

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK – AN INTRODUCTION

“Though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit be on the vines...yet I will rejoice in the LORD.” Habakkuk 3:17-18

Author: Habakkuk “to embrace” (1:1, 3:1)

- Luther proposed that the prophet *embraced* God’s people in their suffering; Jerome saw him as *embracing* the problem of divine justice in a wicked world; Others see Habakkuk as being *embraced* by God in his questioning
- Only Habakkuk, Haggai, and Zechariah are designated as a “prophet” in the title of their book.
- In the apocryphal book, *Bel and the Dragon*, Habakkuk is called the son of Jeshua, a Levite, who took a meal to the prophet Daniel who had been cast into the lion’s den for a second time. This is not considered a historical event.

Date: Likely between 609-598_{BC}

- Habakkuk was a *pre-exilic prophet*, meaning his revelation occurred prior to Judah being exiled to Babylon.
- He likely ministered after **Manasseh** (#14-697-642_{BC}) because the vision was to be fulfilled “in your days” (1:5).
- The revival of **Josiah**’s day (#16-640-609_{BC}) provides an unlikely backdrop for the lawlessness Habakkuk witnessed.
- The wicked days of **Jehoiakim** (#18-609-598_{BC}) along with Babylon’s rise to power provide a likely setting for the book.
- If our dating is correct, Habakkuk would have been contemporaries of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

Audience: the prophet Habakkuk

- Habakkuk’s writing is unique in that it records a personal dialogue between the prophet and God (similar to Jonah).
- Habakkuk concludes with a note directing his prayer to be sung as worship among the people of God (3:1).
- The recorded conversation between the prophet and God would serve as instruction to the people of Judah.
- 1 of 3 prophets who speak to or about unbelieving nations: Obadiah (Edomites), Nahum (Assyria), Habakkuk (Babylon)

Purpose: to correct and comfort Habakkuk regarding his view of God’s justice in a day of evil and injustice

- Habakkuk was personally corrected and comforted regarding his understanding of God’s dealings with evil
- The Southern Kingdom was warned that God would not overlook their wickedness, but bring judgment on them
- To display God’s sovereign reign over all things, including the evil of His people and unbelieving nations

Background:

1. God dealt with His people according to the Mosaic Covenant. If they persisted in obedience to His commands, they would know His blessing, but if they persisted in disobedience, they would face judgment (**Lev. 26; Deut. 28**).
2. Israel was ruled by monarchy under the reign of Saul (1051-1011_{BC}), David (1010-971_{BC}), Solomon (971-931_{BC}).
3. Solomon’s idolatry incited the Lord to judge Israel by splitting the nation into two kingdoms in 931_{BC}.
4. The N. Kingdom (Israel) had 20 kings who were all more or less evil. Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria (722_{BC}).
5. The S. Kingdom (Judah) also had 20 kings who were mostly bad, but were blessed by several kings who feared God.
6. The 18th Southern King, Jehoiakim (609-597_{BC}), was a wicked king. His reign was marked by corruption, oppression, immorality, and idolatry, which was marked by child sacrifice to the false god Molech.
7. The Babylonian Empire rose to power around 620_{BC} and ruled the world until its fall to Persia in 539_{BC}. Their empire was marked by brutal imperialism and tyrannical oppression against any nation who stood in their path.

AN OUTLINE OF HABAKKUK: WHAT WILL GOD DO ABOUT EVIL?

(1:1-1:4) The Prophet's First Question—“*God, Why Don't You Do Something About Evil?*”

(1:5-1:11) The Lord's First Reply—“*Habakkuk, I Am Doing Something About Evil.*”

(1:12-2:1) The Prophet's Second Question—“*God, How Can You Use Evil to Judge the Righteous?*”

(2:2-20) The Lord's Second Reply—“*Habakkuk, I Will Not Overlook Any Evil, Trust Me.*”

Word to Habakkuk—Walk By Faith (2:2-5)

Woe #1—Upon Imperialism (2:6-8)

Woe #2—Upon Indulgence (2:9-11)

Woe #3—Upon Injustice (2:12-14)

Woe #4—Upon Immorality (2:15-17)

Woe #5—Upon Idolatry (2:18-20)

(3:1-20) The Prophet's Prayer—“*God, I Will Wait in Faith Because You are My Strength.*”