



TISSUE PAPER

Have you ever stopped to consider how tissue paper like *Kleenex* is made? If you really want to know, you can scan the QR-code to see the production process.



Imagine life without tissues—inconceivable! Consider how much money and resources go into creating those marvelous little soft squares that magically appear one after the other. Think about the machinery and engineering (not to mention the research and development cost of materials and processes) that goes into manufacturing tissues. Now, consider the shipping, stocking, and even marketing of tissues—all leading to the moment where you purchase and use a tissue.

All of that time, money, effort, were spent so that you can blow your nose and throw the tissue in the garbage. The whole point of a tissue is to make waste more convenient. It's a product that is literally designed to be thrown away.

In our study of the book of *Joel*, we discussed the prophesied Babylonian invaders (based on our dating of the book of Joel). Stepping into the book of Habakkuk, Judah stands on the brink. And yet, as we shall see over the next three Weeks, God raised up Babylon like tissue paper—to serve a purpose and face destruction.

HABAKKUK 1:2–11

²O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? ³Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ⁴So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous;

⁵“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. ⁶For 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. ⁷They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. ⁸Their 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. ⁹They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. ¹¹Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Habakkuk has way too much to offer than we can cover in our study. It sits at the edge of a great cliff called the “Babylonian Exile;” a period of judgment for God’s people. *Habakkuk* forces us to consider its context within the Bible as well as recent world history if we’re to understand it properly.

There’s a lot to consider, but it’s well worth the investment. To get started, scan the QR-code.



DISCUSSION

What has been something that has the Lord has taught you in our study so far?

1. What did Habakkuk see and what questions did this raise? (2-3a)

2. What is God doing to answer Habakkuk’s concerns? (6)

3. How do the Chaldeans judge their own military might? (11)

4. In what ways was Habakkuk’s complaint appropriate and inappropriate?

5. What are some circumstances that burden you like Habakkuk? How do you approach these circumstances with grace and truth?

Prayer is a cornerstone to the Christian life. We can be honest with God, but we should also be respectful of his character. Questions? Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



STUDY NOTES

HABAKKUK'S COMPLAINT

Habakkuk opens informing us that this book was written by the prophet Habakkuk. Immediately, Habakkuk protested in anguish, ***"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save?"***

Habakkuk looked upon God's people and his heart was stricken. We assume *Habakkuk* was written between 609–605 BC. Two major reasons for that date range is, 1) because of the rise of Babylon as a world power. And, 2) because of the reign of the evil king, Jehoiakim who reigned from 609–597 BC. In fact, it's quite possible that Habakkuk's cry of ***"Violence!"*** is in direct response to Jehoiakim murdering one of the Lord's prophets because Jehoiakim didn't like what the Lord said (Jeremiah 26:20–23).

Habakkuk asked the Lord a tough question, but notice the accusation, ***"Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?"***

Habakkuk's complaint hit the crescendo, ***"Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous."***

HOPE LIVES FOR THOSE QUESTIONING GOD

I don't know if you've ever poured your heart out to the Lord like this, but when Habakkuk did, the Lord spoke! ***"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded."*** Words like *"look"* and *"see"* are emphatic—"Pay close attention!" God told Habakkuk to *"wonder and be astounded."* In Hebrew, this is the same word in two different forms for emphasis. The root word literally contains the idea of *"amazement,"* but also embedded is the sense of *"freezing in fear."* This is amazing, but terrifying. To translate it another way, you could say, ***"Shock yourself and be shocked."***

Why such elevated language? God continued, ***"I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans."*** So, to be clear, Habakkuk complained of wickedness and violence. God's solution would come in the form of judgment by an evil empire. The Chaldeans (aka the Babylonians) began making waves as a world power when they kicked the Assyrians out of their own territory in 626 BC. They eventually took the fight to the Assyrian's home turf of Nineveh and sent them packing.

As Babylon gained strength, they joined forces with the Medes (a traitorous bunch who would ultimately be part of Babylon's destruction). They continued their march west, an unstoppable force, chasing the Assyrians to their final stronghold, Carchemish.

The Egyptian emperor, Neco II, joined the Assyrian forces to hopefully stop the Babylonians and Medes before they approached his own border. Carchemish was their best and only hope, a fortified city. At Carchemish (605 BC) the Babylonian king, Nebopolassar handed the throne and command of the army to his son, Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar's victory at Carchemish elevated Babylon to *the* dominant world power. Neco and the Egyptians fled back to Egypt and the Assyrians were basically wiped out. Nebuchadnezzar chased the Egyptians to their own border. King Jehoiakim of Judah, in full self-preservation mode, pledged allegiance to King Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC (the latest date *Habakkuk* was likely written).

The Babylonians were held at Egypt's border for a three year period. Neco finally looked strong enough to push the Babylonians out of the region. Jehoiakim again switched allegiances and told Nebuchadnezzar to take a hike. Nebuchadnezzar regrouped and eventually responded to this insult by invading Judah in 598 BC and laying siege to Jerusalem. This is the prophetic devastation that we've read about in *Joel* and will see in *Habakkuk*.

BELIEVERS QUESTION GOD REGARDING CIRCUMSTANCES

Notice two important things. First, Habakkuk took his heartfelt grief to the Lord, which is a good thing. However, he assaulted God's character in the process accusing God of sitting *"idly."* In truth, God had been raising up his chosen instrument for decades. God not only hears our prayers, but his answers are sometimes a part of a greater plan we simply can't imagine.

Second, with this history in view, it changes how you read our passage. But, notice God's final judgment, ***"guilty men, whose own might is their god!"*** Babylon became the world's supreme superpower as a tissue in the hand of a mighty God.

We'll read more about this next Week, but (spoiler alert) Habakkuk did *not* like God's response. Babylon is indeed evil and their confidence in their military might is idolatrous. Next Week, we'll see God's ultimate plan for Babylon. Like a tissue, the Babylonian Empire represents and lot of time, money, and effort whose usefulness will end with their own destruction.