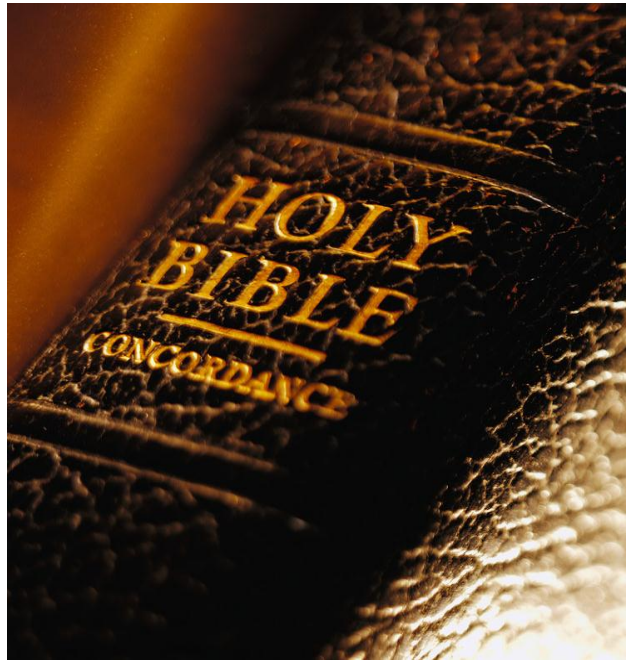


# *Habakkuk: God and the Toleration of Evil*



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NOVEMBER 14, 2009**

*Background to  
Habakkuk*

## **Background Information on Habakkuk**

### I. Author

- A. Habakkuk – Babylonian name, possibly meaning a type of garden plant
- B. Contemporary of Jeremiah
  - 1. Hab. 3:17 and Jer. 8:13
  - 2. Hab. 2:13 and Jer. 51:58
  - 3. Hab. 2:13 and Jer. 12:13
  - 4. Hab. 1:5 and Jer. 33:3
- C. Also referenced in Apocryphal book, Bel and the Dragon

### II. Date

- A. As applied in reference to the Babylonian Empire
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Judah about 600 BC
    - a. Dated around Battle of Carchemish (@605 BC)
    - b. Egyptian forces defeated by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar
    - c. See Jeremiah 46
- B. As applied to time of Josiah and Jehoiakim (Shortly before 600 BC)

### III. Occasion

- A. The “Kings”
  - 1. King Josiah
    - a. II Kings 22:1-23:30; II Chronicles 34:1-36:1
    - b. Jeremiah was the major prophet to Judah during this time
  - 2. King Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:31-35; II Chronicles 36:2-4)
  - 3. King Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:36-24:7; II Chronicles 36:5-8)
- B. God and Habakkuk
  - 1. Judah’s sinful rebellion resulted in God bringing the Babylonians as His rod of punishment.
  - 2. Habakkuk’s complaints incite a discussion between himself and God about God’s justice and His mysterious providence over the affairs of man.
  - 3. Unlike other prophets who are just simply delivering God’s message to man, Habakkuk also delivers man’s feelings about suffering to God.

#### IV. Historical Context of Babylonian Empire (1:6)

##### A. Background Info on Babylon:

1. Synonymous with "Chaldeans"
  - a. Babylon became a learning center, and as a result, "Chaldean" came to stand for any type of specialty learners including priests, astrology and other educated classes.
  - b. Aramaic language began during their influence.
  - c. Ruthless for military exploits / ruthlessness which historians believe the Babylonians also inherited / practiced
    - 1) Treatment of enemies captured in battle
    - 2) Assimilation of captives
2. Cf. Jonah's **fearful** reaction when commissioned by God (Jonah 1:1-3)

##### B. City of Babylon

1. Babylon was located in southern Mesopotamia on Euphrates River (@ 56 miles south of current city of Baghdad).
2. During Neo-Babylonian Empire period, it was largest city in the known world, covering @ 2500 acres.
3. The city where Alexander the Great died

##### C. Nebuchadnezzar:

1. II Kings 24:1-25:30; II Chronicles 36:6-21; Book of Daniel
2. Son of Nabopolassar who had freed Babylon from Assyrian domination
3. Ruled 605-562 BC
4. Military accomplishments included establishing Babylon as the most powerful empire of its time
5. Non-military accomplishments included:
  - a. Building structures with kiln-fired bricks (vs. the common way of sun-dried bricks)
  - b. Allegedly building the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" (one of 7 Wonders of Ancient World)
  - c. Built and remodeled various structures throughout Babylon, including a stone bridge across Euphrates River

# *Outline of Habakkuk*

## **Outline of Habakkuk**

- I. Man's Dilemma: "Why Does God Tolerate Wrong?" (1:1-4)
  - A. Accusation #1 – "God does not listen when we call for help."
  - B. Accusation #2 – "God does not save us from violence."
  - C. Accusation #3 – "God makes us look at injustice and even seems to tolerate it."
  - D. Accusation #4 – "God allows the very things that He has condemned."
    - 1. Destruction and violence
    - 2. Strife and conflict
    - 3. The law is paralyzed
    - 4. Justice never prevails
    - 5. The wicked hem in the righteous
    - 6. Justice is perverted
  
- II. God's Answer: "Look and Watch" (1:5-11)
  - A. "Look, watch and be amazed"
  - B. "I Am going to do something"<sup>1</sup>
  - C. "I Am raising up the Babylonians"
    - 1. Ruthless and impetuous
    - 2. Feared and dreaded
    - 3. A law to themselves
    - 4. Promote their own honor
    - 5. Bent on violence
    - 6. Deride kings and scoff at rulers
    - 7. Guilty men, whose own strength is their god
  
- III. Man's Dilemma: "Why Does God Tolerate the Treacherous?" (1:12-2:1)
  - A. God's Attributes ...
    - 1. From everlasting
    - 2. The Holy One
    - 3. Appoints
    - 4. Ordains
    - 5. Eyes are too pure to look on evil
    - 6. Cannot tolerate wrong
  - B. God's Attributes and the existence of evil ...
    - 1. "Why does God tolerate the treacherous?"
    - 2. "Why is God silent when the wicked harm the righteous?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whether intentionally or not, note the use of the phrase "I Am ". If the "I Am" is in charge, there is no need to panic. He is in control.

<sup>2</sup> There is an assumption that someone can be so "righteous" that they do not deserve to suffer at the hands of the wicked or even suffer at all. And, that something is very wrong (with God?) when this happens.

IV. Man's Dilemma: "Why Does God Tolerate the Treacherous?" (1:12-2:1) (Cont.)

- C. God's Attributes, the existence of evil and the Babylonians ...<sup>3</sup>
  - 1. Men are helpless
  - 2. The Babylonians "catch" the helpless in their "nets"
  - 3. The Babylonians burn incense to their idols.
  - 4. The Babylonians destroy nations without mercy.
- D. God's Attributes, the existence of evil, the Babylonians and the demand for an answer!
  - 1. "I will stand ... and station myself"
  - 2. "I will look to see what he will say to me"
  - 3. Implied: "I will wait for an answer or how to answer when I am rebuked."

V. God's Answer: "Wait" (2:2-20)

- A. "Wait" for the revelation from God
  - 1. It will be clear
  - 2. It will be delivered
  - 3. It will come at the appointed time
  - 4. It will be true
  - 5. It is to be waited on
  - 6. It will come true
  - 7. It will not delay
- B. "Wait" for the woes that will befall the Babylonians
  - 1. The heart of the Babylonians
    - a. Puffed up
    - b. Desires are not upright
    - c. Wine betrays him
    - d. Arrogant
    - e. Never at rest
    - f. As greedy as the grave
    - g. Never satisfied
    - h. Takes people captive
  - 2. The woes that will befall the Babylonians
    - a. Woe to him who piles up stolen goods
    - b. Woe to him who builds ... by unjust gain
    - c. Woe to him who builds ... with bloodshed
    - d. Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors
    - e. Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life'

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<sup>3</sup> Habakkuk wanted a solution to the problem of wickedness, but he did not want that solution to be the Babylonians! Cf. our unhappiness with the solutions that God provides for us.

- VI. Man's Dilemma Solved by Submission to God's Answer: "Live by Faith" (2:4; 3:1-19)
- A. "The righteous will live by his faith" (2:4)
  - B. "The righteous will practice his faith in the face of difficulties" (3:1-19)<sup>4</sup>
    - 1. By remembering who God is (2-15)<sup>5</sup>
      - a. His fame and deeds (2)
      - b. His ability to remember mercy during times of "wrath" (2)
      - c. His glory and praise (3)
      - d. His splendor (4)
      - e. His power (4)
      - f. His 'shaking' of the earth (6)
      - g. His eternal ways (6)
      - h. His anger (8-12)
      - i. His deliverance (13)
    - 2. By waiting for God to deliver (16-19)
      - a. "I heard ... and trembled" (16a)
        - 1) He was in awe of what he had heard of God doing in the past and what He was getting ready to do in his lifetime.
        - 2) Q: "Am I in 'awe' of what God has done in my past and what His is doing today?" (see Hebrews 10:32-39)
      - b. "I will wait" (16b)
      - c. "I will rejoice" (17-19)

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<sup>4</sup> Some commentators see these verses as references to God's deliverance from Pharaoh and the resulting exodus from Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Job 35-40 where God (through Elihu) gives an almost identical speech



*God and the Toleration  
of Evil in  
Habakkuk*

## God's Toleration of the Wicked

### Intro.

- Cf. story of man who sought to ruin careers at a former job
- Why does God tolerate wicked people and wicked activities?

### Discussion:

#### I. Why Does God Tolerate the Wicked?

- A. The eternal question: "If God is with us, why are all these bad things happening to us?"
  1. Deut. 29:24 – "All the nations will ask, 'Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?'"
  2. Josh. 7:7 – "And Joshua said, 'Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us?'"
  3. Judges 6:13 – "'But sir,' Gideon replied, 'if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.'"
- B. ***Standard Conclusion:*** "God must have abandoned us since we are suffering."
- C. Our faith in God must tell us that, although things may look like God is tolerating evil, we must believe:
  1. 1:13a – "Your eyes are too pure to look at evil"
  2. Something else must be going on in God's plans that we are unaware of that makes what happening important to His plan

#### II. God Uses the Wicked to Accomplish His Will

- A. Cf. the sins of the Babylonians mentioned in Habakkuk
  1. Ruthless (1:6)
  2. Impetuous (1:6)
    - a. Synonym for "rash"
    - b. Cf. Num. 30:6-8 (making a rash promise); Ps. 106:33 (rash words from the mouth of Moses); Pr. 13:3 (speaking rashly invites ruin); Pr. 20:25 (dedicating something rashly); Is. 32:4 (the mind of the rash becoming knowledgeable); Acts 19:36 (be quiet & not act rashly); II Tim. 3:4 (terrible times when people are rash)
  3. Seize dwelling places not their own (1:6)
  4. Law to themselves (1:7)
  5. Promote their own honor (1:7) – i.e., complete opposite of humble
  6. Bent on violence (1:9)
  7. Deride kings and scoff at rulers (1:10) – i.e., no respect for authority
  8. Guilty men, whose own strength is their god (1:11) (cf. Dan. 4:29-30)
  9. Treacherous (1:13)

10. Wicked (men) who swallow up those more righteous than themselves (1:13)
  11. Sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet (1:16)
  12. He is puffed up (2:4)
    - a. Arrogance – cf. how many nations, both ancient and modern, have been destroyed by this sin (cf. v. 5a)
    - b. Ps. 10:2, 31:18, 94:4, 119:51<sup>6</sup>, 119:78, 123:4
    - c. Pr. 8:13, 21:24; Isa. 2:17; Isa. 13:11; Mal. 3:15
  13. Greedy (2:5)
  14. Never satisfied (2:5b) (Cf. Prov. 16:8)
  15. The leader of the land of wickedness (3:13)
  16. Gloating (3:14)
- B. God will use the wicked to carry out His eternal will
1. (1:6) - "I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people"<sup>7</sup>
  2. God will use wicked people and their plans to carry out His will
    - a. He will use wicked rulers today
    - b. He will use wicked people who come into my life to help me become more like Jesus (see Ps. 37:1, 7-8)
  3. Cf. Hab. 1:12b – "You have appointed them ... you have ordained them ..."
  4. Rom. 9:17 – "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth'."
    - a. Pharaoh was one of the original users of genocide (cf. Hitler)
    - b. God used him as His tool so that God's power might be displayed
  5. Hebrews 12:3-13
    - a. God often uses others (including the very wicked) as a means of disciplining / discipling us
    - b. He did that for Jesus (cf. v. 3 – "endured such opposition from sinful men")
  6. I Peter 2:21-23
    - a. (v. 21) – "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps"
    - b. (v. 23b) – "He entrusted himself to him who judges justly"
    - c. Psalms 118:8-9

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<sup>6</sup> There will never be a time when arrogant people do not mock God, His word or His people. Don't get discouraged about this or wonder when it will ever change. It **will not** change!

<sup>7</sup> See Jer. 46 – God used the Babylonians to destroy Israel's enemy, Egypt. Israel saw this as justice from God. However, when He used the same force against them, they saw it as God tolerating treacherous sin.

### III. God's Sovereignty Over the Wicked

#### A. (1:12) – "O Lord, are you not from everlasting?"

1. If God is everlasting / eternal, some questions must be raised:
  - a. "Why did he not see this coming?"
  - b. "If He is truly in control, why did He allow this bad thing to happen?"
  - c. "If He can 'see' into the future, why does He not just stop bad things from happening?"
2. The "everlasting nature" of God does not demand that He stop every bad thing from happening
  - a. Gen. 21:33 – "Abraham ... called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God." (Heb., *El Olam - El Olam* is "a phrase unique to this passage")
  - b. Ps. 90:2 – "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."
  - c. Ex. 15:18 – "The Lord will reign for ever and ever."
  - d. Job 36:26 – "How great is God – beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out." Because of God's greatness, I will never be able to figure out why He does what He does (see Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33-36).
  - e. You cannot put a "date" on anything about God's nature.
  - f. If God is eternal, evil things happen and He is still all-loving and all-powerful, then the issue might be **our view** of how all this ties together is wrong. We need to change **our thinking** about what this means.
  - g. Bigger Issues Might Be At Stake:
    - 1) Therefore, what we might think should be stopped should continue because God *can see into the future!*
    - 2) See Matthew 16:21-23 and Matthew 26:50-54

#### B. (3:6b) – "His ways are eternal."

1. In the middle of all the things that were happening that were overpowering to Habakkuk, he needed to see that God was eternal. Difficult circumstances will come and go, but God alone remains eternal.
2. Also, in the instance of suffering, I need to realize that eternal issues and events may be at work that I do not know about. All I am allowed to see is the temporary nature of it. I need to trust God while it is going on, because He may never show me why this suffering had to happen in my life (cf. II Cor. 4:16-18).
3. There is "something bigger" going on here than I may realize.

- a. For example, with Job, the issue was not Job just suffering for suffering's sake. It had to do with God's confidence in men (1:8-12), the justice of God, etc.
- b. With Paul's suffering (II Cor. 12:7-10), it had to do with showing the power of grace.
- c. With Ezekiel, the issue was not just the punishment of the Jews for their disobedience. There was an eternal issue in reference to the Sovereignty of God being addressed on another level.<sup>8</sup>
- d. "Battles" may be being fought on an eternal level that I will never know about. My suffering might be directly tied in with them in some way, e.g., cf. Luke 2:8-15 and Revelation 12:1-9

#### IV. The Wicked Will Reap What They Sow

- A. (2:6) – "Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion"
  - 1. Characteristics of Babylonians:
    - a. Would pile up the goods of those nations they conquered, and as a result, became wealthy (see II Kings 25, II Chron. 36).
    - b. The duty they also required from the nations they conquered lent to their wealth.
      - a. Results: "You have plundered many nations ... You have shed man's blood ... You have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them."
  - 2. Eccl. 7:7 – "Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart."
  - 3. Jer. 22:15, 17 – "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? ... But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion."
- B. (2:9) – "Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin!"
  - 1. Cf. someone who profits from others unjustly (stealing, fraud, theft) and then, uses that money to build up his own personal "realm" (e.g., his business, accumulating possessions, property, power & influence) ... like a gangster who tries to become legitimate!
  - 2. Jer. 17:11 – "Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool."

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<sup>8</sup> Note: with Job and Paul, it is revealed why these things are occurring. With Ezekiel, we are never told why this is going on. We can only surmise since "God's sovereignty" is mentioned so frequently. Therefore, sometimes, we will figure out why we are suffering ... sometimes, we will not! The latter are the occasions when we decide whether we will trust God in the same way as when we know why we are suffering.

- C. (2:12) – “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime!”
1. Ps. 127:1 – “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”
  2. Jer. 51:58 – “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Babylon’s thick wall will be leveled and her high gates set on fire; the people’s exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations’ labor is only fuel for the flames.’ ”
  3. Luke 12:33 – “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”
  4. (v.13) – How God views the ultimate result of all human endeavors: “The people’s labor is only fuel for the fire”
- D. (2:15) – “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies.”
1. The sin of causing others to stumble, i.e., putting others in situations which will encourage them to sin
  2. Cf. Matt. 16:23; Mark 9:42; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 14:13
  3. Cf. Women who were downfall of Josh Hamilton, Texas Rangers’ baseball player
  4. Vv. 16-17 – “Reaping what you sow” / Note what God said would happen to the Babylonians:
    - a. “You *will be* filled with shame instead of glory”, i.e., it was a guarantee from God that they were going to suffer because of the suffering they had brought upon others.
    - b. (V. 16) – “Now it is *your* turn. Drink and be exposed.”
    - c. “Job 4:8 – “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”
      - a. Pr. 22:8 – “He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.”
      - b. Jer. 12:13 – “They will sow wheat but reap thorns, they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. So bear the shame of your harvest because of the Lord’s fierce anger.”
      - c. Hos. 8:7 – “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour.”
      - d. Hos. 10:13 – “But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil; you have eaten the fruit of deception.”
      - e. II Cor. 9:6a – “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.”
      - f. Gal. 6:7-8a – “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction ...”

- E. (2:19) – “Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’ or to lifeless stones, ‘Wake up!’ ”
1. Traits attributed to idols:
    - a. “A man has carved it” (Rom. 1:22-23)
    - b. “An image that teaches lies”
    - c. “He who makes it trusts in his own creation” (Isa. 44:12-20)
    - d. “Idols that cannot speak” (I Kings 18:25-29)
    - e. “Can it give guidance?”
    - f. “It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it”
  2. Idol worship is not a “cultural” issue with God (Ex. 20:3; Mk. 12:29-30)

## The Silence of God

### Intro:

- Cf. following translations:
  1. "Should you be silent while the wicked destroy people ...?" – New Living Translation
  2. "So why are you silent while they destroy people ...?" – Good News Translation
  3. "Why do you say nothing when the evil-doer ...?" – The Bible in Basic English
  4. "So why don't you do something about this? Why are you silent now?" – The Message / Remix
- Q: "How comfortable am I with God not saying anything? Apparently, not doing anything?"
- Habakkuk was not comfortable with it either!

### Discussion:

#### I. The Silent God (1:13)

- A. "Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"
  1. This is a hard saying.
  2. See:
    - a. Ps. 22:1 ff., 28:1, 35:22, 83:1, 109:1
    - b. Cf. Isa. 42:14, 64:12; Prov. 25:2
- B. (2:3c) – "Though (the revelation) linger(s), wait for it"
  1. Is. 8:17 – "I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him."
    - a. God's nature is, at times, to "hide his face".
    - b. This requires the greatest of faith to trust God during these times.
      - 1) The times when I have been faithful and joyful during these times are the ones I recall with the most satisfaction in my spiritual life.
      - 2) E.g., losing jobs, during illness, changing sinful patterns, etc.
  2. Ps. 37:7 – "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes."
    - a. Remember how this "worked" through the UG issue. This is the way God always wants you to deal with disappointment.
    - b. ***"Wait patiently for the Lord and do not fret!"***



3. Is. 30:18 – “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. ***Blessed are all who wait for him!***”
  - a. Blessed – “How superlatively happy are ...”
  - b. You can still be happy while you are waiting for God (Cf. Ps. 33:20 – “we wait in hope”)
  - c. My nature is to be sad, fretting and disappointed while I am waiting. That is not how God expects me to wait.
  - d. God expects me to wait happily and hopefully. I am to be the same, whether I am waiting for them (the next contract job, getting ready for the ½ marathon, prepping for teaching, etc.) or actually have these things I desire in my possession (working, running in the race, teaching the class). There is to be *no difference in my demeanor* of faithfulness or trust in God.
4. I Cor. 4:5 – “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness ... ”
  - a. Spoken in the context of people in the early church who unfairly judged whether Paul was an apostle or not.
    - 1) Paul tells the disciples not to worry about that issue.
    - 2) God reveals the truth in His appointed time.
    - 3) He brings things to light that are not revealed.
  - b. There are things right now that are “hidden” to me (e.g., future contracts, my health, our retirement, ability to run, getting to teach). *Do not worry or make a judgment* about God’s plans for you in these matters. He will reveal the truth about all these in *His* appointed time.
  - c. Cf. how in the past you made judgments about how you thought God was not going to do something you had wanted to be done. However, in His time, he did it. Learn from that. Wait on the Lord and do not think you know what the final outcome will be.

## II. The Silent Earth (2:20)

- A. Spoken in the context of not putting your faith in idols (which is what the invading Babylonians did)
  - 1. There is “no breath” in man-made idols
  - 2. God **is** in His holy temple
    - a. He does exist
    - b. He is to be submitted to
    - c. There is to be silence before Him due to who He is (which is probably what Habakkuk needed to know since he kept raising these complaints to God. See God’s reaction to Job [Job 38:1 ff.] after a certain point).
- B. “Be silent before him”
  - 1. Lev. 10:3 – “Moses then said to Aaron, ‘This is what the spoke of when he said: Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of the people I will be honored.’ Aaron remained silent.”
    - a. Nadab and Abihu had offered strange fire and as a result, been punished by the Lord
    - b. Moses was gently reminding Aaron, their father, that God was to be honored as holy and anything less would result in punishment.
    - c. Aaron knew this was not something God felt was in the realm of discussion – he chose to remain silent.
    - d. There are some things that God is more than happy to discuss with us. Habakkuk, Job and others are examples of those who argued with God about life’s issues (justice, fairness, problems of human suffering, etc.). God’s holiness is not up for discussion. We are *always* to be silent about that! It is not to be questioned.
  - 2. Isa. 41:1 – “Be silent before me, you islands!”
    - a. Zephaniah 1:7 – “Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near.”
    - b. God is Sovereign, i.e., He is in control of the situation. I don’t need to think like I am in control or even feel self-imposed pressure to be in control.
    - c. Again, “the Lord is near”. I am working within God’s concept of “nearness”. That is totally different from my concept, especially when it involves “nearness” of events and time! God is on a different schedule. I must be silent before Him.
  - 3. Ps. 4:3b-4 – “The Lord will hear when I call to Him ... when you are on your beds, search your heart and be silent.”

4. Ps. 39:9 – “I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this.”
  - a. Spoken in the context of being rebuked and disciplined by God (v. 11)
  - b. When God is disciplining me, I need to learn to be quiet. It could be that He is trying to teach me a lesson, and if I will just be silent, I will hear what He is trying to say!
5. Ps. 83:1 – “O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still.”
  - a. A prayer for when we see that God is being silent!
  - b. Maybe when God has chosen to be silent would also be a good time for me to be silent.
6. Eccl. 5:1-3 – “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen, rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools ... Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”
7. Ps. 76:8 – “From heaven you pronounced judgment and the land feared and was quiet.”
  - a. It is the time to be quiet when God is pronouncing judgment against us.
  - b. We are more likely to argue with Him when this is happening
  - c. See Rom. 9:19-21 – Who are we to talk back to God??
8. Ps. 131:2 – “But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother ... ”
9. Lam. 3:26 – “It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”
  - a. Spoke in the midst of suffering and facing judgment from God
  - b. In fact, this was spoken around the same time that Habakkuk was prophesying.

### III. The Silent Fig Tree (3:17-19)

#### A. “Bad Times”

1. What Habakkuk saw that was either going on or was about to happen:
  - a. “The fig tree does not bud”
  - b. “There are no grapes on the vines”
  - c. “The olive crop fails”
  - d. “The fields produce no food”
  - e. “There are no sheep in the pen”
  - f. “(There are) no cattle in the stalls”
2. Application:
  - a. All of the above were probably a ‘prophecy’ of what things would look like once the Babylonians were through with the destruction they were about to bring on Judah. Consider how devastating this would be to an agrarian based economy.
  - b. Q: “How do I react when ‘bad times’ comes upon the physical things that I value the most, e.g., my health, my relationship with

Christy, my relationship with my children, my job, my financial security, my sports teams?"

B. "Faithful Response"

1. "I will rejoice in the Lord"
  - a. Phil. 3:1 – "...rejoice in the Lord."
  - b. Phil. 4:4 – "Rejoice in the Lord **always**. I will say it again: Rejoice!"
2. "I will be joyful in God my Savior"
  - a. Even though bad things are happening and everything that he (and his people) values has been taken away, he still sees God as his Savior.
  - b. This is the one thing that truly can never be taken away! (cf. John 10:27-29 – This security is in **the power of the shepherd** ... not in the goodness of the sheep. See NIV Study Bible note)
  - c. When everything else is taken away from me due to circumstances, aging, the sin of others or anything else, I will still have my salvation. Therefore, I can still be joyful. (cf. Rom. 8:28-39)

C. "Sovereign Lord"

1. "He is my strength."
2. "He makes my feet like the feet of a deer."
3. "He enables me to go on to the heights."