

In your opinion, what is the worst nation or who is the most dangerous leader on this earth today? How should God deal with that nation or person? Our answer *should be* “In the way that is considered best by God, period!!” Of course, our answers usually aren’t that Biblical! When God doesn’t answer our prayers the way we think He should, it’s because it isn’t best! The prophet Habakkuk was quite clear in his own mind that the need was for God to save, deliver, “send a revival”! Let’s together learn that *God’s* best is often not what *we* think is best. Written by the prophet Habakkuk concerning the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin (known as Judah), we see that Judah was declining—spiritually, morally, and politically. So Habakkuk asked Yahweh why He wasn’t doing anything about it. “How long do I have to look at these conditions? Look at what the people are like—violent, sinful, wicked, destructive, full of strife and contention; the law is numbed, justice is ignored; the wicked have hemmed in the righteous; justice is perverted/twisted. How long, O Yahweh!? Why?” In this study we’ll learn that the Lord was neither indifferent nor unfair. He doesn’t clearly answer the prophet’s “Why?” or “How long?”, but He does have a solution. “I’ve got an intention and I’ve got an instrument. My solution? The Chaldeans will judge Judah.” So Yahweh answered Habakkuk’s concern over the sins of the people of Judah. In **1:12-2:1**, we’ll see Habakkuk’s response to God’s answer. But first, let’s look at God’s solution for the people of Judah.

READ :1-11. :5-11 GOD’S SOLUTION? THE CHALDEANS WILL JUDGE JUDAH. Notice that Yahweh doesn’t answer the prophet’s “Why?” of **:3** nor does He tell him the reason for delaying His answer so long. “I AM That I AM” is His name. He owes no apology or explanation. He never does anything wrong or unloving or at the incorrect time. Yahweh addresses a plural audience—‘You all.’ **:5 Look among the nations! Observe (Look)! Be astonished! Wonder! [be astonished, wonder]** (a Hebrew word is repeated twice to make an impact; the Hebrew word is *tamah*, and the English translations are ‘Be astonished!’ and ‘Wonder!’). The word *tamah* means to be astounded, bewildered, dumbfounded, stunned, shocked, shudder, wonder!]**” Because I am doing something in your days—you would not believe if you were told.** Yahweh confounds all previous expectations. “Open your eyes and look around you; get a world view of what I am doing.” When Habakkuk finds out exactly what God is doing, he’ll eventually ask God to show mercy (**3:2**)!

In this verse, God tells Habakkuk that He intends to discipline. “I am doing something! You know the great Assyrian Empire in the north that has been conquered; who by? The Chaldeans! You know the huge city of Nineveh that has been destroyed; who by? The Chaldeans! You know the victory over Egypt; who by? The Chaldeans!” Although Habakkuk hadn’t seen any of God’s work yet with the nation of Judah, God was doing something. God was setting things up. “I’m not sitting by watching the game; I’m not a bystander; I’m involved. I intend to do it in your days—in the lifetime of the present generation.” Within twenty years Judah would be led off into captivity.

Yahweh—“**You wouldn’t believe if you were told.**” Habakkuk—“Tell me, I’ll believe it.” Yahweh—“No, you wouldn’t.” Habakkuk—“Yes, I would.”

Yahweh—“I’m going to use the Chaldeans to judge My people.” Habakkuk—“I can’t believe it!!” The apostle Paul quotes **:5** in **Acts 13:38-41 (read)**, that God was accomplishing a work in their days, a work you’d never believe—it was the fact that Jesus had died, been buried, been raised from the dead, and appeared to many. Through this Jesus, forgiveness of sins was proclaimed. Through Jesus everyone who believed was set free. When someone asks why God doesn’t do something about evil, about sin, we should answer, “God has done something about it! Around 2000 years ago, He gave His Son Jesus to die for our sins and for us as sinners by heredity and nature and for sin in the flesh.” We should honor Him as God, thanking Him for His marvelous work, which is always best, and end up believing Him. Not one of His promises has failed. God’s Word to Habakkuk would come true in every way. Never lose your ‘sense of wonder’ when waiting for God to work.

:6-7 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. :7 They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves. **:5** tells us that God intends to discipline. Now in **:6-11a**, God tells Habakkuk the instrument of discipline. “I intend to raise up an utterly pagan, godless people to conquer the land and punish My people.”

The Chaldeans were also known as the Babylonians during this period of time. The Chaldeans appeared in history about 1000 B.C. when they invaded southern Babylon. By 626 B.C. Nabopolassar, a Chaldean, had established himself as king of Babylon and founded the Chaldean or New-Babylonian Empire. He led the Babylonian armies in victory over Assyria, over the proud city of Nineveh in 612 B.C., and seven years he would defeat Egypt (Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar and the leader of the Chaldean army when Egypt was defeated). Eventually Nebuchadnezzar advanced against the city of Jerusalem, subdued the city, took numerous hostages including Daniel in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar’s father died, so the son returned home to take the throne. In 597 B.C. Judah was again invaded because the nation had rebelled. The Jewish king Jehoiakim was killed; his son Jehoiachin surrendered after only a reign of three months. He was taken captive with others to Babylon. Zedekiah was made king, then he revolted after ten years. The Babylonians came in strength, burned the city, destroyed the temple, and deported its citizens (586 B.C.). Read conditions in **Lam. 3**!

For Habakkuk, the surprise was not the anticipated discipline but the *dispenser* of that discipline. Yahweh says, “I am behind the rise of the Chaldeans, and this is the answer to your prayer!” God sometimes uses unexpected ways to deal with His people. If He wishes and it’s best, He can use even a godless pagan. God was going to use vicious barbarians to correct His people. What were these Chaldeans like? They committed atrocities without forethought or remorse. **Fierce**, ruthless, pitilessly cruel, cold-blooded. **Impetuous**—literally swift, hurrying themselves onward, never resting. They **marched through the earth**, seizing dwelling places which were not theirs. Not satisfied with acquiring unoccupied areas, they wanted people, land. They actually took the city of Jerusalem three times, the third time

burning it to the ground. Judah was just a speck of dust compared to this deadly army. The Chaldeans were horrifying enough to strike fear and terror into the heart; they were to be feared. Without rival, they were self-sufficient, self-confident; they acknowledged no superior authority and no dependency on others. They were a law to themselves; they relied only on themselves.

:8-9 Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour. :9 All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand. The Babylonians used the cavalry as probably no other nation had used it. These fierce, fast, and excellent hunters were compared to three predators whose speed and power bring violent death to their prey. (1) Leopards, agile, mobile, cruel; they run with unbelievable speed to satisfy their lust. (2) Keener (literally sharper) than evening wolves, ravenous because they had not eaten all day. Their horsemen come galloping, literally they jump up, spring up, leap proudly. From afar—distance is no obstacle to them. (3) Like an eagle or vulture swooping down to devour, hunting and killing its prey. The Chaldean cavalry would swiftly overrun a country, looting, raping, killing, spreading fear, panic throughout a nation, and be a precursor to worse things to come when the main army would roll through. Like hungry animals and ferocious birds, they devoured any nation in their way.

:9 They all come for violence—God’s people had been engaging in violence (:2), but they were nothing compared to the violence of the Chaldeans. Their faces turn eagerly forward. **Jer. 5:15-17** writes about the Babylonians devouring everything in their path, including fields, people, children, animals, trees, and cities. They eagerly set on what is before them, burning with eager desire to rush onward. **They collect captives like sand**—numberless, helpless prisoners; deportation was a national policy for the Babylonians. Deportation disoriented the conquered people; it caused them to lose their sense of identity and unity; it made people pliable. They simply swallowed people up.

:10-11a They mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress and heap up rubble to capture it. :11a Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. It was the custom of the Chaldeans to exhibit captive rulers as public spectacles. Their brutality is seen in the way they treated the Judean king Zedekiah after Jerusalem fell. They killed his own sons before his eyes, then with that sight burned into his memory, they put out his eyes, bound him in shackles, and took him prisoner to Babylon (**2 Kings 25:7**). They laugh at rulers, and they laugh at every fortified city. Whether it be royal authority or physical obstacles, the Babylonian army marched forward. If they needed to heap up earth into embankments from which cities were attacked and taken, they just built earthen, inclined ramps in order to storm the city. A little soil was all they needed. No fortress was too high. Neither religion nor regard for human life curbed their ventures. Then they swept through like the wind and passed on. Those hot, scorching winds (like NV’s!) from the Eastern desert. After capturing a city, they rushed on.

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and told *that* is who God was going to use to judge and correct His people. So for Judah being corrected by the Chaldeans would be like disobedient Christians being corrected by _____? Who did you come up with in our opening question? Who is someone/nation that when compared with even the most disobedient Christian seems far worse?! Of course, the righteous would suffer also. “That doesn’t make sense to me. Have You lost control? Don’t You care? Don’t You know what is best? I do!!” We’ll see how to handle troublesome issues like these in **1:12-2:1**. We might remember God’s words to Abraham in **Gen. 15:16**, “I’m going to punish the Amorites,” and you know what? *Four hundred years later* He did! 400 years! **:11b But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.** Be sure your sins will find you out. The Chaldeans gave credit to their strength. They prided themselves on their achievements. The real significance of history never dawned on them. They completely failed to realize they were being used by God. Instead they gave credit for all their success to their own strength. Puffed up by their triumphs, they deified their own people. A proud people (see **2:4**)!

But, “**they will be held guilty!**” We hardly notice these words because we’re so caught up with who God was going to use and what those people were like. Habakkuk didn’t seem to remember these words. He can’t figure out how a holy God can use such a godless people to punish His called people. But we’ll see in **chapter 2**, they will be held guilty. Please remember this!

Let’s wrap up. (1) Habakkuk’s concern would be dealt with. The Judeans would be judged and corrected. Sin will always be judged. Whether immediately or down the road a ways or even at death, sin has its consequences, its wages, and *they will be paid*. Today is the day of salvation—now is the time to personally deal with sin: He will forgive. (2) God answers our prayers but He may not do it our way. We don’t know the way or time He’ll answer, but now we know He’ll answer. (3) We can trust God completely. We need to keep praying, but realize, His answer may be different from what we’d choose; His answer may not be the one we’d prefer. But, we can trust Him. He does best! Could God have chosen another instrument? Of course! He’s God! Was there a better way? No! He’s God! Should we be trusting Him no matter what we’re going through? Of course! He’s God! Our Lord is always doing the unexpected. Not because He delights to puzzle us, but because the variety of His works are so infinite that our feeble minds can’t grasp them. Who knows, God may allow things to get worse; He may act in a way that we never imagined; He may even use a force which is the most antagonistic to His people. The question is, “Will we walk by faith in God no matter what is happening to us or around us? “The righteous will live by his/her faith (**2:4**).” Will we trust our Lord even as **Habakkuk** ended up doing?

Let’s finish by reading two passages together, one from the prophet **Isaiah (55:6-9)** and the other from the prophet **Habakkuk (3:16-19)**. How do the lessons from this passage need to impact your thinking and/or behavior? What thoughts would you like to express to our Lord as a result of this passage?

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