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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Lesson Leaders:

James Haymon

Class Leaders:

Inreach: Pat Hester

Deacon: C M Hester

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Through the sacrifice of His Son, we are forgiven and God's justice is satisfied

POEM FOR THE WEEK:

Now evil prospers, falsehood reigns,
And darkness dims the light;
But we rejoice to know that Christ
Will one day set things right. —Spencer

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked
(Ps 58:10 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", June 13, 1995)

Series: Justice and the Prophets

UNIT: God Requires Justice

NEXT WEEK

Consequences for Injustice
(Habakkuk 2:6-14)

A Prayer for Justice Habakkuk 1:1-4, 12-14

Lesson Background and Introduction

Habakkuk's nation, Judah, was in a spiritual free fall, ripe for the judgment of almighty God. God's method for providing that judgment was not at all wonderful in Habakkuk's eyes. The prophet did not view it as an acceptable solution to the problem. Habakkuk struggled to reconcile his understanding of God with the uncertain world around him. Habakkuk's concern has been voiced repeatedly through the years. For example, Asaph, the author of Psalm 73, was deeply troubled over what he saw as God's unfair treatment of the wicked. They appear to prosper and live carefree lives while completely oblivious to God and His ways. Psalm 10 begins by expressing similar disappointment in God's seemingly uncaring attitude about injustices in the world. The wicked do just as they please and benefit from their evil while their victims suffer. Doesn't God see? And if He does, doesn't He care? This is a struggle with which nearly all of us can readily identify. When we find ourselves questioning God or His purpose for the circumstances we are confronting, we are in good company. Prophets like Habakkuk and righteous people like Job were some of the most outspoken in their questions and accusations directed toward the one who called them to His service (compare Numbers 11:10-15; 1 Kings 19:4; Psalm 13:1-4; Jeremiah 20:7, 8; Matthew 11:1-3). God is not caught off guard with such language. Indeed, sometimes He even chooses to engage our questions, though the answers may not be what we hope to hear. With Habakkuk, our knowledge of the Lord can lead us to conclusions that seem correct but in the end require correction from God (compare Job 38:1-40:2). In all of life's circumstances, but especially in times of discipline, let us rest in the knowledge that God does not change (James 1:17). He is working in our world to accomplish His purposes for us and through us.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

What About Questions - You may have been told, "Do not question God." But the prophet Habakkuk questioned God and His actions, or lack of action. The Bible refers to Habakkuk's prophecy as a burden, something heavy; it has to be picked up and carried. This message predicting future calamities from the Babylonian army proved to be a weighty word from the Lord. The prophet observed all the violence and inequities by the people within his nation. Year after year, Habakkuk cried out to the Lord, pouring out his deeply disturbed heart and begging God to act and set the nation in order. However, God refused to intervene. The violence, stealing, and strife extended from the family home to the business conducted at the city gate. The upright man suffered exploitation while immoral individuals prospered.

God's Strange Plan - God's silence and inactivity troubled Habakkuk. Why would He allow sin to run rampant? God finally said He planned to punish the nation, but Habakkuk was puzzled by God's methods. Why would God choose to use an idolatrous, wicked, Gentile nation like Babylon to bring judgment on Judah? God saw the matter in a different light. He had given His people the Law, so their idolatrous and evil behavior was inexcusable. On the other hand, the heathen Gentile nations knew nothing of Jehovah's expectations; they behaved out of ignorance. Israel knew God's regulations and flat-out disobeyed.

Troubles Today - In our society, like in Habakkuk's time, God's standards are being violated. As a result, people are discontented, confused, and lack peace. This internal rumbling leads to fighting, mistreating others, and legal and criminal injustices. Many Christians ask God the same "why/ when" questions and cry out in anguish. How much longer do we have to witness all of this ungodliness and chaos in society? Eventually, Habakkuk accepted that God's ways and timing were best. But the hard questions were valid to put before the Almighty. God always says, "Talk to Me. Don't be afraid to ask Me questions."

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Prayers for Justice not Heard (Hab 1:1-2)

Not heard at desired time (1-2)

- Because God's timing is not man's timing (Isa 55:8-9)
- Because God sometimes delays to display His faithfulness (Heb 10:23)
- Because God sometimes delays because He is patient (Ps 86:15)
- Because God only does things at the proper time (Eccl 8:6)
- Because God acts when it is His time of favor (Isa 49:8)
- Because it is not for us to know God's timing (Acts 1:6-7)

Not heard concerning violence (2)

- Violence of the wicked (Ps 7:9)
- Violence that recoils (Ps 7:16)
- Violence through refusing to do what is right (Prov 21:7)
- Violence plotted in the heart (Prov 24:1-2)
- Violence breeds violence (Matt 26:52)

Prayers for Justice not Seen (Hab 1:3-4)

Not seeing sin (3)

- God does see because His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole world (2 Chron 16:9)
- God does see because His eyes are upon the righteous (Ps 34:15)
- God does see because the ways of man are before God's eyes (Prov 5:21)
- God does see because God's eyes are in every place (Prov 15:3)
- God does see because He sees through His seven Spirits (Rev 5:6)

Not seeing troubles (3)

- Trouble that man is born into (Job 5:6-7)
- Trouble from man's work (Eccl 2:22-23)
- Trouble that come even from birth, (Jer 20:18)
- Trouble that come each day (Matt 6:34)
- Trouble that requires protection (Nahum 1:7)
- Trouble that has been prayed about (James 5:13)

Not seeing lawlessness (4)

- Lawless because there are none who are righteous (Rom 3:9-12)
- Lawless because all have sinned against God (Rom 3:23)
- Lawless because sin came in the world through one man (Rom 5:12-13)

Lawless so that God can have mercy on them (Rom 11:32)

Lawless because the law is weakened by the sinful nature (Rom 8:3)

Lawlessness that identifies the ungodly and sinful (1 Tim 1:8-10)

Not seeing wickedness (4)

The wicked who are intent on cruelty (Ps 71:4-5)

The wicked who prey on the weak and needy (Ps 82:4-5)

The wicked who should be expelled (1 Cor 5:13)

The wicked who are unbelievers (Rom 15:31)

The wicked who resents rebuke (Prov 15:12)

The wicked who resists the wisdom of rebuke (Prov 24:7-9)

The wicked who ignores rebuke (Prov 1:25-26)

Prayers for Justice not Punished (Hab 1:12-14)

Punishment through judgment (12)

Judgment of pride (Luke 20:45-47)

Judgment of not understanding what we say or teach (1 Tim 1:5-7)

Judgment of not teaching sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3-4)

Judgment of not maturing in the Word (Heb 5:12)

Judgment of being a false teacher (2 Peter 2:1)

Judgment of being a stumbling block (Matt 23:15)

Punishment for wickedness (13)

Punishment for doing evil (John 5:28-29)

Punishment because of not being obedient to God (2 Thess 1:7-9)

Punishment for being a hypocrite (Matt 23:13)

Punishment for the disobedient (Heb 2:2)

Punishment for the wicked through their own sin (Jer 2:19)

Punishment applied when the wicked reap what they sow (Gal 6:7)

Punishment for no leadership (14)

Punishment of leaders because of destructive values and practices (2 Kings 21:9)

Punishment of leaders who are wicked (Prov 28:15)

Punishment of leaders who oppresses the helpless (Isa 1:23-24)

Punishment of leaders that practices bribery (Mic 3:11)

Punishment of leaders that tries to stand and fight against God (Ps 2:2-5)

Punishment of leaders that relies on their own earthly wisdom (1 Cor 2:6)