

God's Master Plan

November 20, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Habakkuk 2:1-5

Session Outline

1. Waiting on God's Answer (Habakkuk 2:1)
2. Receiving God's Answer (Habakkuk 2:2-3)
3. Trusting God's Plan (Habakkuk 2:4)

Theological Theme

Habakkuk not only asked God his questions, but he also waited for God's answer. Once he received the Lord's response, Habakkuk obeyed what he heard.



Leader Guide

God's Master Plan

Introduction

If you have spent much time around kids, you are likely familiar with their propensity to ask a lot of questions. Why is the sky blue? Where does the rain go when it isn't falling? How do fish sleep? Do mermaids' fingers get wrinkly from being in the water too long? And all the other tough to answer things they can think of.

- ❓ What are some examples of other unique questions kids might ask? Think back on your own experiences interacting with children.

At some point the questions can come so fast and furious that you don't even have a chance to answer. You may have even pretended not to hear them so that you don't have to come up with any response. When distracted by something else, you might even answer the wrong question or give an affirmative you didn't mean to.

- ❓ When have you answered the wrong question or been distracted and agreed to something you didn't mean to?

As the adult, you may find yourself backtracking because you were caught unaware or just responded to get a child to stop talking. That is not an issue we have to worry about with our heavenly Father. He does not get distracted or lose focus. He is patient with us and listens when we ask Him questions. His responses are always perfect and right on time. Today we are continuing with the story of the prophet Habakkuk and his conversation with the Lord about the coming judgment of Israel.

Session Summary

Habakkuk was very concerned about the sinful behavior of the people of God. He expressed his concerns to the Lord and asked for guidance. God responded by sharing His plans that were already in the works. He revealed that He planned to use the pagan nation of Babylon to bring judgment against Judah.

It shocked Habakkuk that God would take a pagan nation and allow them to invade His own people, so he questioned God more about what would take place. Habakkuk is an excellent example of how we should respond when we have questions for God and are looking for answers. He demonstrated his faith and trust in God throughout the conversation recorded in this book. The Lord patiently responded to Habakkuk's questions. This reinforces that we can trust the heart and character of God even when His plans are different than we expected.

1. Waiting on God's Answer (Habakkuk 2:1)

After God's initial response to his concerns over the actions of Judah's people in chapter 1, Habakkuk continued to express his concerns to the Lord and asked further questions. He was shocked that the Lord planned to bring judgment on the people and was honest with God about his feelings on the matter. Habakkuk struggled with the plan God revealed but instead of withdrawing from the Lord or grumbling because he didn't like God's response, he kept the communication lines open and shared his heart with his God.



Why is it important to keep talking to God when you may not always understand what He is doing or even agree with His plan?

Note what Habakkuk did after questioning God further and presenting his arguments against the plans God revealed. He went to the watch tower to wait and watch for God's reply. The watch tower was higher than the walls of the city. One went there to keep an eye out in every direction. It was possible to see all the angles of the city and was above all the noise and distraction. In going to stand watch in the tower, Habakkuk showed his faith that God would respond along with humble attentiveness to wait on what the Lord would say. He expected God to answer and wanted to position himself to hear when He did. He put himself in a place to be focused on the Lord as he waited.



What are some ways you can position yourself to hear from the Lord?

Habakkuk struggled with God's plan after hearing from God in chapter 1. In that moment, Habakkuk had the option to turn away from God and go around grumbling and complaining about what was going to happen, or he could trust. Habakkuk chose to go back to God for more answers because even though he might disagree or understand, he knew he could trust the Lord. When you struggle as you deal with what life brings your way, your choice is the same. Will you turn away from God with your

Habakkuk's Complaint

Complaint in 2:1 is from the same root as *punish/reproof* in 1:12. Habakkuk was not demanding an answer from God but was expecting reproof or correction for his audacious remarks, knowing that God's ways are always right. He knew that a solution to his perplexity could come only from God and that whatever God said would demand and deserve a response from him.

grumbling and complaining or will you pour your heart out to the Lord and wait for Him to respond?

When life is uncertain or difficult, we can become consumed by trying to fix things. As we work to figure the situation out on our own, we can get to the point where we no longer hear the Lord speak. Our problems grow and overwhelm us so much that we get focused on circumstances instead of on the Lord. When that happens, the problem seems bigger and our whole perspective changes. Habakkuk's story reminds us that God promises to hear you and answer you when you take your concerns, fears, and struggles to Him. Just as He lovingly responded to Habakkuk, He will lovingly respond to you, and you can trust His character.



Application: What do you need to pour out to God and wait for His response about?

2. Receiving God's Answer (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

Just as Habakkuk expected, the Lord answered him. The Lord told Habakkuk to write down what he heard. God instructed Habakkuk to be careful about inscribing His words on tablets so that they could not be misinterpreted or misunderstood. The words God spoke to Habakkuk were important and were not just for Habakkuk's sake—the people also needed to know them. Many teachings from God were passed down by spoken word. God was clear that these words needed to be plainly recorded so that they would not be corrupted by anything. This instruction implied that Habakkuk was not to add to or take away anything from God's answer.

Announcing that the vision or answer from God was going to take place at the appointed time, reinforced the importance of writing it all down. Once the event took place, the details could be compared to what the Lord said would happen. Because He cannot go against His Word or make mistakes (Hebrews 6:18), God wants His people to compare His promises or answers to what happens. Verse 3 reminds us that whatever God says will come to pass, and we can count on it to happen just as He says. Habakkuk waited in anticipation for the Lord to speak, and He trusted that God would answer Him and that God's answer would be true.





How have you experienced God's Word coming true just as He said?

God promised that His timing was perfect and though it might seem like nothing was happening, Habakkuk was to continue trusting God and wait. Waiting can be one of the hardest things for Christians to do. We are accustomed to quick answers and when things take longer than we expect or want, it can be hard to keep believing. One lesson from this part

of Habakkuk's story is though it may seem like evil is winning and God is not working, nothing could be further from the truth.


Because God has an appointed time for His plan to take place, we can stay patient in our waiting. It is not our job to know the exact time for the Lord's plan to unfold. It is our responsibility to trust even when it seems slow. We must wait for Him and not give up. Though we may be tempted to rush ahead and manipulate things for a desired result, Habakkuk showed the better way. Waiting on the Lord is never a waste of time. There is pruning that happens in our lives as we wait. There are lessons learned in waiting and our faith grows as we wait on the Lord with anticipation.

-  What have you seen as a positive result of a time when you waited on the Lord with anticipation?
-  Application: Where are you currently waiting on the Lord? How is your perspective changed regarding this season considering today's passage?

3. Trusting God's Plan (Habakkuk 2:4-5)

Habakkuk's struggle with God's plan for the judgment of Judah was due to his inability to comprehend that God would use a pagan, wicked nation to enact His judgment. The Lord directed Habakkuk's attention to the issue of pride in the puffed-up people of Judah who lived without concern for the Lord. The unrighteous have no integrity and their souls are not upright. Pride is a trademark of people living apart from God and is always repugnant to Him. Sadly, God's people were guilty of this pride in the time of Habakkuk.

God told Habakkuk that the righteous would live by faith. The person who lives by faith trusts in the Lord and resists allowing pride to direct his or her steps. When you attempt to live life on your own strength instead of trusting in the Lord, that is a form of pride. True faith keeps a person's eyes on the Lord, whereas pride is self-focused. The words recorded by Habakkuk at the end of verse 4 are quoted three times in the New Testament as a summation of living by faith and not the law (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

-  What does it mean that "the righteous one will live by his faith"?

The just or righteous will live by faith and be satisfied. Jesus is enough, and those who seek to live surrendered to the Lord can be content and fulfilled. Nothing is more satisfying than seeing God's will at work in your life, and the righteous prove this to be true as they wait and watch for the Lord to respond to their petitions.

In contrast to the righteous, God described the proud and arrogant. He stressed that they are never satisfied and cannot relax. They are always striving to fulfill their insatiable needs and wants because their appetites keep growing and expanding. All the entangling snares of the enemy are at work against the arrogant, and they selfishly continue in greed in all their ways.



What evidence do you see in the world that aligns with how God described the arrogant and prideful?

The warning is clear, and the progression is dangerous. One may give in to the flesh nature to find satisfaction. Though it may feel good for a moment, it leads to more dissatisfaction and discontentment so that this person never finds real rest. His appetites continue to grow for the lusts of the flesh and again, there is no fulfillment. He progressively attempts to satisfy the flesh by collecting people and things, all for himself. The ultimate motivation for his behavior is selfish desire. Anyone who has slid down the slippery slope of sin can relate to these verses and testify that it does not lead to a fulfilled life. Each person has the choice of whether to chase after empty things of the world or trust God and seek righteousness by faith.



Application: How do you need to deal with any issues of pride or arrogance in your life?

Conclusion

God is always at work around us. Do you see His hand and trust that His plans are good? Have you been waiting on God to respond to you? Habakkuk reminds us we can trust God to do what He says He will. We wait with anticipation because we believe and trust God.

When life is hard and we have questions, we can always turn to the Lord and trust that His plan is best. Sometimes we need to position ourselves to hear from the Lord and remove any distractions that make it hard to hear. The way we receive what God says will also reveal a lot about our relationship with Him. When we hear His voice, we should obey and trust because the righteous live by faith. There is a strong contrast to the way the righteous live and the way the world lives. One is pleasing to God and the other disgusts Him.

- ❓ Where have you been trying to handle things on your own instead of taking them to the Lord? What needs to change?
- ❓ How can you better wait for the Lord to speak in the current season?
- ❓ Where do you see pride creeping into your life? What will you do about it?
- ❓ How have you been guilty of trying to find satisfaction apart from the Lord?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His perfect timing. Confess the ways you have failed to trust Him and commit those things to Him now.

Additional Resources

- *Nahum & Habakkuk by J. Vernon McGee*
- *Micah-Malachi by Ralph Smith*
- *Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah by S.D. Snyman*

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Call to Action

What issues in your life create angst or cause you concern? Perhaps you've tried to think or act in a manner to bring about resolution to these matters, but have you brought them before God and entrusted them to Him? Preferably, in the context of your LifeGroup, confess/share the hardships or challenges you are facing and ask others to pray that you will have faith to trust God with the outcome of these matters.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Relentless Trust

Main Passages

- Habakkuk 3:1-19

Session Outline

1. Prayer for Revival (Habakkuk 3:1-2)
2. Remember God's Power (Habakkuk 3:10-13)
3. Trusting God Relentlessly (Habakkuk 3:16-19)

Memorize

Look, his ego is inflated;

he is without integrity.

But the righteous one will live by his faith.

-Habakkuk 2:4

Historical Context of Habakkuk

Purpose

Like the book of Job, Habakkuk deals with the problem of understanding God's ways: Why does God allow injustice to prevail (1:3)? How can God use the more wicked Babylonians to punish the less wicked Judeans (1:13)? How long will God allow evildoers to dominate the world (1:17)?

God did not give clear answers to the questions Habakkuk raised. Instead he called on the godly to have faith (2:4). When Habakkuk declared he would rejoice in God no matter what (3:17–19), he showed that he had accepted and appropriated this message to his own life.

Author

Habakkuk is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. His name is thought to derive from the Hebrew word *chabaq*, “to embrace,” but its form appears non-Hebraic. More likely the name is related to *habbaququ*, a word found in the related Semitic language of Akkadian. It denotes a species of garden plant or fruit tree.

Setting

Habakkuk predicted the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans (1:6). The term Chaldean (Hb *kasdim*; Akk *kaldu*) was originally used of an ethnic group that appeared in southern Babylonia in the ninth century BC. In the eighth century BC, Chaldeans began to rise to power in Babylon. Among the early Chaldean kings was Merodach-baladan II (2Kg 20:12; Is 39:1), who twice in the late eighth century took (and lost) Babylon's throne. The Chaldean Nabopolassar (626–605 BC) began to dismantle the Assyrian Empire with help from the Medes and founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire. By the time of Habakkuk, “Chaldean” had come to be a synonym for “Babylonian.”

Special Features

The book of Habakkuk, one of the Minor Prophets, is unique in its style. Rather than speaking to the people on God's behalf, Habakkuk spoke to God on behalf of the people. Habakkuk struggled with how to understand God's actions in history, especially his use of an unrighteous nation as the instrument of his justice. God's answer to Habakkuk's objection was that “the righteous one will live by his faith” (2:4).

Extended Commentary

Habakkuk 2:1-5

2:1 Habakkuk braced himself for God’s response. Hebrew *tokachath* (“reproof, reprimand”) is probably stronger than the word *complaint* suggests: The prophet had presumed to correct God. Alternatively, it may refer to God’s reproof of Habakkuk: “[his] reproof of me.” The Syriac translation (see textual footnote) preserves another text for 2:1b that is possibly the original reading: “What he will reply about my reproof [of him].”

2:2–3 God replied that the vision must be written down clearly for—in spite of Habakkuk’s objections—the vision of the Babylonian invasion would come true.

2:4–5 The arrogant Babylonians were just as wicked as Habakkuk supposed. Yet v. 4b says righteous people such as Habakkuk must exercise faith in God’s goodness despite his use of evil Babylon. This is similar to the answer Job received from God (Jb 38–41). God does not have to explain himself to humans. We must let God be God and trust in his goodness even when we find his ways difficult to understand. Verse 4 conveys the central message of the book. The NT cites it to show how the Christian life from beginning to end is based on faith (Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11; Heb 10:38).¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

J. Vernon McGee (Nahum & Habakkuk)

Dr. J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988) spent more than 50 years teaching the Bible on his “Thru the Bible” radio broadcast. He pastored for more than 40 years and has authored many best-selling books, including *Doctrine for Difficult Days*.

Ralph Smith (Micah-Malachi)

Dr. Ralph L. Smith is professor of Old Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. He has the Th.M. and Th.D. degrees from Southwestern, and has done post-doctoral studies at Harvard Divinity School and The University of Chicago. His previous books include *Job: A Study of Providence and Faith*, and *Amos* in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*.

S.D. Snyman (Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah)

S. D. (Fanie) Snyman is research associate in Old and New Testament studies at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Known for his research on *The Book of the Twelve*, he is author of a commentary on *Malachi*, several books published in South Africa, and numerous articles.