

LESSON 1 ~ HABAKKUK

The prophet Habakkuk ministered during the death throes of the nation of Judah. Although repeatedly called to repentance, the nation stubbornly refused to change her sinful ways. Asking how long this intolerable situation would continue, Habakkuk is told by God that the Babylonians will be His chastening rod on the nation—an announcement that sends the prophet to his knees. Though perplexed, Habakkuk acknowledges that the just in any generation shall live by faith (2:4), not by sight, and he concludes by praising God’s wisdom even though he doesn’t fully understand God’s ways.

Author

The author of this book is the prophet Habakkuk, about whom little is known apart from his name, which is derived from the Hebrew word meaning “embrace” or “embracer.” The fact that he is called a “prophet” (1:1; 3:1) may suggest that he was a member of a professional prophetic guild. In addition, the musical reference at the conclusion of the book indicates that Habakkuk may have been a priest connected with the temple worship in Jerusalem.

Date

Although the book of Habakkuk includes no reference to the reign of a king, internal evidence indicates a date between the death of King Josiah (609 B.C.) and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity (605 B.C.). The only explicit time references in Habakkuk are to the Babylonian invasion as an imminent event (1:6; 2:1; 3:16). The deplorable conditions of the people (1:2–4) imply a date after the untimely death of Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.) and early in the wicked reign of King Jehoiakim (609–597 B.C.).

A contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, Habakkuk warned of God’s approaching judgment through the approaching Babylonians. This prophecy was fulfilled in 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar deported ten thousand of Jerusalem’s prominent citizens to Babylon.

Themes and Literary Structure

The book of Habakkuk may be conveniently divided into two portions: the problems or perplexity of Habakkuk (chs. 1 and 2), and the praise of Habakkuk (ch. 3).

Realizing Israel’s iniquity and need for punishment, Habakkuk is perplexed with the moral dilemma of how a holy God could employ the even more wicked Babylonians to chastise His children. God’s response is twofold: He reaffirms His basic moral nature which implies that everyone must eventually face judgment for their offenses (2:2–20). God also gives Habakkuk a vision of His infinite glory, a vision somewhat reminiscent of the one given in Job 38–41. These two responses are enough to reestablish Habakkuk’s faith in God.

Habakkuk also stresses God’s sovereign freedom as God to accomplish His good ends in His own way. In spite of appearances to the contrary, God is still on the throne as the Lord of history and the Ruler of the nations.

The book of Habakkuk depicts the prophet’s struggle of faith, and in so doing the centrality of faith in the lives of God’s people is highlighted. This faith which can endure despite unfavorable outward circumstances comes to beautiful expression in 3:16–19.¹

Understand The Background

¹*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts : Old and New Testaments.* electronic ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996.

LESSON 2 ~ HABAKKUK

Study Questions For Habakkuk Chapters 1:12 – 3:19

1. According to Habakkuk's second question, from what was God holding His tongue?
2. To what does Habakkuk compare the people taken by the Chaldeans?
3. What was the reaction of the Chaldeans to their "fishing"?
4. What did the LORD tell Habakkuk to do with His answer?
5. How will the just live?
6. Read Rom 1:16-17, Gal 3:11 & Heb 10:38-39. How is this passage applied in each of these NT passages?
7. What is the LORD's answer to Habakkuk's second question?
8. What is Habakkuk's response to the LORD's answer?
9. Habakkuk wrote he would rejoice even if any of six things happened, name them.