

# Habakkuk

## IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

### Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Habakkuk using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Habakkuk—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



### Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



### Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



### Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,\* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,<sup>†</sup> taking the form of a servant,<sup>‡</sup> being born in the likeness of men.<sup>§</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>¶</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,<sup>||</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>|||</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Shinin**  
12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.  
14 Do all thi tioning,<sup>15</sup> that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

**2:7 emptied himself:** The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

**2:8 death on a cross:** The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

**2:9 exalted him:** By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

**2:10 every knee should bow:** An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

**2:11 confess:** I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

*A Thing to Harpagmos* (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable de the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

## **Prepare**

Read the Introduction to Habakkuk, paying particular attention to the *Historical Background*, the *Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Habakkuk to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

## **Pray**

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Habakkuk, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.*

## **Read and Reflect**

Read and reflect on Habakkuk as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

### *For understanding*

1. **1:1–4:** What does Habakkuk lament? Troubled by God’s inaction, what does he question? When will his concern be addressed? Thus, how is the first part of the book presented?
2. **1:1:** To what does the Hebrew term *massā’* refer? What is the meaning of Habakkuk’s name? How does God impart revelation to prophets?
3. **1:4:** What did the Torah or Law of Moses codify? What was transgressing the Law tantamount to doing? What does the Hebrew word *mishpat* mean? Of what is lawless corruption in Judah the evidence? Who are the righteous?
4. **1:5:** Just as Habakkuk could “see” and “look upon” the problem of evil in Judah, what are he and his fellow Judahites invited to do? When did this most likely occur? Because it was unclear before 605 B.C. that the Babylonians were destined to become an imperial superpower who could pose an existential threat to Judah, what were few people likely to believe would happen? Why does Paul cite the Greek LXX version of this passage in Acts 13:41?
5. **1:6:** Who were the Chaldeans, and when did they seize the throne of Babylon? Who were key figures in the reemergence of Babylonian power? For what does the prophet learn that God intends to use Babylonia? What role would Nebuchadnezzar in particular play?

### *For application*

1. **1:4:** What makes enforcement of a law credible to those it addresses? When should a strict law be relaxed? On the other hand, what problems arise from relaxing a law that is strict but fair?
2. **1:5:** The note for this verse refers to Acts 13:41. In Paul’s sermon to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41), how does he use OT history to show that the message of salvation has actually been sent to them (v. 38)? What Scriptures does he cite to prove his point? Why does he end with the warning from Habakkuk?
3. **1:13:** How would you answer Habakkuk’s complaint that the Lord uses bad people to chastise others more righteous than they? Why do bad things happen to good people?

## Chapter 2

### *For understanding*

1. **2:2:** What vision does the Lord want Habakkuk to write down? Why must the prophecy be written legibly and displayed publicly? What can the Hebrew term for tables indicate? Who else was similarly told to write on a display placard?
2. **2:4:** Who is the person whose soul is not upright? Who is the righteous person, and what will happen to him in the judgment coming upon Judah? What points does Paul make by citing this passage in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11? What does the fuller citation of the passage appearing in Heb 10:37–38 urge believers to do? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, how does Baptism, which initiates a new life of righteousness and enlightenment of faith, accord with the words of Habakkuk?
3. **Word Study: Faith (2:4):** What does the Hebrew noun *’emūnāh* typically denote? How does the Lord show himself preeminently a “God of faithfulness” to the covenant people? How do the people show their faithfulness? At other times, to what does the term specifically refer? Why does the English word “faith” that appears in Hab 2:4 only capture its meaning imperfectly? What does it mean doing over the long haul? What did Isaiah expect of the Davidic Messiah?
4. **2:17:** For what were the majestic cedars of Lebanon, flourishing north of Israel, coveted? What were the Babylonians, in their greed, guilty of doing?

### *For application*

1. **2:1:** Describe a time when you and the Lord had a dialogue going during prayer, where one initiated the dialogue and the other responded. Have you ever argued with the Lord over an issue? If so, how did he respond and how did you receive his answer?

2. **2:4:** Heb 10:38 quotes this verse in the context of the need for endurance. How challenging has living the life of faith been for you? In times of difficulty or personal loss, what have you done to retain and build up your faith in God's good will toward you?
3. **2:7:** How do you feel about the pricing policies of drug manufacturers? How able are you to pay for medications you need? If your medications are too expensive, what recourse do you have to obtain lower prices? What group efforts are being made to challenge the manufacturers?
4. **2:14:** Compare this verse in its context with that of Is 11:9 in its context. What are the main similarities and differences? To what fulfillment is each prophet looking forward?

### **Chapter 3**

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–19:** How does the book close? What kind of psalm does it resemble? Between these endpoints, what does Habakkuk describe?
2. **3:3:** Where are "Teman" and "Mt. Paran"? From where was Israel originally commanded to invade the land of Canaan? How was God's glory manifested on Mt. Sinai? What does "selah" mean, and where does it occur? What do scholars speculate it calls for from the congregation?
3. **3:11:** Of what is "the sun and moon stood still" reminiscent? How does the Psalmist picture God warring against adversaries? Of what is upheaval in the heavens a traditional feature?
4. **3:16–19:** Before what power is Habakkuk trembling, and yet what does he trust that God will do? What is he also prepared to face?

#### *For application*

1. **3:2:** At the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, Pope St. John XXIII prayed for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. How has that prayer been answered? What problems in the Church remain? What work of the Lord would you most like him to renew in our day?
2. **3:16:** What prospect for the future most terrifies you? For example, how concerned are you that death and judgment are both imminent? How quiet is your waiting for that day to arrive?
3. **3:17–18:** Since times will not always be good, have you tested the limits of your trust in the Lord's provision for you? How willing are you to rejoice in him if the economy should fail and the stores run out of supplies?