following metaphor.

Just as a fisherman uses his net and hooks to catch fish for his own consumption and economic benefit, just so the wicked use human beings for their own gain, so the wicked use, exploit, ensnare and overwhelm people.

Habakkuk 1:14 You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. ¹⁵ The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his drag-net; and so he rejoices and is glad.

7. To whom does the wicked ascribe his success? 1:16

Whether it be in violence such as war, in business, e.g. in exploitation in the labour market, or as in the so-called 'church' (such as e.g. the false teacher), the wicked worships his 'net', the **means** by which they have done it, as if it were a god.

Habakkuk 1:16 Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his drag-net, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. ¹⁷ Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

8. What was Habakkuk's confusion? 1:17

Will this continue? Is this supposed to go on like this without God putting a stop to it?

9. What was Habakkuk waiting for? 2:1

What the LORD will answer him regarding his complaint. And what will Habakkuk answer the LORD when he is corrected, which he is sure he will be?

^{NKJ} Habakkuk 2:1 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. (Hab 2:1 NKJ)**

Habakkuk 2:1 I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

10. What will the LORD provide as an answer? 2:2

The answer will be revealed to you.
When you receive the answer, write it down and let a herald run with it! The revelation must be visible, plain and public.

Habakkuk 2:2 Then the LORD replied: "Write down **the revelation** and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.

11. Which three things must be noted regarding this revelation? 2:3

The revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end, it will not prove false. The answer will come at exactly the right time, the appointed time. It speaks the truth with regard to the end.

³ For the revelation awaits an **appointed time**; it speaks of **the end** and **will not prove false**.

12. What is the content of this revelation? 2:3

What we have is this:

The revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false.

Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come, and it will not delay.

So, the translation could read as follows...

He will speak of **the end**, and **he will not prove false**.

Though **he** lingers, wait for it (**to come**/to be brought); **he** will certainly come, and **he** will not delay.

13. What is God's ultimate answer to evil? 2:3b cf. Hebrews 10:37

God's revelation, God's ultimate answer to evil, is a person!

The revelation is 3rd person masculine singular. The revelation to come is a 'he'!
This is confirmed in the NT by the writer to the Hebrews!

Hebrews 10:37 For in just a very little while, "**He who is coming will come and will not delay!**"

14. How does the LORD describe the wicked? 2:4a, 5

The LORD contrasts the wicked with the righteous.

Habakkuk 2:4 "See, he is puffed up; his desires (**soul**) are not upright— ⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.

15. In contrast to the wicked, what will happen to the righteous? 2:4 cf. Hebrews 10:38

Habakkuk 2:4 --But the righteous by his faith shall live--

In the context perhaps better translation, keeping the sense of the original is as follows: *the righteous one, by his faith, shall live!*

Note the LXX rendering of Habakkuk 2:4: ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται
Which can be translated as: *But my righteous one, by his faith, shall live.*

The NT has the following rendering of Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38:

ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται

Which can also be translated as: *But the righteous, by his faith, shall live.*

16. When will this be fulfilled? 2:3

The revelation is coming, but not known. It will come at the appointed time.

This is God's answer to how he will deal with evil once and for all.

The answer is not now, not in Habakkuk's day. It will come at YAHWEH's appointed time.

Reflection & Application _____

1. What can the believer know about suffering? Hebrews 10:32-34

Suffering may be vivid, real and overwhelming, but we are reminded that it happens to many believers.

Hebrews 10:32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

2. What must we do when facing suffering? Hebrews 10:35-36

Remember God's promises and do not give up!

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

3. Why must we not give up?

Jesus is coming, and we live in this light! The Righteous by Faith shall Live!

Hebrews 10:37 For in just a very little while, "**He who is coming will come and will not delay.**" ³⁸ But **my righteous one will live by faith.** And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

4. Which two possible outcomes are there for every person on earth? Hebrews 10:39

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

Study 3. YAHWEH's Answer to Evil: Three Woes Habakkuk 2:4-14

1. What was the LORD's answer to evil? 2:3; Hebrews 10:37

God's answer to evil is a person! He is **Jesus Christ!**

He will speak of **the end**, and **he will not prove false**.

Though **he** lingers, wait for it (**to come**/to be brought); **he** will certainly come, and **he** will not delay.

2. What will happen to those who have faith, or put their trust in the LORD's answer; those who would place their trust in God's solution? 2:4b

Habakkuk 2: 4 -- the righteous by his faith shall live--

- They will become righteous by their faith in the One who will come.
- They shall live, even though they may die.

3. What is the LORD's description of the wicked, i.e. those who do not trust in the LORD's answer? 2:4a, 5

He is puffed up, a person who is full of pride.

One whose soul is not upright,

He is arrogant, and he is never at rest

He is greedy and never satisfied

He gathers to himself and takes people captive

Habakkuk 2:4 "See, he is puffed up; his desires (*or his soul is*) are not upright

...

⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.

4. Which two attitudes can one have towards the LORD's answer? 2:4

You see, there are only two possible attitudes in this life: **faith** or **unbelief**.

As a man believes, so he is, so he lives, and so he dies.

A man's belief will determine his conduct and his destiny.

The man who draws back from faith in God is unrighteous; unbelievers are the wicked.

5. Against which wickedness is the first woe announced? 2:6

Dishonest gain. Nations steal and plunder from weaker nations. Likewise, the wicked rich increase in wealth by stealing from his neighbour, taking what is not theirs by stealing or by extortion. Or not paying the worker a living wage.

Extortion – also called shakedown, outwresting, and exaction is obtaining money, property, or services from a person, entity, or institution through coercion.

The verbal or written *instillation* of fear that something will happen to the victim if they do not comply

Habakkuk 2:6 "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, "'**Woe** to him who piles up **stolen goods** and makes himself **wealthy by extortion!** How long must this go on?'"

6. What will happen if you acquire wealth in an unlawful manner or at the expense of others? 2:7-8; James 5:1-6

It will result in judgement on your life. To the question: "How long must this go on?" **Answer: "It will not be forever."**

Habakkuk 2:7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim.

⁸ **Because** you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

7. Against which wickedness is the second woe announced? 2:9

Covetousness. This is closely linked to the first offence; even though the wicked rich are already rich, they covet still more, and never have enough.

Habakkuk 2:9 "**Woe** to him who **builds his realm** by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin! ¹⁰ You have **plotted the ruin** of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.

They think that by accumulating more wealth, they will protect themselves from ruin. They build their realms, their empires, setting their **nests on high** to keep out of economic hardship. They never have enough, and always want more. The arrogant and proud wicked...

Habakkuk 2:5 he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied...

Like death and the grave, they swallow more and more but they are never satisfied. By doing this, they are shaming their own house and forfeiting their very lives, the LORD says. So, even if you may be able to enrich yourself without anyone else knowing about it, your time of judgement will certainly come.

Habakkuk 2: 11 **The stones of the wall will cry out**, and the beams of **the** **woodwork will echo it.**

Isaiah 5:8 Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.

The third woe against the 3rd form of wickedness, still closely linked to dishonest gain and covetousness, is ...

8. Against which wickedness is the third woe announced? 2:12

Violence. This may be literal killing and establishing a realm, empire, or kingdom, such as the Babylonians. Or it may be the businessmen of this world building their business empires. The warning is very clear.

Violence and bloodshed in God's eyes are not only if I kill in war or conquest. It is equally true for economic destruction or annihilation, such as the withholding of a living wage from the worker for his labour.

Habakkuk 2:12 "Woe to him who builds a city with **bloodshed** and establishes a town by **crime**!

9. How is this only fuel on the fire of God's wrath? 2:13

God will repay them for what they have done to others.

Habakkuk 2:13 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

10. What will be the end result?

The result will be God's judgement! Heed the warning in James:

James 5:1 Now listen, you **rich people**, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ⁴ Look! The **wages you failed to pay** the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters **have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty**. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. **You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter**. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

11. What will be the ultimate reality on earth? The revelation which was clear to Habakkuk? **2:14**

The Earth will be filled with God's Glory!

Habakkuk gives a description of God's ultimate reality. Even though powerful people seem to control the world and its resources through dishonest gain, covetousness and violence (economic and military) they will not prevail in the long run. Whether it be the powers of Babylon that held sway in the 7th century BC from about 605 BC to 539 BC, or the powers of Babylon today of wealth, covetousness and economic violence, Babylon will fall!

The revelation from Habakkuk is clear.

Habakkuk 2: 14 For the earth will be filled with **the knowledge of the glory of the LORD**, as the waters cover the sea.

Reflection & Application _____

1. How is YAHWEH's charge against the wicked a timely warning for us as well?

We have to ask the question: "**Are we not evil too?**"

If so, then how will YAHWEH deal with us?

- Remember that wicked means everyone who does not ultimately **live by faith**.
- Faith in the revelation of God, the revelation being a **Person**, namely **Jesus Christ!**

The wicked are very ordinary people who reject God's solution, or the false teacher leading God's people astray.

2. How does Revelation say it will all end for Babylon?

The great Babylon of the world's wickedness and rebellion will likewise experience destruction.

Revelation 18:10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!"

3. How can we escape judgement? Habakkuk 2:3-4

If we trust in the LORD's answer to evil. Then, God will not judge me! You may say, "Why isn't He going to judge you?" Because I have had someone who took my judgment already; Jesus Christ.

4. Which two possibilities alone are there in life and death?

There are only two possible attitudes in this life: faith or unbelief. As a man believes, so he is, so he lives, and so he dies.

A man's belief will determine his conduct and his destiny. The just, the righteous by faith, shall live. But the man who draws back from faith in God is unrighteous.

5. What is faith?

Faith means I take the word of God and I act upon it. Is there anything more foolish, more idiotic, in banking your whole world and eternity on what this world has to offer, or what it thinks it has to offer?

Study 4. YAHWEH's Answer to Evil: Two Woes Habakkuk 2:4-5; 15-20

1. How does the LORD describe the wicked? 2:4-5

The description is typical of Judah's wickedness; typical of the wicked oppressor, which in this case will be Babylon; and typical of wicked people today. Arrogant, gluttonous, debaucherous, self-serving, exploitative.

Habakkuk 2:4 "See, he is puffed up; his desires (or their souls) are not upright⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.

2. What is YAHWEH's final solution to evil?

Habakkuk 2:3 For the revelation awaits an **appointed time**; it speaks of **the end** and will not prove false. Though **he** linger, wait for it **to come**; **he** will certainly come and **he** will not delay.

The final solution to evil is a Person!

3. Who does the NT tell us this person is? Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38

The NT reveals to us that this person is Jesus. The righteous are those who live by faith in God's revelation and solution.

Habakkuk 2: 4 -- the righteous by his faith shall live--

4. What will be the reality at the end of time, according to YAHWEH? 2:14

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with **the knowledge of the glory of the LORD**, as the waters cover the sea.

A time will come when every human being will know that Jesus is God's solution. The glory of the Lord would be, and will be revealed in Jesus Christ.

5. What will the reality for the wicked be? Let us return to a description of the wicked...

Judgement and woe.

The LORD pronounced three woes on the wicked. 2:6, 9, 12

1. Dishonest gain,
2. Covetousness,
3. Violence.

6. Against which wickedness is the fourth woe announced? 2:15

Habakkuk 2:15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbours, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies.

7. What does drunkenness lead to? 2:15

Drunkenness leads to immorality and debauchery. That is why people drink at clubs, at parties and in private homes. It dulls the senses and relaxes the inhibitions. People in an intoxicated state do what they normally would not do

when they are sober. They may think about these things when they are sober, but they may not do them. The wine makes it all come out. Intoxicated people have no shame, and they actually shame themselves and others. Those who lure others into shame by drunkenness will eventually be exposed themselves.

8. What is it about the use of wine that God hates? 2:15

God hates is the abuse of this good gift of wine. Woe to him who leads his neighbour into sin when there is no restraint.

Habakkuk 2:15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbours, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. It is not only the state of being drunk by itself, but also the actual promotion of it.

9. Is YAHWEH against wine and celebration? Isaiah 25:6; Amos 9:13
Joel 3:18; John 2:1-11

God is not against wine or alcohol. There may even be a place for it in feasting and times of celebration. There are many prophecies in the Old and the New Testament that carry a positive message regarding wine and celebration.

Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine--the best of meats and the finest of wines.

Jesus even brings fulfilment to some of these prophecies by making 600 litres of wine at a wedding. It was definitely not grape juice, as the **master of ceremonies** said it was the best wine!

10. Are there warnings in the Word against the dangers of wine? Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-32

The word says that the abuse of wine is an abomination to God.
There are a lot of warnings about this in the Bible.
There is a cost involved. It is a very dangerous road to tread.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29 **Who** has woe? **Who** has sorrow? **Who** has strife? **Who** has complaints? **Who** has needless bruises? **Who** has bloodshot eyes? ³⁰ **Those** who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. ³¹ Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! ³² In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.

11. What does excessive drinking fuel and give rise to? Ephesians 5:18

Pride and boasting. Drinking too much and with ungodly people also leads to and fuels pride. In the bar, the club or the business lunch, great boasts are

made, and great visions of the self are promoted regarding wit, intelligence, strength and attractiveness.
The pride of the drinker is set ablaze

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

12. Who is the prime example of this kind of behaviour in scripture?
2:15; cf. Daniel 5:1-4; 18-23

This woe is a prophecy particularly against the Babylonian Kings. The two worst characteristics of the wicked Babylonian kings were drunkenness and idolatry, and also the promotion of these sins. This is perhaps prophetically fulfilled in the drinking story of Belshazzar.

Drunkenness and idolatry and their promotion thereof, go hand-in-glove with wickedness and helps pride to grow and to come into full bloom.

13. What will the judgement of God be on the drunken braggart? 2:16-17; cf. Jeremiah 25:15-17; 27-28

Result: You will drink the cup of his wrath.

Habakkuk 2:16 You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming round to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. ¹⁷ The **violence** you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

Idols

Jeremiah 25:15 This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ²⁷ "Then tell them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit, and fall to rise no more because of the sword I will send among you.'

14. Against what wickedness is the sixth woe announced? 2:18-19

The sin of idolatry.

Whether it be kings and empires, or just ordinary people, anyone who makes and trusts in his own creation is an idolator, who makes idols that cannot speak.

Habakkuk 2:18 "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. ¹⁹ **Woe** to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.

15. What is the sin of idolatry in essence?

Substituting God for one's own creation.

16. How do drunkenness and idolatry connect? Daniel 5:4-5

Drunkenness and idolatry are also linked, as when a man becomes drunk, he starts boasting in what he has done and achieved and he starts praising his own handiwork. His idols of riches and achievements, conquests and power. This is what Belshazzar also did.

Daniel 5:4 As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. ⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

17. What is the irony of this?

The very gods or idols we may place our hope and trust in cannot protect us from God's wrath!

This prophecy of Habakkuk was fulfilled in 2 ways.

- In 586 BC, God judged Judah.
- In 539 BC, God judged Babylon.

18. What is the ultimate reality which all of creation must realise? 2:20

The LORD is in His temple! He is to be revered and to be held in awe. Let the whole earth be silent before God. The LORD is not in created things, in wealth, or in achievements. He is not in idols of silver or gold, shares, properties, luxury items, cars or any other earthly thing. Let no one brag or boast about what he has, or what he has achieved. God is God. Let us consider His person. Let us all be silent before him. We serve him for who he is. The LORD is in his holy temple. The LORD is in Heaven.

Habakkuk 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."

Reflection & Application _____

1. What is the Temple of the LORD according to the New Covenant? Ephesians 2:19-22

The temple of the LORD we know from the NT, is his people.

The LORD is in every Christian believer. They corporately form his temple. We are not made to love created objects. We are made to love God and God's people. They are his bride whom Christ loved so much that he gave his life for her.

2. What is the Difference between an idol and the real God?

An idol is silent and cannot speak to you. Idols are idols because of what they can do for you! They give you temporal security and protection. They serve your interests and comforts, but ultimately, in the long run, they cannot protect you.

3. What is health, wealth and prosperity teaching in essence?
It is nothing other than idolatry dressed up in religious garb. It is making YAHWEH, the LORD of all, a simple idol.

Study 5. Habakkuk's Prayer: Petition and Praise Habakkuk 3:1-19

1. What was Habakkuk's main concern? 3:2

His request was for God's continued active presence. He asked that God's honour and fame be restored! He stood in awe of God, his fame and his deeds. God was the centre of his prayer!

Renew them in our day, in our time make them known. Do what is your will LORD, do what you must. **Your will be done O LORD; but remember mercy!**

Habakkuk 3:2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. **Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.**

2. How does Habakkuk's prayer correspond to the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:19ff), and the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39, 42)?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done. There is no pleading for God not to do what he has promised. Habakkuk does not plead for the promised judgement of God to pass them by, yet accepts his will regardless of the suffering it may cause.

3. Why is it a dangerous thing to pray for God's will to be done?

It is a dangerous thing to pray for God's will to be done, for his **kingdom to come on earth as in Heaven**. As God's will is directed against the unjust, the rebellious, and the wicked. When God's will is done on earth as in heaven, one consequence is that there will be no rebels and unrepentant sinners there. Habakkuk knows this.

4. What does Habakkuk pray?

May God execute his promised judgement! Hasten your deliverance; God will fulfil his promised wrath. Habakkuk does not deny God's wrath. He accepts it; he knows God has promised it against his people. He knows it is coming. So, he acknowledges the fact that God will mete out punishment

5. What element does Habakkuk know needs to be part of God's judgement? 3:2

LORD, in your wrath, **remember mercy!** Relieve and succour your people. Comfort us now. Once again, this is in line with God's character. He is a merciful God. He is long-suffering, abounding in kindness and mercy. He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

Therefore, Habakkuk, once again in line with God's will and character, pleads for mercy.

6. What does Habakkuk call to mind from the past? 3:3-15

As Habakkuk pleads with God, he calls to memory the great acts of God, when things looked bleak for Israel. When there seemed to be no way out. God's people were severely tested and oppressed, and they lost heart. The odds against them were overwhelming. Habakkuk remembers God's saving deeds.

7. Which gracious deliverances in the past does Habakkuk call to mind?
Remember many of God's gracious deliverance from Egypt through the Red Sea, the wilderness, into Canaan and through the conquest.
Habakkuk remembers God's glory at Sinai. From the East God's glory would rise like the sun. *simile*

Habakkuk 3:3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. **Selah.** His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. **4** His splendour was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

8. How does Habakkuk remember **Egypt**?

The ten plagues.

Habakkuk 3:5 Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps.

9. How does Habakkuk remember **Sinai**?

God's powerful presence.

Habakkuk 3: 6 He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.

10. How does Habakkuk remember the **time of the Judges**, especially Othniel & Gideon? 3:7; Judges 3:7-11; 6:13

God's deliverance through his judges.

Habakkuk 3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

Judges 3:7 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs.

⁸ The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of **Cushan-Rishathaim** king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years. ⁹ But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised

up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, who saved them. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of **Aram** into the hands of **Othniel**, who overpowered him. ¹¹ So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.

Judges 6:13 "But sir," **Gideon** replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of **Midian**."

11. How does Habakkuk remember the **Red Sea and the Jordan River crossings? 3:8-10**

The parting of the water.

Habakkuk 3: 8 Were you angry with the rivers, O LORD? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots? ⁹ You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. Selah

Habakkuk 3:10 the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

12. How does Habakkuk remember **Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan? 3:11-13**

God gave the Canaanites over into his people's hands.

Habakkuk 3:11 Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. ¹² In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations. ¹³ You came out to **deliver your people, to save your anointed one.**

13. How does Habakkuk remember the **return to Egypt and the Exodus? 3:14-15**

You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. **Selah**

Habakkuk 3:14 With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. ¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.

14. What did Habakkuk decide, despite trouble and hardship, and his own fear? 3:16-18

Despite trouble and hardship, praise the LORD.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled.

Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. ¹⁷ Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in **God my Saviour**.

15. Which calamity was on its way? 3:17

Habakkuk knew that the Babylonian judgment was coming. He knew that God will fulfil his word and that it would be a terrible time.

Just go and read Lamentations.

Habakkuk had Holy concern and fear, as he had heard the LORD's answer.

16. What did he know the LORD would do to the Babylonians?

He knew that the terror would pass. He would wait patiently for calamity to come upon the Babylonians, as God had promised. He knew, as the LORD told him in his answer (Habakkuk 2), that he would deal with them in time, and Habakkuk would wait.

17. What is Habakkuk's conclusion? 3:17

A time may be coming when all will fail.

Habakkuk 3: 17 Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,...

But more than the Babylonian terror, even if all of creation gives way, even **when all fails**, even if everything in God's good order seems to fail, Habakkuk will rejoice. He will be joyful in God his Saviour!

Reflection & Application _____

1. What is the lesson we can learn from Habakkuk's song?

Trust in the LORD for strength; all will be well. Trust and future hope

Habakkuk 3:19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.
For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

2. What is the metaphor which Habakkuk uses? What will the LORD give you?

Habakkuk and you have the strength needed for whatever may be faced in life. As the deer flees the hunter, he goes up onto the heights of the mountains. Just so, God will give you the necessary strength to go up on the heights.

3. How does Habakkuk's prayer compare with Psalm 7, which is also a *shiggaion*.

- 1-2: David faced extreme danger.
- 3-5: David accepted God's judgment against himself if it was because of his own wickedness.
- 6-9: However, if this was without cause, he called on the LORD to execute judgement on his enemies.
- 10-12: David's trust was in the LORD's salvation.
- 13-16: The wicked would ultimately perish.

Psalm 7:1 *A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.* O LORD my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me, ² or they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no-one to rescue me. ³ O LORD my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands-- ⁴ if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me or without cause have robbed my foe-- ⁵ then let my enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. Selah ⁶ Arise, O LORD, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice. ⁷ Let the assembled peoples gather round you. Rule over them from on high; ⁸ let the LORD judge the peoples. Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High. ⁹ O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. ¹⁰ My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. ¹¹ God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. ¹² If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow. ¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows. ¹⁴ He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment. ¹⁵ He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. ¹⁶ The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head. ¹⁷ I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

שִׁגְיֹן or שִׁגְיָנָה (Shiggayon or Shiggayonah)

Meaning: perh. a wild passionate song with rapid changes of rhythm