

VI. “O LORD, How Long?”

13-Apr-03 Habakkuk 1:1-17

Theme: We are to pray for knowledge when there is a gap between our theology and our understanding of God’s actions and intents.

Key Verse: Habakkuk 1:2 “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ and You will not save.”

Review

Two weeks ago, we finished up our study of the first 7th Century BC prophet by looking at **Nahum 3**. In the first section (3:1-7), **God cites Nineveh’s crimes:** violence, deception, plunder, and witchcraft. In response to these crimes God declares that He is against the Ninevites and that He will expose them to the contempt of the nations they have plundered. In the second section (3:8-13) **God reminds Nineveh of the fate of Thebes**. The Lord drew a lesson for mighty Nineveh from Thebes. Thebes had been an equally great city, Nineveh’s rival. Yet Thebes had fallen. Who were the Ninevites to think that they should be spared? The same lesson applies to us. The moral laws that operated in the destruction of Thebes and Nineveh will also destroy us unless we repent and seek God’s blessing. If God does not settle the account in our lifetimes, we can be sure that He is going to close the books on that final day when we must all stand before Him to be judged. In the final section (3:14-19) Nahum declares the surety of Nineveh’s fall, despite all of their strengths and advantages.

Nahum’s prophecy was intended to be a source of comfort to God’s people and can be a similar source of comfort to us today. We are surrounded by evil. But evil does not go unjudged. **Though delayed, God’s vindications of His own and condemnation of the wicked are both full and certain.** Nahum 3 is also a warning for us not to dilly dally about our own sin, but to treat it seriously. Remember that although Nineveh appeared to turn from her sin for a time, she was not really changed and eventually fell back into that pattern of cruelty and repine for which God eventually wiped her from the surface of the earth.

Introduction

Today we are going to begin our three-week study of the prophecy of Habakkuk. Remember, we can date the book to just before 605 BC, when the Babylonian Empire reaches full strength after the battle of Carchemish. Very little is known about the prophet himself. Less is stated in the Bible about Habakkuk than almost any other prophet. Not even his father, tribe, or hometown are mentioned. His name is apparently not Hebrew but comes from the Akkadian word for some plant or fruit tree.

For a book written in Judah 2,600 years ago, it **deals with surprisingly modern problems**. What is God’s involvement with history? Why is there evil in history? Why doesn’t God do something about wickedness? How can I believe in a loving, personal God when He allows bad things to happen to me? Habakkuk raises these questions. He asks, “Is God in charge of history?” and, “If He is, why do things happen as they do?” Habakkuk was faced by **a situation where his “systematic theology” of God did not correspond to his actual experience of God’s ways**.

Remarkably, the reader is allowed the unique privilege of **witnessing the progress of the prophet** himself in submitting to a new concept of the Lord’s purposes among Israel and the

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nations. The idea of **growth or maturity in faith** is essential to appreciating the genius of this prophecy. Trust in the purposes of the Lord despite confusing perceptions of precisely what he is doing lies at the center of the thought of Habakkuk. The underlying theme of the book may be summarized as follows: *A matured faith trusts humbly but persistently in God's design for establishing righteousness in the earth.*

The structure of the book is rather straightforward. Chapter 1 is a dialogue of complaint that contains the prophet's first question, the Lord's first response, and the prophet's second question. Chapter 2 contains the Lord's second response, and chapter 3 contains the prophet's final response in a hymn or psalm of praise. This week we will look at: 1) the prophet's initial problem; 2) the Lord's response; and 3) the prophet's problem with the Lord's response.

Superscription (1:1)

1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

1. Habakkuk's prophecy possesses a burdensome dimension from start to finish. The book begins with a plaintive cry, "How long ...?" It ends with the prophet's resolve to endure the severe judgment of God that is sure to come. This message is appropriately designated *the burden* of Habakkuk.

Exposition

I. The Dialogue of Protest (1:2-17)

A. The Prophetic Spokesman Complains Against Unanswered Prayer for Relief from Injustice (1:2-4)

This section is in the form of a lament, or psalm of complaint (cf. Ps. 3; 13; 22; etc.) *How long* is a lament introduction (cf. Ps. 13:1-2). Such anguished questions are especially relevant when cries to God are apparently not heard or answered. **The prophet speaks as an individual addressing God. But the Lord returns answer to a plurality of people rather than to the prophet himself.** Habakkuk addresses God as an isolated voice, although he speaks on behalf of others in his position as prophetic mediator. Clearly a change of speakers occurs in 1:5. Yet the prophet employs none of the standard formulae for introducing a divine oracle. Not until 2:2 is a speaker specifically identified. This particular literary mode heightens the drama of the dialogue. The critical nature of the situation demands directness of address, and the book of Habakkuk provides God's word in a form adequate to the situation. God speaks directly to His people, rather than addressing first the prophet as an individual.

- 2 a *How long, O Yahweh, shall I cry for help?*
b *But no! You will not hear.*
a *I cry out to you, "Violence!"*
b *But no! You will not save.*
3 a *Why do You make me look*
b *on trouble?*
b *At suffering*
a *You force me to stare.*

*Plundering and violence confront me;
There is strife, and contention arises.*

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- 4 *Therefore*
a *God's law*
b *is numbed;*
a *justice*
b *is not carried out to its proper end.*

*For the wicked surround the righteous;
therefore justice goes forth perverted.*

2. Two expressions introduce the complaint of the prophet: *How long* and *Why*. The first implies that **the prophet had spent some time already in petition to God**. The cry of the psalmist is often heard as, "How long?" (Ps. 6:4-5; 13:2; 35:7; 74:10; 90:13). Perhaps it might have been some consolation to the prophet if he had recalled that the Lord himself was the first to cry "How long?" Long before Habakkuk had begun his struggle with the problem of the prevalence of evil, oppression, and injustice, the Righteous One had asked "How long?" while dealing with the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 16:28; Num. 14:11). Without doubt the Lord entered sympathetically into the agonies of His prophet.

Since prayer is provided specifically as the framework in which all the burdens of God's people may be poured out before the Lord, **prayers expressing perplexity are appropriate so long as they are offered in a context of trust**. So long as the mystery of iniquity is at work, God's people shall long earnestly for relief from pain. The substance of the prophet's complaint centers on unanswered prayer. He has cried for relief from injustice; he has not been answered. The prophet cries, but the Lord does not hear. The wickedness brought in by Manasseh and his predecessors has sealed Israel's fate. Left to themselves, they suffer endless abuses.

Most often the references to God's people crying in distress are balanced by the affirmation that God has heard their cry. But hints also appear that the sin of God's people may lead the Lord not to respond with deliverance immediately when they cry. Job as a wisdom figure puzzles over God's failure to answer his cry. His language strikingly parallels that found in Habakkuk (cp. Job 19:7; Hab. 1:2).

When the prophet announces his distress over *violence* in the land, **he echoes the description of the prevailing circumstances in the days of the flood**. At that time also, the earth was filled with "violence" (Gen. 6:11, 13). But now the unique situation prevails in which those set apart to be God's own people are instigating violence among themselves. For that reason, **judgment will have to begin with the house of God**. Because they have violated the stipulations of the covenant, they must undergo the curses promised in the covenant made hundreds of years previously (Dt. 28:29).

As prophetic mediator, his petition is offered in behalf of the whole of the faithful remnant. Why should not this prayer be answered? It is out of this context that the prophet registers his protest with the Lord. In view of the Lord's intention to maintain a people for himself, how can he refuse to provide deliverance in such desperate circumstances? **The prophet's theological understanding of God as just and righteous is not matched by his experience of God**, a problem similar to that known by Job (Job 6:28-30).

3. The specifics of Habakkuk's complaint are spelled out more fully in three couplets: *trouble and suffering, plundering and violence, strife and contention*.

4. In this situation, possessing the law does Israel absolutely no good. *God's law is numbed.* The law was to be the basis of God's order for society, but it no longer functions in this way. **So the prophet offers his complaint. It is indeed a strong one. He can find no justice among God's own people.** Instead, a brutal perversion of God's law prevails throughout the land. The righteous people of the Lord suffer endless abuse. Prayers of the devout go unheard. How does the Lord explain this terrible circumstance, and his own lack of response to the cry of the prophetic mediator?

It is clearly an anguished cry from a man who loved justice. He had seen justice perverted and had cried out to God against the evil. **It is the kind of cry we might utter over the deplorable state of the church in our days or the equally deplorable moral decline in America.**

B. The LORD Unveils His Awesome Instrument of Retribution (1:5-11)

Now comes the divine response. The Lord had listened patiently to the complaint of the prophet. Interestingly, in no way does the Lord dispute the analysis of Habakkuk concerning the circumstances prevailing in the nation. The total absence of rebuke to the complainer also should be appreciated for its disarming effect. **The Lord Himself is fully in sympathy with the prophet's agony over the suffering righteous ones.** Although having larger concerns as well, the Lord knows and sympathizes with these who have been surrounded by the wicked. The stunning character of the Lord's revelation relates to the awesomeness of the divine response that hovers on the horizon of history. When this coming reality is appreciated, **it becomes plain that the Lord perceives the problem even more deeply than does the prophet.** The hoped-for response to the lament would be an oracle of salvation, but here the response is an oracle of judgment. This is not due to Yahweh's ignoring the lament and pleas for help, but rather because **the prophet's plea is in reality an appeal for God to display His justice and righteousness by sending judgment where it belongs.**

1. Preparation for the Unveiling of God's Instrument of Retribution (1:5)

5 Look among the nations
and see!
Be astonished!
Wonder!

*For I am working a work in your days;
You would not believe
even if it were told.*

5. God is no alarmist. Yet He assembles no less than **four words of alert** to awaken the recipients of this message: *Look! See! Be astonished! Wonder!* The prophet had presented a perplexing problem. The divine response is of an overwhelming nature. No formula such as "the Lord replied to me saying. . ." occurs. Yet it is clear that a change of speakers has occurred, and that God now addresses the people and their prophet.

The prophet is awed by the violence being experienced by the people of Judah. But God tells him to look on the international horizon. **The prophet must expand his perspective on the divine purposes.** He must appreciate the Lord's intent among the heathen as well as for Israel. The whole of His people should stand amazed at the awesome judgment that is coming. For no less than the whole of the nation shall be struck by this judgment. Part of the amazing character

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of this work of God is that it is to be accomplished in the days of the hearers of this prophecy. *In your days* this event shall occur, says the word of the Lord. Although extremely patient and forbearing with rebellious sinners, the Lord is not slow to act once he has determined that the iniquity of the people is full, and the time for judgment has arrived.

What precisely makes this divine work so incredible? Many facets could be noted, including the rapidity of the rise of power of God's instrument for judgment, the intensity of the judgment that is to come, and the fact that God Himself is to be involved in this action. **But most incredible is the fact that God's own people could be cast off, and at the hands of Gentiles more wicked than they.** The prophet Habakkuk had prayed, hoping for some form of purging of the wicked element of the nation. But the divine response speaks of such an utter devastation that even greater puzzlement will grip the mind of the pious prophet.

It is most instructive to note that this very statement concerning the unbelievable character of the coming judgment of God was employed by Paul to forewarn the Jews that they were hardening themselves against his proclamation of the saving acts of God found in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah (see Acts 13:38-41). Far from simply taking up a mode of expression found in Habakkuk, Paul captures the heartthrob of the prophet's message and applies its awesome insights into the ways of God with people in his own day. **Paul's direct application of Habakkuk's words to his contemporaries reveals his concept of the history of redemption.** He is seeing Israel's experience of judgment as anticipating the judgment that should come in the context of the eschatological proclamation of the gospel. The Jews of the city reject Paul's proclamation, and Paul indicates that he now would turn from them to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-46). The complaint against "violence" practiced by brother against brother (Hab. 1:2) now finds its strongest ground in the deliverance of Jesus to Pilate for execution, although no reason for such an action had been found (Acts 13:28). But God's raising him from the dead indicates the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the ongoing program of redemption.

2. Identification of God's Specific Instrument of Retribution (1:6a)

6a For behold Me raising up the Chaldeans

6a. The term translated Chaldeans is used regularly in the OT for the Neo-Babylonian Empire founded by Nabopolassar (ca. 626-605) and reaching its zenith of power under Nebuchadnezzar (605-562). It is rather remarkable to **note the rapid ascendancy to power of this nation, the extent of their domain, and their equally rapid decline in prominence.** This whole international escapade underscores **the prominence of the divine hand** in *raising them up* and also bringing them down. The Lord's control of the nations is so great that He orders their rise and fall according to His own plans and purposes.

3. Characterization of God's Instrument of Judgment (1:6b-11)

*6b That bitter and impetuous nation
which covers the breadth of the earth
to take possession of territories not rightly
belonging to it.*

*7 Fearsome and terrible is it;
from itself shall come forth its (own) justice and honor.*

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- 8 *Its horses*
a *are swifter*
b *than leopards*
a *and are keener*
b *than wolves of the evening.*

Its horsemen
gallop (furiously);
Yes, its horsemen
a *shall come*
b *from afar;*
a *they shall fly*
b *as a vulture rushes for food.*

- 9 *Every one of them shall come*
for violence;
the assembling of their faces
is forward.
And they shall gather like sand
captives.

- 10 *So he*
at kings will mock;
and sovereigns are a joke
to him.

He
at every fortification
will laugh;
for he will heap up dust,
and will take it.

- 11 *Then*
his spirit changes,
and he becomes angry,
and sins.

This
his strength
is his god.

6b. Bitter and impetuous. Not just a few isolated individuals, but this whole nation may be characterized as irritated and ill-tempered. *To take possession of dwelling places not rightly belonging to it.* This characteristic of the **instrument of God's judgment on his people sounds strangely similar to the promise made to Israel at the time of their conquest of the land.** They were to possess wells they had not dug, vineyards they had not planted, homes and cities they had not built (**Deut. 6:10-11**). **Could it be that these barbaric Babylonians now were to step into the role once occupied by God's people?** So now it is the displacement of Israel that receives attention. **In a very real sense, Israel is being placed in the role once occupied by**

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the Canaanites before them. As those people once were driven away from their possessions because their iniquity was full, so now Israel must be driven away from its possessions because its iniquity is full. Their place of comfort, enjoyment, pleasure, relaxation, security, and refreshment shall be taken from them.

7. *From itself shall come forth its (own) justice and honor.* “Autonomous” summarizes this characteristic of the instrument which God shall employ for judgment. This nation shall not look to God for a criterion for righteousness; it shall determine its own standard of truth.

8. *Its horsemen gallop (furiously); yes, its horsemen shall come from afar.* The horse and chariot of old would be roughly equivalent to today’s tanks, submarines, and jets. In attacking, they would overwhelm any opposition placed in their path.

9. *the assembling of their faces is forward.* The front of this troop is directed *forward* or “eastward.” Irresistibly, inevitably, uninterruptedly, this horde of warriors moves toward the land of God’s covenant people. Relentlessly they move on, and certainly they shall arrive one day to bring total judgment and devastation. *And they shall gather like sand captives.* Abraham had been promised that his seed would be as the sand of the seashore. But must their multiplication end in this tragic condition? Must they be gathered in heaps and carried into captivity? According to the laws of God’s covenant, transgressors must end up in this condition.

10. *So he at kings will mock; and sovereigns are a joke to him.* This adversary makes fun of the most powerful figures on earth. How then may the remnant of Judah expect to resist successfully the invasion of this enemy?

11. *This his strength is his god.* **Unbelievable as it may seem, this instrument of the Almighty for judgment on His own people now exalts itself to the level of deity.** So the Lord characterizes for His prophet this instrument by which He shall establish some semblance of justice in the earth. The wicked in Israel shall not by any means escape judgment. As a matter of fact, they shall be devastated by the awesome tool raised up by the Almighty.

C. The Prophetic Spokesman Challenges the LORD’s Program for Punishment (1:12-17)

This portion of Scripture does not represent the first time in which **a person’s faith received greater challenge even as he was granted fuller insight into the plans and purposes of God.** Habakkuk had asked “How long?” and the Lord had promptly answered, “Very suddenly and very soon.” Habakkuk had asked, “Why is not justice upheld?” and the Lord had answered, “My impartial justice shall bring awesome vengeance even on My own people.” Although the answers of the Lord dealt precisely with the issues raised by his prophet, they ended up troubling him more than his original questions. Habakkuk takes up another lament psalm when he hears Yahweh’s response. Habakkuk cries out, “Wait! Wait! Hold on just a minute! I understand why You are judging us. We deserve it. But what I cannot understand is how you can use the Babylonians as agents of that judgment. They are even more wicked than we are.” Although approaching his subject cautiously by expressing confidence in the nature and purpose of God (v. 12), he ends up by questioning God and His program (vv. 13-17).

Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

1. Confidence in God (1:12)

12 *Are not You from eternity,
Yahweh, my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.*

- a *Yahweh*
- b *for justice*
- c *You have set him;*
- a *and O Rock*
- b *for rebuke*
- c *You have established him.*

12. This intensive probing of the purposes of God by the prophet should not be analyzed as a manifestation of weak faith. **Not a weak faith but a perplexed faith torments Habakkuk.** If the Chaldean conqueror is ordered by God to treat Israel with the same ruthlessness with which it shall man handle other nations, then what will have happened to the distinctive role of Israel as God's covenant people? As we read Habakkuk 1:12, we find that **the prophet bolsters his confidence by reminding the Lord of the lasting character of His own nature, the attributes of God.**

The first attribute is God's *eternal nature.* *Are not You from eternity?* (cp. Is. 37:26). The seriousness of the problem faced by Habakkuk may be seen in the prophet Micah's earlier use of similar language to express his anticipation of Israel's future. A "ruler" would arise from Bethlehem of Judah. His "goings forth" had been "from eternity" stretching throughout all the days of the past (Mic. 5:2). If these saving purposes of God "from eternity" hinged on the Davidic ruler who would arise from Bethlehem, how then could the entire kingdom be subjected to the ravages of a deportation like that which had recently been experienced by the kingdom of the north? *Yahweh, my God.* Yahweh is the covenant name of God (Ex. 6:2-8). This Great Eternal One is personalized and made close when he is called *my God*, a real God of objective power.

Habakkuk's second sentence refers to another of God's attributes: ***holiness.*** Habakkuk is really asking, "Does God act rightly?" In the context of this set of questions it was important for Habakkuk to remind himself that God is the Holy One.

Habakkuk then refers to **God's *sovereignty.*** *We shall not die*, the prophetic faith affirms. Instead of serving as an instrument of annihilation, the enemy being raised up by God against Israel must function as the divine tool for *justice* and for *rebuke*. The prophet's affirmation underscores the nature of God as a *Rock* who administers *justice*. God has *established* the Chaldean as his instrument for *rebuke*. This same term is employed to describe the response that God promised to disobedient descendants of David at the time of the establishment of the eternal covenant. God would "rebuke him" with the rod of men (2 Sam. 7:14). God controls history.

The fourth characteristic of God that Habakkuk implies is ***faithfulness.*** He expresses it by saying that God is a place of security for His people. He calls Him his Rock. So the prophet expresses his confidence in God. His nature is unchanging, and His eternal purpose finds faithful reflection in the events of history now being unfolded to him. But still he must proceed in all honesty to offer his questions before God.

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2. Questioning God (1:13-17)

a. *Source of the Problem (1:13)*

13 a (You are of) purer eyes
b than to see evil;
b and to look on perverseness

a You are not able.

Why

a do You look
b on those dealing treacherously,
a and You are silent
b while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?

13. The prophet's concern centers on the problem (from his perspective) of God's using the obviously depraved Chaldeans to carry out judgment on His own chosen people. Many patterns of the ceremonial law of Israel enforced the concept of God's *purity*. **Purity is a complete separation of good and evil.** How could He favor the depraved Chaldeans over the well-being of His own beloved people? Habakkuk eases into this problem by first affirming what he knows must be true despite his own perceptions. His God is of *purer eyes than to see evil*. Obviously God does in some sense "see" evil. His omniscience extends to all the affairs of His creation. But **He never looks to condone or tolerate evil. His holiness cannot abide iniquity.** Particularly when sin is committed against His own people, the Lord is stirred to definitive action.

Why? The prophet's faith in a holy God is challenged by the reality of Yahweh's choice of the Babylonians as an instrument of punishment. **His puzzlement represents one of the most basic questions that must arise if God is to effect redemption among a fallen humanity.** Finding its precursor in the constant query of the psalmists of Israel, this question reaches its apex of perplexity in the "Why?" of Christ from the cross (Mt. 27:46). How can the favored of God suffer such devastations? Chastenings? Yes they must be taken with a sober humility. But a destruction that resembles an utter devastation? How could it be? A deportation that reverses the total direction of God's electing mercies? **The wicked has changed its referent from the unfaithful of Israel (1:4) to the Babylonians themselves.** Certainly in some sense Israel must be seen as *more righteous* than those Chaldeans who had never been called out of Ur. What astonishes Habakkuk is that God is *silent* at this new, unjust turn of events. He ought, in the light of His character as understood by Habakkuk, to be doing something to right them. **So the puzzlement of Habakkuk arises out of the seeming injustice of the judgment which the Lord has shown him, and the utter devastation which the coming of the Chaldeans forces him to envision.**

b. *Intensification of the Problem (1:14-17)*

14 For You have made man
as the fish of the sea;
as a swarm not having a ruler over him.

15 Each of them
a with a hook
b he has led out.

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- b He will drag each*
a with his net,
b and he will gather each
a with his dragnet.
Therefore he will rejoice and be gleeful.
- 16 *Therefore*
a he will sacrifice
b to his net
a and burn incense
b to his dragnet.
- For with these*
a he has made fat
b his portion;
b and his food
a is luscious.
- 17 *So is it to be*
that he will empty his net
in slaughtering nations perpetually?
Never will he show pity.

Now the prophetic spokesman challenges the Lord's program for punishment with greater intensity. He rehearses before the Lord the infamous manner in which the Chaldeans have treated people in the past. He furthermore points directly at God Himself as the ultimate source of these international atrocities.

14. Habakkuk begins these remarks by addressing God: *You have made man as the fish of the sea.* This statement probably represents **the prophet's most pointed accusation against the Almighty.** In recognizing the sovereignty of God among the nations, he must conclude that God Himself is ultimately behind this massive maltreatment of humanity. **Contrary to the creational order in which man was to have dominion over the totality of the world (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:9), he is now brought low,** treated as the nondescript mass of the ocean's bounties, having no ruler to protect or to guide.

15. Not just figuratively but literally the Chaldeans have carried on the Assyrian tradition of driving a hook through the sensitive lower lip of their captives and stringing them single file. In such a diabolical method they enforced docility. Every single one of their captives was to be favored with a hook, according to Habakkuk. By a second and related figure, the prophet enforces his depiction of the brutality of the Babylonians. If not led with a hook, the faceless captives are dragged in a net. How can it be, says the prophet? Is this procedure actually the righteous way for the Lord to deal with His own people?

16. That which is dearest to the heart of the Babylonians is the booty of their rapacious aggressions, as seen in their worship practices. Perhaps Habakkuk by this vivid imagery intends to provoke the God of Israel to jealousy. How can he tolerate such perversity? **The Chaldeans are clearly worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator.**

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17. Habakkuk's problem with the maltreatment of his people is intensified not only by the brutality and sensuality of the instrument of divine judgment. The relentlessness of the oppressor also causes him to tremble. How can it be that this process goes on continually?

So the prophet Habakkuk questions God and His revealed intention for resolving the problem that he himself had raised. **Admittedly Israel needed some form of corrective chastening.** Their own exercise of brutality deserved a proper reprimand from the Lord. **But Habakkuk could not understand the breadth of the oppression that the Lord now revealed to him.** His heart and mind were wounded from such awesome prospects. He dared to question the Almighty—and then had to await a response.

Conclusion

Four lessons emerge in the opening exchange between God and His questioning prophet. First, *history is under God's control*. We see this in God's reply to Habakkuk's first complaint, where He raises up the Chaldeans (1:5-6). Second, *history follows a divine plan*. The events of history are not accidental, though they may appear so to us. Third, *history follows a divine timetable*. God says, "I am going to do something in your days" (1:5). The point is even made more strongly in 2:3. Fourth, *history is bound up with the divine kingdom*. The story of the other nations mentioned in the Old Testament is relevant only as it bears upon the history of the Christian church. **What really matters in the world is God's kingdom.**

When we see surprising things happening in the world, let us ask, "What is the relevance of this event to the kingdom of God?" There is a meaning in all events if only we can see it. We need not become bewildered and doubt the love of the justice of God. If God were unkind enough to answer some of our prayers at once, and in our way, we should be very impoverished Christians. Fortunately, God sometimes delays His answers in order to deal with selfishness or things in our lives that should not be there. He is concerned about us, and intends to fit us for a fuller place in His kingdom.

God's people are repeatedly compelled to struggle with the depth of the suffering that falls upon God's own. If it were possible for the feeble human mind to grasp in some small way the reality of the sufferings of the Son of God, it would no doubt reel in stunned awe. **For both the depth of God's righteousness and the depth of His love are incomprehensible.**

On behalf of the Lord's people through the ages, the prophet wrestles with the depths of the riches and wisdom of God. For His ways are unsearchable, past finding out. **Yet the truth has been made known to the people of the Lord. It is right therefore to search out that revelation in all its profundity.** So long as the harness of faith restrains the energies of the Lord's own people, they may be edified as they join Habakkuk in his efforts to search out the depth of the mysteries of the Almighty.

Next week: Lesson 7 – Habakkuk 2 – "The Just Shall Live by His Faith"

Close in Prayer.