

A minor prophet has a major conversation with God about justice!

Introduction

We know very little about the prophet Habakkuk. His name is only mentioned twice in the bible – both of those are in his book.

What makes Habakkuk unique among these 17 prophetic books in the Old Testament is that it doesn't record Habakkuk being the mouthpiece of God: bringing a message from God to the people; although that doesn't mean he wasn't doing that. Rather, this book records a dialogue between Habakkuk and God.

Based on Habakkuk's complaints and the responses from God it is likely that Habakkuk was having his dialogue with God around 607 BC. Under King Josiah, the nation of Judah went through many moral reforms. Early in Josiah's reign the book of the law given to Moses was rediscovered and Josiah purged the nation of the altars to the false gods (2 Chronicles 34:1-7) and restored the Passover celebration (2 Kings 22:8-20; 23:21-27). Josiah died in battle against Neco, the king of Egypt in 609 BC. After Josiah's death, the reforms of the nation were reversed, as the subsequent kings committed evil in the Lord's sight, which led to a decline in the morality of the nation. So it was after Josiah's death but before the raising of the Babylonians (Habakkuk 1.6) which would mean it was before 605 BC (Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, defeated Pharaoh Neco in 605 BC at the Battle of Carchemish).

There will be six sessions in this study series:

- Complaining to the Father! (Habakkuk 1.1-4)
- Well you did ask! (Habakkuk 1.5-11)
- Now I'm really confused! (Habakkuk 1.12-17)
- The righteous will live by faith! (Habakkuk 2.1-5)
- Five woes! (Habakkuk 2.6-20)
- Confidence in the Lord! (Habakkuk 3.1-19)



Week 1: Complaining to the Father!

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

Icebreaker. Can you think of situations when complaining has led to a positive outcome?

WORSHIP

Read part or all of Psalm 34. Share ways God has answered your prayers, blessed you or been there for you in some way over the last week. Have a time of praising the Lord for what he has done.

WORD

Read Habakkuk 1.1-4

1. What did Habakkuk observe in the Kingdom of Judah?

2. How did Habakkuk response to what he witnessed?

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3. Are there any similarities between what Habakkuk observed in Judah and what you observe happening in the UK in this age?

4. What does this passage tell us about prayer and our relationship with God?

Read Psalm 142.

5. In what ways can the psalmist's words help us to identify with the personal nature of his complaint?

6. There is a sense of powerlessness in the psalm. How is this helpful when complaining to God?



WHAT NEXT?

Habakkuk shows us that we can have an honest conversation with God. The Lord can handle our raw emotions and thoughts. Doing so deepens our relationship with the Lord.

Habakkuk had been praying to God but hadn't received the answer he was looking for from God. We can have a false expectation of prayer; that if we offer prayer, God is compelled to respond. Rather than thinking of prayer as a request line, we need to see prayer as a discussion with God. When we have times of doubt or do not understand, prayer is the way to express our perplexity, ask our questions, and then wait for God to respond, in God's time. It's an opportunity to draw closer to God and become more aware that we are not all-powerful, all-knowing, or in control, but God is and we can rely on him.

Habakkuk asked and many continue to ask today, "Why doesn't God do something?" But we know God has done something. He gave his Son to die for us and to taste our suffering and much worse. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, everyone can have a living relationship with God. But even those who accept the invitation and put their trust in Jesus are not immune to suffering. So that can only be part of the answer.

The name Habakkuk means 'the embracer'. Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, wrote, "Habakkuk bears the right name to his commission. For Habakkuk means, 'to hug'. He does so with his prophecy by hugging or embracing his people. He comforts them and takes them into his arms as one does with a crying child or adult."

How can we hug each other and our community? What does that look like? Please bring that to the Lord in your prayers this week.

It's just possible that the Lord will make us part of the solution by teaching us how to hug. Maybe the Lord will give us opportunities to virtually hug our community this week.