

## ***Faith Faces the Mystery of History, Part 1***

### ***Habakkuk 1-2:1***

**Intro:** *Why is there injustice in the world? Evil exists and seemingly goes on unpunished. How can God allow this?*

*Habakkuk leads us to ponder the mystery of History – unpunished evil. This prophet lays forth the mystery of Providence and the believer’s response to it. Today we look at the mystery, next week we will look at the believer’s response.*

**Theme:** *How long, O Lord? As believers we live in tension with evil, injustice and the inequities of life. God’s mysterious ways unfold leave us mystified at times and forces us to wait on God.*

<sup>1</sup> **The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. Habakkuk 1:1 (NIV)**

#### **Introduction:**

- *The author and the exact date reflect the topic of the book – mysteriously enigmatic.*
- *Habakkuk was a prophet; perhaps a temple prophet. The primary role of an OT prophet was to bring the leaders and people of God back to covenant obedience. ‘Shuv’ = return; “God sent the prophets to give them a ‘shuv’ in the right direction.” – Walter Kaiser (paraphrase)*
- *Larger context = Covenant; United monarchy late 900s BC (David – 931 on); Divided Kingdom - Idolatry and decline – 740s on Assyrian expansion. They had sacked Samaria in 722 BC and carried off the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Apparently this divine warning had not been effective in returning the Southern Kingdom of Judah to full covenant obedience. Good, bad and the OK. Assyria had been the dominant power but the Chaldeans were on the rise at the time of this prophecy which scholar date around 640-615 BC.*
- *Habakkuk lived in the Chaldean or Neo-Babylonian era prior to the fall of Jerusalem (586/587 BC). The empire gained strength around 625 BC and in 612 BC sacked the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. In 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar led them as they defeated an Egyptian led alliance at Carchemish (Syria) and became dominant in the region for a short while. Given the internal evidence I would guess that this was written between 625 to 615 BC.*
- *Habakkuk was troubled by the sin of the nation of Judah*

#### **I. God’s Ways are Often Very Mysterious -**

##### **a. Habakkuk’s 1<sup>st</sup> Complaint – Injustice Reigns (1:2-4)**

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

*‘Why do you allow **unpunished evil** in the world?’*

- i. The nations and even God’s people practice injustice and violence.
- ii. The righteous cry out, **‘How long, O Lord, will you allow wickedness to persist and even triumph?’**

iii. When will we see your justice?

**b. God's 1<sup>st</sup> Answer – Judah Will Be Judged (1:5-11)**

**"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. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. 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; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on-- guilty men, whose own strength is their god."**

*'I will send the Babylonians to punish my people.'*

- i. **Be utterly amazed.**
- ii. God's plan is to use a proud and pagan nation to bring His judgment.

*Use Fire, Famine or drought - natural means or even Supernatural; –but not...*

- iii. Are you ever surprised by God's answers to your prayers?
- iv. Don't we tend to expect God to answers our prayers with the answer we have in mind?

**b. A Closer Look at the Inscrutable God**

- i. **God's inaction mystifies us.**
- ii. **God's unexpected ways astound us.**
- iii. **God's unusual means dumbfound us.**
- iv. **History is still under God's divine control, plan and timetable. (cf. 1:6)**

**God Is Too Wise To...**

At the session of the Southern Baptist Convention in San Francisco, M. T. Rankin led a prayer of thanksgiving for the life of martyred missionary William Wallace. The prayer included this sentence, rich in illustrating value, "God is too wise to make a mistake, too good to do evil."

***How God's Sovereignty and Free Will are Affirmed in Scripture***

*Compatibilism (from How Long, O Lord? by D. A. Carson, Baker Book House, 1990, p. 201)*

The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true:

1. **God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.**
2. **Human beings are morally responsible creatures--they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent."**

■ **Isa 10:5-19**

- **God intends to use Assyria to punish and discipline Israel. (vv. 5-7; 15-19)**
- **Assyria wants to invade, rape and pillage Israel. (vv. 7-11)**
- **Assyria is punished for it's pride and sins. (vv. 12-14, 16-19)**

■ **Gen. 50:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. Genesis 50:19-20 (ESV)

- Joseph’s brothers intended to harm Joseph (for evil).
- God intended to use Joseph to save Israel (for good).

## II. The Saint’s Perplexity at God’s Ways

### a. Habakkuk’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Complaint – Aren’t The Babylonians More Unjust? (1:12-2:1)

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. 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?

...Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy? 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.

*‘Can those who are more wicked swallow up the more righteous?’*

- i. If God’s inaction mystified us.
- ii. Then His use of the Babylonians shocks us.
- iii. The problem is not really solved but compounded by God’s solution in the mind of the prophet.
- iv. How can we reconcile God’s use of the Babylonians with God’s character?
- v. Habakkuk waited upon the Lord for an answer.

**Time? – One day , one year?**

### ***Application: Living with the Mystery of Providence***

*How long, O Lord? As believers we live in tension with evil, injustice and the inequities of life. Waiting on God as His mysterious ways unfold leave us mystified at times.*

### **Responding to the Inscrutable God**

- Commit your problems and perplexities to God. (2:1)
- Expect the Lord to answer you. (2:1)
- Watch and wait for the Lord’s answer. (2:1)

### **Application – Praying during LCC’s transition for God’s best.**

- *Waiting and watching in prayer - asking God to work in each one of us and in this church family.*
- *Praying for connection and unity in the church family.*
- *Praying for greater personal intimacy with our Savior.*
- *Praying for opportunities to bring God into the conversation with non-believers.*