



# HABAKKUK

FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA



## “Why the animals on the covers?”

Similar to CS Lewis' depiction of the LORD in Narnia, the lion is used to demonstrate the incredible and terrifying power of the LORD. The lion also highlights the pride the LORD has for His own name, His care for his people, and the fact that He is King.

The lion can be viewed as both a terrifying and uplifting figure.

The deer on the back cover refers to the final verse of the book where Habakkuk, recognising the LORD as his strength, echoes the victorious words of Psalm 18.33

*'He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights'*

# HABAKKUK: FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA

## THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

The book of Habakkuk is a dialogue between Habakkuk and Yahweh (the God of Israel) during a vision Habakkuk receives from Yahweh. It commences with the persistent question of 'Why...?' (1.3, 13) and ends with a prayer that is sung by Habakkuk including a confession of faith (3.17-18). The remainder of the book details how Habakkuk moves from questioning God to this incredible expression of his own faith.

The nation of Judah is not directly mentioned. However, the message of Habakkuk is directed to them during a crisis, which led to the fall of Jerusalem (597 B.C. see below for historic and contextual details). From the prophet's words, and the historical context it becomes clear that the crisis was internal as well as external. Internally the nation was being torn apart as the wicked abused the righteous. God's holy law was being ignored and had become ineffective. Externally the pressure of the wicked pagan nations was becoming unbearable.

For Habakkuk there was an even more serious concern, the seeming inactivity of God in the face of unrelenting evil. How and why would a righteous God allow sin to go unpunished? The Lord answers Habakkuk in such a way that sparks more concern. Punishment will come through the instrumentality of the Babylonians, a wicked people (1.5-11). But, their actions will not go unpunished (2.2-20). Ultimately, Judah is told; God's answer comes, in 2.4-5, wrongdoers will be punished for their deeds, but 'the just/righteous will live by his faith'. Habakkuk responds to this promise of hope and judgement with a prayer (ch. 3). This prayer demonstrates the reverence and faith that the Lord expects of his people. Habakkuk recalls the history of Israel, remembering that the Lord is to be revered and that He is faithful (3.3-15). He concludes by fearfully and joyfully submitting himself into the hands of the Lord who can and does provide even when all other means of support fail (3.16-19).

## HABAKKUK: THE MAN, THE PROPHET, THE 'VOICE'

Habakkuk engages with God in a probing dialogue, in a 'stand before God', seeking to confront Him with the apparent inconsistencies of His actions toward mankind. As a prophet he was to serve as an intermediary between the God of Israel and His people. This tended to mean calling the people to account when they strayed from the covenant stipulations. On this occasion Habakkuk, instead, calls God to account when His actions appear to stray from the covenant He had established with His people.

Due to the association of Habakkuk with music, particularly the psalm prayer in chapter 3, and other non-biblical manuscripts, there is the suggestion that Habakkuk was an official temple musician. But more importantly, we see a man who was willing to put himself on the line by confronting God, much like Job. We also bear witness to how the Lord works. In a time where powerful nations were clashing, the divine response comes in the form of words, from a man unknown among the nations of the world. The prophetic word of God, demonstrated to be more powerful than the greatest human armies of the world.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE TIMES

The time in which Habakkuk prophesied and the book was written are a matter of debate. However, it appears most appropriate to date Habakkuk's prophecy after Josiah's reign, which ended in 609. It is helpful to understand the political context that Habakkuk prophesied in, in order that we understand the internal and external concerns.

### **Josiah, his sons and his grandson... the final destruction of Judah [609-538 BC]**

Josiah began to reign when he was eight years old and continued on the throne until he was thirty-nine (2 Ki. 22.1). By the time he was sixteen years of age he was 'seeking after the God of David his father' (2 Ch. 34.3). He was the last good hope for a just and God-fearing government. At twenty years of age he began to remove

all pagan images from Judah, seeking to return the people to the Lord. This was even before he discovered the 'book of the law' that was 'given by Moses' in 622 B.C. (2 Ki 22.8; 2 Chr. 34.14-15). At this point the reforms of Josiah took a significant leap forward – the book of Kings tells us of the destruction of false-worship centres extending even up into the northern kingdom.

The political climate was beneficial in allowing for reform during Josiah's reign because the Assyrian's attention had been directed to other political threats. The Babylonian Empire was gaining power under Nabopolassar, eventually destroying the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, in 605 BC. During the growing conflict between the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Egyptian king Neco was supporting the Assyrians by sending troops from the south, up past Judah by what was called the 'Way of the Sea'. It was at this point that Josiah made his fatal move as he strategically intercepted the Egyptian army. Neco attempted to dissuade him but Josiah was fatally wounded, retreated to Jerusalem and there died.

All Judah and Jerusalem mourned, and appropriately so. Josiah's death marked the end of a promising era, and not only had they lost their young reforming king, but they had also lost all independence. From the point of Josiah's death the end came quickly. Three of his sons and one grandson ruled in Jerusalem until the fateful collapse of the kingdom to the Babylonians in 587 BC.

Josiah's son Jehoahaz was imprisoned in Egypt and Neco ensured a 'puppet king' was put on the throne, a king of his choosing and under his control, Jehoiakim (name changed from Eliakim). Four years later Neco lost to the Babylonians but Nebuchadnezzar kept Jehoiakim as his vassal, 'puppet-king' (2 Ki. 23-24). Jehoiakim's character was poor; the prophet Jeremiah spoke of his greed and injustice in comparison to his father (Jere. 22.12-23). Jehoiakim returned to the idolatries of Manasseh, disregarding the 'book of the law' – the Torah of Yahweh that Habakkuk speaks of. With an example like this, it would be surprising for the citizens to be living otherwise.

In looking at the words of Habakkuk it would appear that this is the context in which the prophecy begins, with Habakkuk complaining to the Lord regarding the injustice and wickedness perverting Judah. However the book spans some sixty years in its fifty-six verses. The remainder of the book is set within the Babylonian

victory, exile and the subsequent fall of Babylon to Persia. Babylon will be the nation to bring 'justice', a surprising and concerning fact for Habakkuk, but they will also be punished. It is again helpful to briefly detail this context too.

Jehoiakim eventually rebelled in 601 BC, so Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiachin (yes annoyingly similar... he was Josiah's grandson) on the throne but exiled him to Babylon after three months. He was in power just long enough to be deported to Babylon with all the leading citizens of Judah; this is the beginning of the end (2 Ki. 24). Zedekiah (Josiah's third son and Jehoiachin's uncle) managed to delay the final demise another decade. But he eventually rebelled by withholding tribute and Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 BC (2 Ki. 25). We see reference to the Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem in Hab. 1.5-17. Yahweh promises the defeat of the nation of Babylon in 2.1-20, and Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon allowing the exiles of Judah to return to the land in 538 BC.

It is amid all of this violent political upheaval that Habakkuk prophesied. The 7th century BC was a time of the stomping, tramping and romping of nations. So, the result is a book that stands as a timeless witness to the Lord's purposes in a world dominated by corruption and violence.

## SERIES STRUCTURE

<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>12/07 - Habakkuk 1:1-11</b>
<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>19/07 - Habakkuk 1:12-2:1</b>
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>26/07 - Habakkuk 2:2-20</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>02/08 - Habakkuk 3:1-19</b>

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

### 1. Personal Reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day.
- The 5 daily studies for each week are *in preparation* for the upcoming sermon on Sunday.
- Although some days you will be focusing on just a couple of verses, it is always great to read the whole chapter again to help put what you are reading into context.
- Each devotion should take approximately 10 minutes - if you would like to dive deeper: ask more questions, read back over yesterday's points, or read the surrounding text. If you can make and take more time, go for it!
- By spending weeks studying this book, the goal is that you will have read it many times and have studied it in depth.
- Take your time and enjoy God's word.

### 2. Prayer

- In some places, prayer ideas are given as a suggestion. In other places, the prayer has been left blank. This is for you to complete with your own requests, confessions and thanks. At times your prayers may be prompted by the passage, but there is room to pray for whatever is happening in your life each day.

### 3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided after each week.

Sermons and digital booklet available at:

[www.narweebaptist.org.au](http://www.narweebaptist.org.au)



## WEEK ONE - HABAKKUK 1:1-11

### Why O LORD? And the Surprising Response

#### Monday

##### **Read Habakkuk 1**

- i. Write down your initial thoughts as you read chapter 1?
- ii. What stands out from these thoughts?
- iii. What questions do you have from this chapter?

Pray that God might reveal more of himself and his plans for you through our reflections on Habakkuk this week.

#### Tuesday

##### **Read Habakkuk 1:1-4**

- i. What information does v.1 give us about this book?

*If you haven't already read the introductory material at the beginning of this booklet, it would be helpful to read that now. If you have already, you may like to read it again!*

- ii. What does verse 2 reveal about how Habakkuk feels?
- iii. Who is the source of Habakkuk's frustration in verse 2? Does this surprise you? Why/why not?
- iv. List the things that Habakkuk complains about in verses 2b-4?

Read Ephesians 6:18. Give thanks to God that you can approach him in prayer "with all kinds of prayers and requests".

## Wednesday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:5-6**

- i. How does the Lord suggest that Habakkuk will respond to what he is going to be told? What does that suggest might be coming?
- ii. Describe what kind of people the Babylonians are as verses 5-6 detail?
- iii. It appears God will be using *this* people to achieve His purposes. How does that sit with you? How do you think Habakkuk will respond? How would you respond?

Give thanks that God is sovereign and has all nations and people in His hand. Pray for our nation.

## Thursday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:7-9**

- i. Who do the Babylonians seek to glorify (v.7)? How does this compare to Peter's challenge to us in 1 Peter 4:11?
  
- ii. Verses 8 and 9 are beautifully and terribly poetic. Try to rewrite these verses in your own words using contemporary imagery. If you're artistic try drawing this piece of poetry.

Pray for Christians throughout the world suffering persecution as a result of their faith.

## Friday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:10-11.**

- i. What regard do the Babylonians have for other nations and their cities (v.10)?
  
- ii. Given the way God has described the Babylonians, why can they trust their own strength? Again what does that teach us about this nation?

Read and pray the words of Psalm 146

FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA

Sermon notes

***Habakkuk 1:1-11***

**Why O LORD? And the Surprising Response**

## WEEK TWO - HABAKKUK 1:12-2:1

### Standing, Waiting, Watching Amid Confusion

#### Monday

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

- i. What are your thoughts as you read this chapter now?
  
- ii. What verses stand out?
  
- iii. What questions do you have?

Pray that God might reveal more of himself and his plans for you through our reflections on Habakkuk this week.

#### Tuesday

##### **Read Habakkuk 1:12**

- i. What do you think Habakkuk's tone would be after hearing God's first response?
  
- ii. What characteristics of God does Habakkuk mention in verse 12? Why would he start with focusing on God's everlasting nature?
  
- iii. What does verse 12 reveal about God's role in the rise of the Babylonian empire?

- iv. What have the Babylonians been ordained to do?

Praise God for who He is, highlighting and reflecting on the characteristics you identified above.

## Wednesday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:13**

- i. Like yesterday, why would Habakkuk focus on this attribute of God – that Yahweh’s “eyes are too pure to look on evil”?
- ii. Habakkuk makes two statements about God and then asks two questions. How are these two aspects of this verse related?
- iii. Habakkuk is clearly wrestling with the thought that God would use the evil nation of Babylon to punish His chosen people. Everywhere he looks there appears to be evil! Are the questions that Habakkuk poses in verse 13 ones that you have asked? How does it make you feel that Habakkuk has asked similar questions?

Praise God for His holiness, purity, and longsuffering with our sin. Pray that He will transform you into his likeness and reveal those areas that he wants to transform you in now.

## Thursday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:14-17.**

- i. Using what we have read in previous days and the historical background provided, what is being pictured in v.14-15?
- ii. Who or what does the wicked fisherman (representing the Babylonians) attribute his success to (v.16)?
- iii. How could Habakkuk's complaint in verse 17 be justified? Is this accusation of God fair? Why/why not?

Read Psalm 46. Pray that God will grow your trust in Him, despite the world seeming to be out of control.

## Friday

### **Read Habakkuk 1:12-2:1**

- i. How would you summarise Habakkuk's complaint in these verses?
- ii. Although Habakkuk has questioned the Lord the way he has, how does he respond in 2.1?
- iii. What does this reveal regarding Habakkuk's expectations of his Lord?

Read and reflect on the words of Psalm 46:10. Give thanks to God that He is in control, and pray that you might rest solely in Him, despite the challenges of your circumstances today.

FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA

Sermon notes

***Habakkuk 1:12-2:1***

**Standing, Waiting, Watching amid Confusion**



## WEEK THREE - HABAKKUK 2:2-20

### Live by Faith in the Just and Living God

#### Monday

##### Read Habakkuk 2

- i. What are your first thoughts when you read this chapter?
- ii. What stands out?
- iii. What questions do you have?

Praise God that He answers prayers.

#### Tuesday

##### Read Habakkuk 2:2-3

- i. What was the LORD replying to?
- ii. Why does God tell Habakkuk to write down His response?

*Note: the word translated 'revelation' could also be translated 'vision' – the Lord is telling Habakkuk to write down what he has revealed to him, what it is that Habakkuk has seen. That Habakkuk is instructed to write the revelation on 'the tablets' creates a link to the original law given by Moses. Clearly this is a significant message! The herald running most likely refers to the responsibility given to the runner in proclaiming the revelation, the message from God.*

- iii. What does the revelation await, speak, of and not prove?
  
- iv. Why would the Lord's answer express what it does in the last sentence of v.3?

Praise God because He is certain about His plan. Pray in light of His promises.

## Wednesday

### **Read Habakkuk 2:4-5**

- i. Verse 4a is about the Babylonians, with special reference to their king. What does "he [the enemy] is puffed up" mean?
  
- ii. How does "the righteous person" compare to this? (v4)

*Note: The phrase that you just wrote down is quoted frequently in the NT to support the teaching that people are saved by grace through faith (Romans 1:17, Gal 3:11) and should live by faith (Heb 10:38-39; 11:7).*

- iii. How does the LORD describe the arrogance and insatiability of the Babylonians? (v5) What does this further solidify about these people?

Praise God for His wonderful gift of righteousness! (Check out Romans 5:17)

## Thursday

*Note: Verses 6-20 are a taunt song that is an extended commentary on v4a which falls into two halves of ten (Hebrew) lines each - this will be our focus **today and tomorrow**. Both halves of this prophetic judgement conclude with a significant theological statement (v14 and v20). Together these two statements set the five "woes" pronounced against Babylon in a larger frame of reference.*

### **Read Habakkuk 2:6-14**

- i. "All of them" (v6a) refers to the threatened victims of the Babylonian onslaught, especially Judah. What is the first "woe"? (v6b-8)
  
- ii. What is the second "woe"? (v9-11)
  
- iii. What is the third "woe" (v12-14)
  
- iv. How does verse 14 compare to Isaiah 11:9?

Praise God that He is just. Praise Him that He is sovereign.

## Friday

*Re-read the note from the beginning of yesterday's devotion to put things into context.*

### **Read Habakkuk 2:15-20**

- i. What is the fourth "woe"? (v15-17)
- ii. What is the fifth and final "woe" of the chapter? (v18-20)
- iii. Try and express what all of the 'woes' have communicated.
- iv. How does the command in v.20 complement and add further depth to the message communicated in all of the woes?

Take some time to worship God in silence. In the space below you might like to write some of the created things, the objects you put your trust in as well as confess the times you haven't lived according to God's call upon you life. Ask God that you would be able to trust Him and Him alone.

Sermon notes

***Habakkuk 2:2-20***

**Live by Faith in the Just and Living God**

## WEEK FOUR - HABAKKUK 3:1-19

### Recalling and Renewing Faith

#### Monday

**Read Habakkuk 3, the persevering prayer of Habakkuk.**

- i. What are your thoughts when you read this chapter?
- ii. What stands out?
- iii. What questions do you have?

Take some time to unpack and pray verse 2.

#### Tuesday

**Read Habakkuk 3:1-2**

- i. How is the final chapter of Habakkuk introduced in v.1? This will mean that we have a different form of writing and it will also mean Habakkuk's tone and approach has changed.
- ii. What has Habakkuk heard of and what does he stand in awe of? Could this mean that Habakkuk has not *seen* these things in his lifetime?

- iii. How does Habakkuk respond to God's "deeds"? (v2a) What might these "deeds" be referring to?
- iv. What does Habakkuk ask in verse 2b?

Praise God for His presence, His justice and His mercy.

## Wednesday

### **Read Habakkuk 3:3-7**

- i. List any stories from the Old Testament that these verses remind you of and then read the note.

*Note: In verses 3-15, Habakkuk's prayer portrays a theophany, or visible self-manifestation of God, using imagery that is found in the traditional descriptions of God's appearances at the Exodus from Egypt, at the giving of the covenant law at Sinai, and during the conquest of Canaan (Ex. 15:1–18; Deut. 33:2, 3; Judg. 5:4, 5; Ps. 18:10; 68:7,8, 24; 77:16–20).*

- ii. What is the significance of Habakkuk using imagery in his prayer? What is Habakkuk trying to do?

*Note: Teman means "southland". God is pictured as coming from an area south of Judah during the exodus.*

- iii. Explain the difference in Habakkuk's tone and approach in his theophany compared to his previous responses.

- iv. What attributes of God can be seen in this part of the prayer?

Praise God because He is glorious and worthy of praise.

## Thursday

### **Read Habakkuk 3:8-15**

- i. In verse 8-11, Habakkuk alludes to the plague on the Nile (Ex 7:20-24) and/or the stopping of the Jordan (Josh 3:15-17), and to the parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14:15-31), as well as the sun and moon stopping (Josh 10:12-13). Why do you think Habakkuk brings these things up in his prayer? What do they remind him of regarding his God?
- ii. Why would Habakkuk refer to the Lord's wrath in these verses?

*Note: Habakkuk is blending the ideas of salvation and judgement in his look toward the future. Even in this terrible event of judgement on Israel, Habakkuk has seen that the Lord is advancing his purposes of redemption.*

- iii. How is the Lord pictured throughout this passage?
- iv. How might God's actions in the past give Habakkuk and his people an expectation for the future?

Praise God for His undisputed dominion over natural and historical forces.



## Friday

### **Read Habakkuk 3:16-19**

- i. How does Habakkuk respond (v16) knowing that the Lord answered his painful questions and will hear his prayer?
  
- ii. What is Habakkuk's point in verses 17-18? Try re-writing these in your own words to help provide clarity.
  
- iii. What is the significance of the "deer" reference in v20? How does this verse compare to Isaiah 40:29-31?

Praise the Sovereign LORD that he is your strength. Ask him to help you recall all that He has done for His people, including you. Ask him to renew your faith. This may be difficult for you depending on your current circumstances – read Philippians 2.1-11 and 4.2-9 and allow God's word to remind you of what it means to be united with Christ.

FAITH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA

Sermon notes

***Habakkuk 3:1-19***

**Recalling and Renewing Faith**

Notes:

## BE CONNECTED @NBC – AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

### [HOME GROUPS]: weeknights during term

Home groups are a key component of our church. Small groups of people gather in homes to grow in their understanding of God and grow in their relationship with others.

CONTACT: [brett@narweebaptist.org.au](mailto:brett@narweebaptist.org.au) / 95 34 26 99

### [SUPPERS]: Sunday nights

Every Sunday night after NBC@6PM the 1023 crew meet together at a home, café or restaurant to share food, welcome, connect people and build relationships.

### [MEN'S UPCOMING]

Men's convention – BASECAMP:

31 July – 01 August – Mountains (Katoomba)

08 August – City (Redfern)

Men's BREAKFAST – 29 August

### [WOMEN'S UPCOMING]

Liquid Women's Afternoon Tea – Saturday 18 July [TBC]

Flourish – 06 August

For more details see website [www.narweebaptist.org.au](http://www.narweebaptist.org.au) details can also be found in the weekly bulletin or feel free to call the church [95 34 26 99]

## MISSIONARY PARTNERS @NBC

*The New Testament teaches us that we are to share in the work of the gospel, giving consistently and joyfully. Please partner with us in mission by praying for, contacting and supporting our mission partners. Each term we will have a list here for you to consider and get to know.*

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



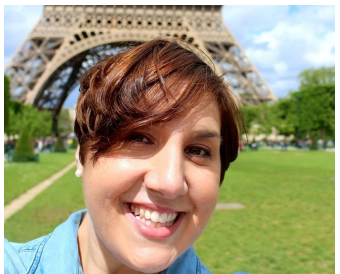
**Interserve, SE Asia**

**Craig and Kate MARGETSON**



**Wycliffe, Thailand**

**Jasmine NG**



**SIM Burkino Faso (France – preparing)**

**Emily WOODS**

Pray that Emily will settle into life in France and flourish in her language study.



**Christian Surfers, SE Asia**

**Adrian, Clair, Alana and Kobe YOUNG**

## LOCAL PARTNERS

### YOUTH AND SCHOOLS:

#### **CRAM Campus Crusade for Christ**

Michelle DIRCKS

Peter & Rebecca MAWHINNEY

### UNIVERSITY:

#### **Sydney Uni, EU**

Liz MANSOUR

Billy and Melissa TANG

### SCHOOLS:

#### **Christian Studies, Beverly Hills Girls'**

Jeannine BAIRD

#### **Christian Studies, Peakhurst High**

Matt HARRIS

PRAYER POINTS / UPCOMING FOR PRAYER



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