

1:1-4 Habakkuk 'YHWH, please do something re. injustice & violence in Judah?'	1:5-11 YHWH 'I'm going to send the Babylonians, with destructive power!'	1:12-2:1 Habakkuk 'YHWH, live forever! But isn't this more unjust? I wait eagerly for your reply'	2:2-20 YHWH 'Wait for me: I will destroy Babylon in the end for its evil!'	3:1-19 Habakkuk 'YHWH, I know you were awesome with the Exodus. I will humbly wait.'
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Habakkuk 1:1-2:20 (ESVUK)

Sunday 5 July 2026

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

Title for Ch1-2 (1:1)

² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?
Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?

1. Habakkuk's complaint:
'there's injustice within Judah!' (1:2-4)

³ Why do you make me see iniquity,
and why do you idly look at wrong?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

⁴ So the law is paralysed,
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
so justice goes forth perverted.

⁵ "Look among the nations, and see;
wonder and be astounded.

2. YHWH's reply:
'I will send the Babylonians!' (1:5-11)

For I am doing a work in your days
that you would not believe if told.

⁶ For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,
that bitter and hasty nation,
who march through the breadth of the earth,
to seize dwellings not their own.

⁷ They are dreaded and fearsome;
their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards,
more fierce than the evening wolves;
their horsemen press proudly on.

Their horsemen come from afar;
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.

⁹ They all come for violence, all their faces forward.
They gather captives like sand.

¹⁰ At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh.
They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.

¹¹ Then they sweep by like the wind and go on,
guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

¹² Are you not from everlasting,
O LORD my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.

3. Habakkuk's reply:
'sir, this seems more unjust!' (1:12-2:1)

O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgement,
and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

¹³ You who are of purer eyes than to see evil
and cannot look at wrong,



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Customer relations (1:1-2:1)

To what extent does YHWH answer Habakkuk's complaint? What does this show about YHWH?

4. YHWH's promise:

'I will eventually destroy the Babylonians!' (2:2-20)

- Woe #1 (2:6a-8)
Reversal of plundering

why do you idly look at traitors

and remain silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he?

¹⁴ You make mankind like the fish of the sea,
like crawling things that have no ruler.

¹⁵ He brings all of them up with a hook;
he drags them out with his net;
he gathers them in his dragnet;
so he rejoices and is glad.

¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net
and makes offerings to his dragnet;
for by them he lives in luxury,^a
and his food is rich.

¹⁷ Is he then to keep on emptying his net
and mercilessly killing nations for ever?

2 I will take my stand at my watchpost
and station myself on the tower,
and look out to see what he will say to me,
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.^b

² And the LORD answered me:

"Write the vision; make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.

³ For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.

If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.

⁴ "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.^c

⁵ "Moreover, wine^d is a traitor,
an arrogant man who is never at rest.^e

His greed is as wide as Sheol;
like death he has never enough.

He gathers for himself all nations
and collects as his own all peoples."

⁶ Shall not all these take up their taunt against him,
with scoffing and riddles for him, and say,

"Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—for how long?—
and loads himself with pledges!"

⁷ Will not your debtors suddenly arise,
and those awake who will make you tremble?
Then you will be spoil for them.

⁸ Because you have plundered many nations,

^a Hebrew *his portion is fat*

^b NASB opts for *And how I may reply when I am reprimanded*.

^c Or *faithfulness*

^d Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *wealth*

^e The meaning of the Hebrew of these two lines is uncertain

all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you,
for the blood of man and violence to the earth,
to cities and all who dwell in them.

⁹“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house,
to set his nest on high,
to be safe from the reach of harm!

- [Woe #2 \(2:9-11\)](#)
Reversal of security

¹⁰ You have devised shame for your house
by cutting off many peoples;
you have forfeited your life.

¹¹ For the stone will cry out from the wall,
and the beam from the woodwork respond.

¹² “Woe to him who builds a town with blood
and founds a city on iniquity!

- [Woe #3 \(2:12-14\)](#)
Reversal of bloody empire-building

¹³ Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts
that peoples labour merely for fire,
and nations weary themselves for nothing?

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁵ “Woe to him who makes his neighbours drink—
you pour out your wrath and make them drunk,
in order to gaze at their nakedness!

- [Woe #4 \(2:15-17\)](#)
Reversal of humiliation

¹⁶ You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.
Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision!

The cup in the LORD’s right hand
will come round to you,
and utter shame will come upon your glory!

¹⁷ [For]^f The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them,
for the blood of man and violence to the earth,
to cities and all who dwell in them.

¹⁸ “What profit is an idol
when its maker has shaped it,
a metal image, a teacher of lies?

- [Woe #5 \(2:18-20\)](#)
Reversal of who is recognised as God

For its maker trusts in his own creation
when he makes speechless idols!

¹⁹ Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;
to a silent stone, Arise!

Can this teach?

Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,
and there is no breath at all in it.

²⁰ But the LORD is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him.”

Do you want justice; yes or no?

1. Is your version of God ‘permitted’ to judge this harshly on judgement day?
2. To what extent do you enjoy poetic justice? Why?
3. How do you feel about the combination of:
 - a. the *certainty* of God’s promise
 - b. God’s command for us to *wait* faithfully?

^f Included from Hebrew. See e.g. CSB, KJV, NASB, LSB.

Worldview diagnostic

What present forms of injustice within God's people frustrate you? What forms are you aware of but don't affect you?
What do you make of God's command to *wait* for him to fix things in the future, rather than now?

Getting back into the text

- 1:1-4 1. In 1:1, what does the verb 'saw' make us expect in terms of genre?
2. What is the effect of piling up terms like *violence*, *iniquity*, *destruction*, *strife* and *contention*?
3. What is the literary effect of YHWH being described 'you will not hear', 'you will not save', 'why do you make me' and 'why do you idly...'?
- 1:5-11 4. Why might YHWH's reply have the verbs 'look' (1:5) and 'behold' (1:6)?
5. What is the effect of YHWH saying, 'I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told'?
6. How does the description of the Babylonians build momentum through movement, speed, and force?
7. What could 'their justice and dignity go forth from themselves' (1:7) mean?
8. How might 1:11 function as the dark climax of YHWH's answer?
- 1:12-2:1 9. Why might Habakkuk begin his reply by confessing who YHWH is?
10. Why does Habakkuk acknowledge YHWH has *ordained Babylon as judgment* before objecting to it?
11. How does the phrase 'more righteous than he' (1:13) work in Habakkuk's appeal?
12. What is the effect of describing people using the imagery of *fish* and *creeping things*?
13. How does Habakkuk signal humility in 2:1?
- 2:2-6a 14. How does the tension between *delay* and *certainty* shape God's reply in 2:2-20?
15. Given 2:3, what characterises *faith* or *faithfulness* in 2:4?
16. What does 2:5 mean when *Babylon gathers and collects peoples for himself*?
17. What is the effect of framing the woes as the victims *taking up their taunt against Babylon* in 2:6?
- 2:6b-8 18. What is the significance of Babylon being described as a *borrower* or *debtor* in 2:6-7?
19. How does 2:8 'you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you' work as poetic reversal?
- 2:9-11 20. How does the bird/nest image combine ambition, pride, and attempted safety?
21. What is ironic about trying 'to be safe from the reach of harm'?
22. Why are the building materials in 2:11 personified?
- 2:12-14 23. What is the effect of escalating from a *house* in 2:9-12 to a *city* in 2:12, then to the *earth* in 2:14?
24. How does 2:12 force us to see the hidden cost behind impressive city-building?
25. How does the '*is it not from YHWH of hosts*' amplify the sense of futility in 2:13?
26. To what extent do you think 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of YHWH' 2:14 contrasts with Babylon's attempt to fill the earth with conquest?
- 2:15-17 27. What is the literary effect of the phrase 'to gaze at their nakedness'?
28. How does 2:16 reverse the action: 'utter shame will come upon your glory'?
29. What is the effect of repeating 'for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them' in 2:8 and 2:17?
- 2:18-20 30. Why might the final woe in 2:18 reverse the pattern of *woe* followed by *for*?
31. What is ironic about trusting in something made by its own maker?
32. How does the author play with the themes of 'speechless' (2:18) and 'silence' (2:20)?