

Habakkuk's Complaint

A choral reading and Bible study

CHARACTERS: Habakkuk, VOG (Voice of God), Chorus (which is further divided into three parts: Angels, Chorus A and Chorus B)

RUN TIME: 5 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Habakkuk 1-3

Habakkuk is questioning and God answers. The Chorus appears fearful and frightened in section 1; beaten down and discouraged in section 2 but hopeful and triumphant in section 3.

Section 1

HAB: How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

CHORUS: Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

HAB: Why do you make me look at injustice?

CHORUS: Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?

HAB: Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

CHORUS: Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails.

HAB: The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

VOG: 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.

ANGELS: The Babylonians, ruthless and impetuous, a feared and dreaded people; will execute judgment for The Lord of heaven.

CHORUS A: *(fearfully)* They are fiercer than wolves at dusk.

CHORUS B: *(afraid)* They fly like an eagle swooping to devour

CHORUS: They all come intent on violence.

CHORUS A: Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand.

CHORUS B: They mock kings, scoff at rulers and laugh at all fortified cities

CHORUS: Then they sweep past like the wind and go on -

ANGELS: guilty people, whose own strength is their god.

Section 2

HAB: LORD, are you not from everlasting?

ANGELS: My God, my Holy One, you will never die.

HAB: Why have you appointed them to execute judgment?

ANGELS: Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

HAB: Why do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked Babylonians swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

CHORUS A: We are like the fish in the sea that the wicked pull up with hooks.

CHORUS B: Then they sacrifice to the net and burn incense to the dragnet

CHORUS: Are the Babylonians to keep on emptying the net, destroying nations without mercy?

HAB: I will look to see what God will say to me, how He answers.

VOG: The enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.

CHORUS A: The enemy is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied

CHORUS B: Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion!

HAB: How long must this go on?

VOG: Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, to him who builds a city with bloodshed
and establishes a town by injustice!

ANGELS: For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

HAB: Are not idols worthless? Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies?

CHORUS A: Woe to the one who trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak.

CHORUS B: Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’

CHORUS: Or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’

HAB: Can it give guidance? No! It is covered with gold and silver but there is no breath in it.

ALL: The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him. *(silence for 4 beats)*

Section 3

HAB: LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD.

CHORUS: Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

ANGELS: God's glory covers the heavens and his praise fills the earth.

CHORUS A: His splendor is like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

CHORUS B: He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble.

CHORUS: The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed—

ALL: but he marches on forever.

HAB: Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory?

CHORUS A: You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed.

CHORUS B: Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

CHORUS: Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

HAB: (*understanding, joyous*) You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one.

CHORUS A: I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound;

HAB: Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

CHORUS B: Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,

CHORUS A: though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,

CHORUS B: though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

HAB: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

CHORUS: The Sovereign LORD is my strength;

HAB: God makes my feet like those of a deer

ALL: God enables me to walk on mountain heights!

Bible study/ Questions and exercises to get into character

SECTION 1: Consider recent events or news stories about injustice, wrongdoing, destruction and violence. Why might God allow these? What are some of the causes of strife and conflict? Would you say these abound even today? Share an example. Do you ever feel the law is paralyzed? Is “justice never prevails” a hyperbole or exaggeration? Habakkuk claims “The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.” Does that happen here and now?

What groups of people (nations, gangs, etc.) might be described as “more fierce than wolves of the night” or “an eagle, swooping to devour, to do violence”? How would you feel, what would you do, if they were coming for you or your family?

SECTION 2: Hab. 2:18-19 (HCSB) reads “What use is a carved idol after its craftsman carves it? It is only a cast image, a teacher of lies. For the one who crafts its shape trusts in it and makes idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to wood: Wake up! or to mute stone: Come alive! Can it teach? Look! It may be plated with gold and silver, yet there is no breath in it at all.” What are some modern day idols that people worship? What are some philosophies being taught that are empty, hollow and meaningless? Why do people trust in lifeless things?

SECTION 3: Habakkuk says, “LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD.” Which deeds might he be thinking of? Make a list of all the miracles you can think of from Genesis to Malachi. Which would you consider to be the top three of the entire Old Testament?

Hab. 3:17-18 (HCSB) reads “Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls ...” Habakkuk says he will still trust God. Rewrite this in modern terms. You may wish to use the paragraph frame below.

“Though the car does not ____ and there is no ____ in the refrigerator, though the _____ fails and my bank account is _____, though there are no ____ in the _____ and no _____, yet I will triumph in Yahweh; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!