

Snapshot of Habakkuk

The Prophet:

The name Habakkuk means “clasp” or “embrace.”

The prophet’s name appears nowhere else in Scripture. His home is unknown. We know nothing of his occupation.

The Date:

Habakkuk does not date his prophecy by referring to the king or kings during whose reign he ministered. But 1:6 appears to throw some light on this problem. Assyria had fallen and Chaldea (Babylon) was now the world power. This change of power occurred in 612 BC. Yet the Chaldeans had not, at the time of Habakkuk’s ministry, invaded Judah (3:16). This invasion did come in 605 BC. Thus we can date the book somewhere between 612 and 605 BC.

The Message:

The fact that God was about to use a pagan people who were even more wicked than the Jews forms the foundation for the book of Habakkuk.

The form of the book of Habakkuk is unique. The other Minor Prophets plead with the people on behalf of God. Habakkuk pleads with God on behalf of the people.

His is an effort to justify the ways of God to man. It is a book of consolation to a people upon whom the threatening shadow of long exile was rapidly sinking.

The Book:

Chapter one raises the problem of sin and violence in Judah. The prophet cries, “How long?” God answers by informing Habakkuk that he knows of this awful condition and is preparing to bring the Chaldeans against these people to punish them. This, in turn, causes the prophet to ask how God could punish Judah with a nation even more wicked than itself.

Chapter two answers the question by revealing that the Chaldeans shall also be punished and sets forth the fundamental principle of God’s dealing with men, that is, proud men who refuse to trust God must suffer whereas those who are righteous because of their faith in God will live.

Chapter three is a psalm of confident trust. Having raised the difficult problems of chapters one and two, Habakkuk declares that he has enough evidence of God’s integrity to trust Him in the face of the great adversity which was coming.

Outline of Habakkuk

- I. Habakkuk's First Question and God's Reply (1:1-11)
 - A. Title of the book (1:1)
 - B. Question: Why does God tolerate sin among His people? (1:2-4)
 - C. Reply: God is raising up the Chaldeans to punish the wrongdoers (1:5-11)
- II. Habakkuk's Second Question and God's Reply (1:12—2:20)
 - A. Question: How can God use the ungodly Chaldeans to punish His people (1:12—2:1)
 - B. Reply: The Chaldeans shall be punished in turn (2:2-20)
 1. The contrast between pride and faith (2:2-5)
 2. Woe upon the lust for conquest (2:6-8)
 3. Woe upon covetousness (2:9-11)
 4. Woe upon the building of cities with blood (2:12-14)
 5. Woe upon intoxication and violence (2:15-17)
 6. Woe upon idolatry (2:18-20)
- III. Habakkuk's Prayer (3:1-19)
 - A. A petition for mercy (3:1-2)
 - B. Confidence based on the past (3:3-15)
 - C. The prophet's faith expressed (3:16-19)
 1. Confidence amidst fear (3:16)
 2. Rejoicing in God's integrity (3:17-19)

Lessons for Today:

1. All men and nations are within the power of God and are accountable to him.
2. The day of the Lord was that day on which a nation received its just due for sin. The times in history foreshadow the ultimate day of the Lord when all men will be judged before the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 17:30-31).
3. The day of the Lord was not only a day of wrath for sinners but also of salvation for the righteous.