# Habakkuk – Where is God when bad things happen?

## SESSION 1: Chapter 1: Will a Holy God put up with Sin?

**Context:** We are living in a pandemic and it seems like the world is in chaos and out of control.

**Starter:**

Do you ever wonder why bad things happen? What do we expect God to do about bad things?

What is it like in a classroom when a teacher hasn’t addressed a student disrupting the lesson? How do you feel? What would you do if you were the teacher?

**Intro:** Habakkuk lived in a time of chaos. He is troubled that after a time of seeing great revival and Israel coming close to God, they have drifted back into sin and selfishness. He’s confused that it seems that God is doing nothing about this.

Habakkuk means “to embrace” or to “cling” – and we can learn to be a lot like H in these chaotic times. He clings to God and through some tough questions he comes to a firm faith.

### READ Hab 1:1-4

1. What is his complaint? (v-1-4)[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. Why does God cause us to see wickedness?(v.2)[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. What does H hope God will do in response to his complaints? Would this be a good idea?[[3]](#footnote-3)

### READ Hab 1:5-11

1. What is God’s response? (v5-6)[[4]](#footnote-4)
2. What kind of people were the Babylonians/Chaldeans? (v.7-11)[[5]](#footnote-5)
3. Does this seem like a good solution to you?[[6]](#footnote-6)

### READ Hab 1:12-2:1

1. How did H respond to God’s solution and why? (v12-13)[[7]](#footnote-7)
2. Even though he doesn’t understand God’s solution to his problem, what is his attitude in 2:1?[[8]](#footnote-8)
3. How should we respond when we don’t understand?[[9]](#footnote-9)

### Summary of Chapter 1:

1-4 – Habakkuks problem #1 How long?

5-11 – The Lord’s answer Bablylon will be my tool, prepare to be amazed!

12-17 – Habakkuk’s problem #2. OK, so you’re sorting it, but WHY that way?

2:1 – I’ll wait and expect to be corrected where I got it wrong.

### Pray:

* **Repent** for our actions which are part of the problem – show us where we are wicked and how we can turn to Jesus and follow his ways instead of our own.
* **Trust** that God’s got this, even if we don’t understand.

## SESSION 2: Chapter 2: God is God, even in the middle of “Chaos”

**Starter:** Have you ever had a situation where it makes no sense at the time, but later, you are glad it happened in hindsight?

One big example – Christ dies. In hindsight, we are glad this happened, but if we were there at the time, it would look devastating.

### READ Hab 2:2-5

1. What does God ask H to do and why? (2:2-3)[[10]](#footnote-10)
2. Revelation #1: How does God contrast the life of an evil man and a just man? What non-desirable quality does the wicked man have? (2:4)[[11]](#footnote-11)
3. What are you in danger of finding pride in?[[12]](#footnote-12)
4. V4 – “The Just shall live by faith” What does this mean to you? How can you become “justified”? [[13]](#footnote-13)

### Read Hab 2:6-20

1. What five characteristics or activities does God warn about in vs 6-19?[[14]](#footnote-14)
2. Revelation #2: Despite the evil all round, what is God’s plan for the whole world? (2:14)[[15]](#footnote-15)
3. Revelation #3: Where is God? What is He doing? [[16]](#footnote-16)
4. How should we respond?[[17]](#footnote-17)
5. How can you trust that God has a plan even when you don’t understand His way?[[18]](#footnote-18)

### Summary of Chapter 2:

God reminds H of His wisdom and strength. He knows Babylon is evil and he has a plan on a bigger scale to deal with all wickedness.

We can be confident that God will not let evil go unpunished. He will act justly and be glorified in His actions. We can be on the right side of his justice when it comes through His salvation plan.

### Pray:

* PRAISE – God is in control. He knows who is evil and who will be Just through faith in Jesus. He will sort it out so we will all know His glory and be speechless.
* THANK God for making his home in you when you accept Him.

## SESSION 3: Chapter 3: Lord, I trust You.

**Starter:** Do you understand how the insides of your phone work? How can you still use it even if you don’t understand the workings completely? (You trust the creator).

### READ Hab 3:1-19

1. Divide the prayer into sections:
2. The Start. (2-3a)
3. God’s character. (3b-15)
4. Habakkuk’s reaction. (16)
5. Habakkuk’s determination to trust in all situations (17-19)[[19]](#footnote-19)
6. Rephrase V2 in your own version of a prayer to God[[20]](#footnote-20). (“Now do again in our times” GNT)
7. How can we contribute to the revival Habakkuk is praying for?[[21]](#footnote-21)
8. Habakkuk mentions a lot of actions God has done in the past. How does remembering God’s past work help us in prayer?[[22]](#footnote-22)
9. How does Habakkuk feel after his praise of God’s awesome power? (v16)[[23]](#footnote-23)

### READ Hab 3:17-19 (again)

1. List some items that Habakkuk cannot put his faith in (v17)[[24]](#footnote-24)
2. How does Habakkuk define real trust in God? (v18-19)[[25]](#footnote-25)
3. Why choose a deer to symbolise what we are like when we trust in God? (v.19)[[26]](#footnote-26)
4. V13 and V18 tells us God is our God of Salvation. After all the judgement in chapter 2, what does this tell us about God and his plans? How does this help us trust God?[[27]](#footnote-27)

### Summary of Chapter 3:

God is powerful. He has a right to be angry with evil and this needs to be judged. But He is a God of Mercy and provides a rescue plan for us through His anointed one, Jesus. He is a dependable SAVIOUR GOD. He makes his home in us when we invite Him in and is the source of our strength and peace.

### Pray:

FOR EACH OTHER – we are going through hard times and need to pray for God to be close to each of us.

FOR CONFIDENCE in God – Lord, give us the FAITH to trust in times of uncertainty when we can’t understand what is going on.

## Sources:

Blueletterbible.org

Festive CU Bible Study notes – “Where is God when Bad Things Happen?”

<http://www.stjohnlutheran-elyria.org/images/03-04-Deer_Imagery.pdf>

Habakkuk Good News Translation (GNT)

THIS IS THE TRANSLATION LINKS HAVE IN THEIR JOURNALLING BIBLES

**1**This is the message that the Lord revealed to the prophet Habakkuk.

Habakkuk Complains of Injustice

**2**O Lord, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? **3**Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you stand to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere. **4**The law is weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.

The Lord's Reply

**5**Then the Lord said to his people, “Keep watching the nations around you, and you will be astonished at what you see. I am going to do something that you will not believe when you hear about it. **6**I am bringing the Babylonians to power, those fierce, restless people. They are marching out across the world to conquer other lands. **7**They spread fear and terror, and in their pride they are a law to themselves.

**8**“Their horses are faster than leopards, fiercer than hungry wolves. Their cavalry troops come riding from distant lands; their horses paw the ground. They come swooping down like eagles attacking their prey.

**9**“Their armies advance in violent conquest, and everyone is terrified as they approach. Their captives are as numerous as grains of sand. **10**They treat kings with contempt and laugh at high officials. No fortress can stop them—they pile up earth against it and capture it. **11**Then they sweep on like the wind and are gone, these men whose power is their god.”

Habakkuk Complains to the Lord Again

**12**Lord, from the very beginning you are God. You are my God, holy and eternal. Lord, my God and protector, you have chosen the Babylonians and made them strong so that they can punish us. **13**But how can you stand these treacherous, evil men? Your eyes are too holy to look at evil, and you cannot stand the sight of people doing wrong. So why are you silent while they destroy people who are more righteous than they are?

**14**How can you treat people like fish or like a swarm of insects that have no ruler to direct them? **15**The Babylonians catch people with hooks, as though they were fish. They drag them off in nets and shout for joy over their catch! **16**They even worship their nets and offer sacrifices to them, because their nets provide them with the best of everything.

**17**Are they going to use their swords forever and keep on destroying nations without mercy?

The Lord's Answer to Habakkuk

**2**I will climb my watchtower and wait to see what the Lord will tell me to say and what answer hewill give to my complaint.

**2**The Lord gave me this answer: “Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance. **3**Put it in writing, because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed. **4**And this is the message: ‘Those who are evil will not survive, but those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God.’”

Doom on the Unrighteous

**5**Wealth is deceitful. Greedy people are proud and restless—like death itself they are never satisfied. That is why they conquer nation after nation for themselves. **6**The conquered people will taunt their conquerors and show their scorn for them. They will say, “You take what isn't yours, but you are doomed! How long will you go on getting rich by forcing your debtors to pay up?”

**7**But before you know it, you that have conquered others will be in debt yourselves and be forced to pay interest. Enemies will come and make you tremble. They will plunder you! **8**You have plundered the people of many nations, but now those who have survived will plunder you because of the murders you have committed and because of your violence against the people of the world and its cities.

**9**You are doomed! You have made your family rich with what you took by violence, and have tried to make your own home safe from harm and danger! **10**But your schemes have brought shame on your family; by destroying many nations you have only brought ruin on yourself. **11**Even the stones of the walls cry out against you, and the rafters echo the cry.

**12**You are doomed! You founded a city on crime and built it up by murder. **13**The nations you conquered wore themselves out in useless labor, and all they have built goes up in flames. The Lord Almighty has done this. **14**But the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the seas are full of water.

**15**You are doomed! In your fury you humiliated and disgraced your neighbors; you made them stagger as though they were drunk. **16**You in turn will be covered with shame instead of honor. You yourself will drink and stagger. The Lord will make you drink your own cup of punishment, and your honor will be turned to disgrace. **17**You have cut down the forests of Lebanon; now you will be cut down. You killed its animals; now animals will terrify you. This will happen because of the murders you have committed and because of your violence against the people of the world and its cities.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+2&version=GNT" \l "fen-GNT-25828d" \o "See footnote d)]

**18**What's the use of an idol? It is only something that a human being has made, and it tells you nothing but lies. What good does it do for its maker to trust it—a god that can't even talk! **19**You are doomed! You say to a piece of wood, “Wake up!” or to a block of stone, “Get up!” Can an idol reveal anything to you? It may be covered with silver and gold, but there is no life in it.

**20**The Lord is in his holy Temple; let everyone on earth be silent in his presence.

A Prayer of Habakkuk

**3**This is a prayer of the prophet Habakkuk:[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3&version=GNT" \l "fen-GNT-25832a" \o "See footnote a)]

**2**O Lord, I have heard of what you have done,
    and I am filled with awe.
Now do again in our times
    the great deeds you used to do.
Be merciful, even when you are angry.

**3**God is coming again from Edom;
    the holy God is coming from the hills of Paran.
His splendor covers the heavens,
    and the earth is full of his praise.
**4**He comes with the brightness of lightning;
    light flashes from his hand,
    there where his power is hidden.
**5**He sends disease before him
    and commands death to follow him.
**6**When he stops, the earth shakes;
    at his glance the nations tremble.
The eternal mountains are shattered;
    the everlasting hills sink down,
    the hills where he walked in ancient times.

**7**I saw the people of Cushan afraid
    and the people of Midian tremble.
**8**Was it the rivers that made you angry, Lord?
    Was it the sea that made you furious?
You rode upon the clouds;
    the storm cloud was your chariot,
    as you brought victory to your people.
**9**You got ready to use your bow,
    ready to shoot your arrows.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3&version=GNT#fen-GNT-25840b)]
Your lightning split open the earth.
**10**When the mountains saw you, they trembled;
    water poured down from the skies.
The waters under the earth roared,
    and their waves rose high.
**11**At the flash of your speeding arrows
    and the gleam of your shining spear,
    the sun and the moon stood still.
**12**You marched across the earth in anger;
    in fury you trampled the nations.
**13**You went out to save your people,
    to save your chosen king.
You struck down the leader of the wicked
    and completely destroyed his followers.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3&version=GNT#fen-GNT-25844c)]
**14**Your arrows pierced the commander of his army
    when it came like a storm to scatter us,
    gloating like those who secretly oppress the poor.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3&version=GNT#fen-GNT-25845d)]
**15**You trampled the sea with your horses,
    and the mighty waters foamed.

**16**I hear all this, and I tremble;
    my lips quiver with fear.
My body goes limp,
    and my feet stumble[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3&version=GNT#fen-GNT-25847e)] beneath me.

I will quietly wait for the time to come
    when God will punish those who attack us.

**17**Even though the fig trees have no fruit
    and no grapes grow on the vines,
even though the olive crop fails
    and the fields produce no grain,
even though the sheep all die
    and the cattle stalls are empty,
**18**I will still be joyful and glad,
    because the Lord God is my savior.
**19**The Sovereign Lord gives me strength.
    He makes me sure-footed as a deer
    and keeps me safe on the mountains.

1. Things are going wrong, and you’re not doing anything about it. Students can relate to this when they think a teacher hasn’t seen the bad behaviour someone else in the room is displaying and thinks nothing will be done. A sense of injustice. How long will you let this behaviour happen before you act? (Note, he is confident that he has a relationship with God and feels able to ask hard questions. He knows God’s character is to be a JUST GOD and he is seeking to understand. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If we see wickedness –

in ourselves - it keeps us humble, means we ask for help, recognise we need Jesus as we too are wicked and deserve the same judgement he’s asking on everyone else.

In others – to avoid going into sin, to admire God’s transforming grace when people turn to him, to show others they need Jesus to change them. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. He hopes God will bring down justice to end violence and lawlessness. God is a God of justice and this will happen, but his timing is not ours. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. God uses an even more wicked nation to bring his judgement on Israel. He tells H he would be amazed! It’s a very unexpected response. He does bring justice (as requested) but not how H expects. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Babylonians are a terrible, dreadful, feared, ungodly people. They believe their strength comes from their own power (and here we have God telling us that He’s the one who has ALLOWED them to have strength as its part of His plan and works to His end. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Probably not! A modern equivalent might be to unleash a virus on us, or have a Communist country overrun us, or for Islam to impose Sharia law in the country. It appears the cure is worse that the disease! [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. He acknowledges God as eternal. He reminds himself of God’s bigger picture and that God will not let him perish (spiritually). He uses names like “Rock” – he knows God’s character is firm and steadfast. He ACCEPTS the solution. But, he still feels able to question it further. Even in his faith, he has concerns. He knows God can’t bear wickedness, so his solution is confusing him. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. H has a great attitude.

He EXPECTS an answer and is willing to WAIT (“I will watch”). We need to be patient when we ask, be willing to wait for an answer, don’t leave the conversation and miss it. God delights in responding to us and helping us see His ways are perfect. Reading the Bible is a great way to do this.

He expects to be CORRECTED (“when I am reproved”). He isn’t being critical in his questions trying to catch God out and thinking he knows best. His questions are based on trying to UNDERSTAND God’s purposes. He knows that if he can’t figure out what God is up to, it isn’t that God is doing something wrong, but that he hasn’t grasped what God is doing right. We need to be willing to be corrected – God is always right, and we can get things wrong. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. We need to view the situation through BIBLICAL GOGGLES. When hard times come, people can give up on God and leave the church. They can think God is not getting it right and that they know better. But stop. Go back and look at God’s principles. Apply them to the problem. And if you still don’t understand, commit the problem to God in faith. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Write it down – this isn’t just a personal revelation for H, it’s for all people. Clay tablets were the most permanent form of recording. Before he could write it down, he had to SEE it for himself. It is important that we ask God to reveal his Word to us so we can best share it with others.

He was asked to:

PREACH (share it), PERMANENT (write it), PLAIN (make it easy to understand), PRACTICAL (so others can “run” – the message is for people to take action when they hear it.) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Just man lives by faith. The opposite of this man is the PROUD man. According to Spurgeon (a 19th C preacher), Pride is the universal sin – we all have it! [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. It can be anything - we can even secretly be proud of being humble!! God hates pride, and so do people – that’s why people try to behave modestly, but we aren’t good at this… (and end up bent over – not upright). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. JUST – declared approved, righteous, in step with God. (Romans 1:17 explores this further)

LIVE – eternal life from faith not works. (Galatians 3:11 explores this further)

By FAITH – in a relationship with God, not by the law. (Hebrews 10:38 explores this further).

This verse is quoted 3 times in the NT – its IMPORTANT to understand it – you cannot make yourself justified, you will always be guilty of pride. You can only be declared approved when someone else takes your place for judgement (JESUS!).

When Martin Luther mediated on this verse, he realised his error in trying to live by the law/works and once he realised only FAITH (a relationship with Jesus) would save him, he felt “born again! [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Pride, Greed (wealth), Violence, Drunkenness and Idolatry. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. That everyone will know the GLORY of the Lord (what He is – all His attributes). Even if you didn’t believe this, one day you will see it all anyway. Being in a relationship with Him before that time will be highly recommended! [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. He is in His Holy Temple. As Christians, we are told that WE are the temple of the Holy Spirit when we invite Christ into our hearts, so we can be assured that God is with us always (1 Corinthians 6:19). While all the idols of vs 16-19 are lifeless and dead, God is LIVING in you. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. With joy and amazement (Silence – speechless!) Awesome wonder. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. It’s the hindsight thing – If God can promise that the “Just shall live by faith” 500 years before Jesus came to make us a way to be justified, then we can know that any promise God makes will happen. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Structure can help us in prayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. V2 prays for REVIVAL. H has seen times of God being praised by many before. He longs for this again. Notice: Revive YOUR work – revival is from God, not our own efforts. But, we can contribute to the prayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. We can contribute as people see us and decide if they want it too:

CONDUCT – Does your behaviour reflect that you believe God is Lord and in charge not you?

CONVERSATION – does the way you speak keep pointing to Jesus? Do you use profanity, rude jokes?

COMMUNION – Do you spend time with Jesus in prayer, study and serving? [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. It helps us remember all God’s characteristics and that He has a track record of keeping His promises and being in full control. Psalm 105:1-65 tells us to make known God’s deeds and to praise him for them, to make Him known to others and to praise him for what He has done already. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. He is trembling and weak with awe. He realises God’s might and his own weakness and inadequacy to do anything apart from God. “He will wait quietly” – acceptance of God’s plans even if he still doesn’t fully get it. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The fig tree, the vineyard, the olive crop, the sheep, the cattle – all the material goods of a prosperous Israelite landowner. Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool who puts his faith in these things in Luke 12:13-21. These things can fail and even prosperity won’t save you anyway. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Even if the material goods fail, he is still praising God. He does not depend on his wealth to save him (his own strength). He depends only on the strength of God and the SALVATION that will come from him. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. David also spoke of a deer saying “He makes my feet like hind’s feet; he sets me on the high places” as part of his song of deliverance (2 Samuel 22:34). We will be FREE to run like the deer – we will be sure footed, have agility and grace and be able to reach high places. A deer is an untamed animal and dependent on God for his provision (“As the deer pants for the water” – Psalm 42:1). Habakkuk is reflecting that he too depends on God for provision. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. V13 – God went forth to deliver his people – he is at the front, he is ACTIVE in his rescue plan. “Anointed one”, “Chosen King”, AKA Jesus. There is no other way to be saved – all the material possessions of V17 fall away. All the human behaviours of Chapter 2 result in deserved punishment. The pattern is here already, so we can trust that God has it all in control. He is a God of JUDGEMENT, but he also has a plan to rescue us from the judgement we deserve. He is a God of MERCY. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)