

Habakkuk

Authorship: Habakkuk (1:1) was apparently a Levite with experience in the music ministry of the Temple (3:1, 19).

Date: It is likely that the book of Habakkuk was written sometime between 610 B.C. and 605 B.C. The prominence of Babylon in Habakkuk indicates a post-612 B.C. date, but Babylon apparently had not yet invaded Judah, placing the book before 605 B.C. Though no kings are mentioned, the nation's sad spiritual condition suggests a date near the end of Josiah's reign, perhaps after the wicked Jehoiakim replaced him in 609 B.C. (see 2 Chronicles 36:8; Jeremiah 22:18-19).

Background: Israel's northern kingdom had fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C., leaving only the tiny southern kingdom of Judah in the Promised Land. In 612 B.C., Assyria was itself conquered by Babylon, the new masters of the ancient Near East. Now, Babylon was threatening to invade Judah. Even worse, the reforms of the good King Josiah, begun in 621 B.C., were losing their influence, and Judah's spiritual condition was at an all-time low (see 1:2-4). Into this situation came Habakkuk, recording for his people what God taught him about his coming judgment of both Judah and Babylon, his sovereignty over human affairs, and his loving faithfulness toward his own.

Recipients: The people in Judah living during Habakkuk's lifetime. The first hearers were the kings and people living in the land of Judah during the years before the Babylonian captivity.

Purpose: To announce that:

- (1) the sinful in Judah will be punished;
- (2) though Babylon will be God's instrument for punishing Judah, it too will be punished in due time;
- (3) God will preserve Judah's faithful remnant (2:4).

To help Habakkuk himself (as well as his readers) be patient with God's sovereign working in history.

Outline:

I. The Prophet is Troubled (1:1-17)

A. The Crimes of Judah (1:1-4)

1. A Personal Sorrow (1:1-2a)
2. A Perilous Situation (1:2b-3)
3. A Permissive Society (1:4)
 - a. The Law's Power Was Curbed (1:4a)
 - b. The Lord's People Were Careless (1:4b)

B. The Coming of Judgment (1:5-17)

1. Its Immense Extent (1:5)
2. Its Impending Execution (1:6-11)
 - a. The Success of the Chaldeans (1:6-10)
 - i. Their Coming (1:6)
 - ii. Their Character (1:7-8)
 - (a) Their Personal Traits (1:7)
 - (b) Their Powerful Troops (1:8)
 - iii. Their Cruelty (1:9)
 - iv. Their Conquests (1:10)
 - b. The Sin of the Chaldeans (1:11)

3. Its Impossible Explanation (1:12-17)

- a. Revelation (1:12)
 - i. The Person of God (1:12a-b)
 - (a) He is Different from Man in His Existence – He is Eternal (1:12a)
 - (b) He is Different from Man in His Essence – He is Holy (1:12b)
 - ii. The Purposes of God (1:12c-d)
 - (a) God's Judgment Was Really Consistent (1:12c)
 - (b) God's Judgment Was Really Corrective (1:12d)
- b. Reason (1:13)
 - i. A Simple Declaration of God's Character (1:13a)
 - ii. A Seeming Denial of God's Character (1:13b)
- c. Righteousness (1:14-17)
 - i. The Fishing of the Foe (1:16)
 - ii. The Folly of the Foe (1:16)
 - iii. The Fate of the Foe (1:17)

Key Verse

“Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation”
(Habakkuk 3:17-18 ESV).

Meaning of Name

Habakkuk, the seventh-century Israelite prophet to Judah, has given his name to this book as its composer. His name is possibly related either to the verb “embrace” in Hebrew or to an Assyrian plant called the “hambakuku.” His name means “Love's Embrace.”

II. The Prophet Is Taught (2:1-20)

A. The Righteousness on the Individual Plane (2:1-4)

1. The Eagerness of the Prophet (2:1)
 - a. His Receptive Attitude (2:1a)
 - b. His Responsive Attitude (2:1b)
2. The Enlightenment of the Prophet (2:2-4)
 - a. Regarding the Truth of God (2:2)
 - i. To Be Recorded Simply (2:2a)
 - ii. To Be Relayed Swiftly (2:2b)
 - b. Regarding the Timing of God (2:3)
 - c. Regarding the Trustworthiness of God (2:4)

B. God's Righteousness on the International Plane (2:5-20)

1. The Wars of the Chaldeans (2:5)
2. The Woes of the Chaldeans (2:6-20)

The Lord will deal with:

 - a. Their Crimes (2:6-8)
 - i. The Property They Had Stolen (2:6)
 - ii. The People They Had Slain (2:7-8)
 - b. Their Covetousness (2:9-11)
 - c. Their Cruelty (2:12-14)
 - d. Their Carousing (2:15-17)
 - e. Their Cults (2:18-20)

III. The Prophet Is Triumphant (3:1-19)

A. Faith Surrenders (3:1-2)

1. Habakkuk's Response to Revelation (3:1-2a)
2. Habakkuk's Request for Revival (3:2b)

B. Faith Sees (3:3-15)

1. The Lord's Presence (3:3-5)
 - i. The Region (3:3)
 - ii. The Resplendence (3:4)
 - iii. The Result (3:5)
2. The Lord's Power (3:6-9:1)
 - i. Rending the World (3:6-7)
 - (a) Methodically (3:6)
 - (b) Mindfully (3:7)
 - ii. Riding the Waves (3:8)
 - iii. Remembering the Word (3:9a)
3. The Lord's Progress (3:9b-15)
 - i. Nature Trembled (3:9a-11)
 - (a) Violent Storms (3:9b-10)
 - (b) Visible Signs (3:11)
 - ii. Nations Trembled (3:12-15)
 - (a) The Lord Saving Mightily (3:12)
 - (b) The Lord Saving Majestically (3:13-14)
 - (c) The Lord Saving Miraculously (3:15)

C. Faith Soars (3:16-19)

1. Trembling (3:16)
2. Trusting (3:17-19)
 - i. Irreversible Judgment (3:17)
 - ii. Irrepressible Joy (3:18-19)

Key Term: "Dialogue"

The book opens a dialogue between the prophet and God. The prophet asked God questions about his ways, and God answered. The book shows one righteous way to bring concerns to God when his ways appear incomprehensible.

One Sentence Summary

When Habakkuk asked God questions about the nature of evil and its punishment, God answered by revealing his righteousness and sovereignty, and the prophet then responded with worship and faith.

Sources:

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