

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Habakkuk

Theme: The book of Habakkuk presents a picture of a man of GOD, perplexed by the problem of the seeming toleration of evil on the part of the Lord.

The Prophet is surrounded on every hand by wickedness unpunished and triumphant. At first his cry for judgment is apparently unheeded by GOD. When his prayer is at last answered and judgment pronounced, he is further perplexed that the agents of GOD's judgments, the Chaldeans, are more wicked and more worthy of punishment than the victims. Habakkuk is full of doubt and questionings. But happily he takes his perplexities to the Lord who quickly dispels them, and who presents a solution to his problems summed up in a statement which is the heart of the book - "**The just shall live by his faith**" (2:4). That is, no matter how gloomy the outlook and how triumphant evil may seem, the just man must not judge by appearances, but rather by GOD's Word; though the wicked may live and prosper in their wickedness and the righteous suffer, the latter are to live a life of faithfulness and trustfulness. The prophet learned this lesson well, for, whereas his prophecy begins with mystery, questioning and doubt, it ends with certainty, affirmation and faith. We shall sum up the theme as follows: the conflict and ultimate triumph of faith.

Author: Practically nothing is known of Habakkuk save what may be learned from conflicting traditions. From 3:1, 19, it has been inferred that he was a Levite, and participated in the music of the temple. As Nahum predicted the destruction of the Assyrian nation, and Obadiah, of the Edomite, so Habakkuk prophesied of the downfall of the Chaldean empire. Since he speaks of the growing power of the last-named nation and of the imminence of their invasion of Judah, it has been concluded that Habakkuk prophesied during the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim.

CONTENTS:

- I. The Conflict of Faith (Chs. 1, 2).
- II. The Triumph of Faith (Ch. 3).

I. The Conflict of Faith (Chs. 1, 2)

1. Habakkuk's first conflict (1:1-4). The prophet sees evil and violence on every side, the law

violated, and the righteous persecuted. He cries out to the Lord to visit judgment on Judah because of this condition, but seemingly his cry is unheeded. He pours forth his perplexity in these words: "**O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear! even cry out to thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!**"

2. The Lord's first answer (1:5-11). Though it may sometimes appear that the Lord is silent and indifferent, yet He is working. In due time He will visit judgment upon wicked Judah, using as His agents the terrible Chaldeans.

3. The prophet's second conflict (1:12 to 2:1). The first problem is solved; GOD will punish the evil doers in Zion, by bringing upon them the fierce Chaldeans. But this solution suggests another problem to Habakkuk. Viewing the pride, false confidence, and destructiveness of the invaders, he cannot understand why GOD should punish His people by a nation less righteous than they (1:13). Though the Lord has ordained the Chaldeans to judge His people (1:12), can it be the will of Him who is too pure to behold iniquity (v. 13), to allow that nation to trample as recklessly upon Judah as upon the other nations (vv 14-17)?

4. The Lord's second answer (2:2-5). Though the Chaldeans have been commissioned to execute Judgment on Judah, yet, in their arrogant pride they have exceeded their commission (2:4, first part). Though the wicked, as represented by the Chaldeans, may prosper in his iniquity, and the righteous suffer, yet the latter is to live by a life of faithfulness to the Lord, a life inspired by faith in His promises and justice (2:4 second part).

Though the Lord will use the Chaldeans as a Scourge upon His people, yet the former shall not go unpunished (vv. 5-20). The prophet is to write this prophecy of the Chaldeans' ultimate overthrow and post it where all may read (2:2). Though its fulfillment may be delayed: the righteous are to wait patiently for it, trusting in the Lord's word (2:3).

II. The Triumph of Faith (Ch. 3)

The following are the contents of this section:

1. At first the prophet was wondering why the Lord seemed to delay judgment on the wicked of His people (1:2-3). Now he has heard the Lord's sentence, he is afraid and prays that He may repeat on behalf of His people His work of deliverance as of old, and that He may remember mercy In the midst of judgment (3:1, 2).

2. He presents a vivid picture of the Lord's going forth in the days of old to save His people, the implication being that His past mercies to Israel are a pledge of His future mercies toward them (vv. 3-16).

3. Habakkuk has learned his lesson of faith. Whatever be his circumstances or that of his people, however dark and hopeless the outlook, he will rejoice in the Lord, the GOD of his salvation (vv 17-19).

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