

Synopsis of Habakkuk

(With Spiritual Lessons)

The Time and Occasion of the Prophecy: According to conservative scholars the prophecy belongs to the period between 625 and 606 B. C., and was probably written about 607 B. C. Chapter 1, verse 6 refers to the Chaldeans (Babylonians) who were swiftly coming westward but had not yet reached Judea. The Chaldeans were the new predominant world power after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire.

This external threat from the Babylonians came at the same time of increasing moral and spiritual deterioration in Judah. Jehoiakim, who reigned 608-597 B. C., was a very wicked king. Habakkuk was a contemporary prophet with Jeremiah.

1. Habakkuk notes the flagrant sinfulness of Judah and wonders that it seems to go unpunished-Ch. 1: 1-4.
2. God replies by telling how He will send the Chaldeans as a terrible instrument of judgment, upon the wicked nations, including Judah-Ch. 1: 5-11.
3. Habakkuk is taken aback by this and wonders how a holy God can use this wicked nation to destroy people more righteous than they are-Ch. 1: 12-17.
4. He goes into his watch tower (place of prayer?). God tells him of His purpose and encourages him to wait for it to come to pass-Ch. 2: 1-3.
5. The most well-known verse in the entire prophecy-Ch. 2: 4. The truth contained in this verse is so important that it is quoted three times in the New Testament: Rom. 1: 17; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38.
6. Inspired by God, Habakkuk pronounces terrible woes against Babylon. After God used this wicked nation to judge His people, He brought terrible retribution on this instrument of His judgment. He would chastise His people severely, but they would not utterly be destroyed. They would survive as a nation. However, after He had used the Babylonian/Chaldeans to chastise His nation, He would utterly destroy them. The prophet could take comfort from this in the exceedingly difficult days ahead.

There are five woes pronounced against the Chaldeans in this section: Woe for dishonesty-2: 6; covetousness-2: 9; bloody building projects-2: 12; drunkenness and the moral uncleanness that often accompanies it-2: 15; idolatry 2: 18.

In the midst of this section of divine judgment there are two majestic verses that would serve to comfort and awe God's people: 2: 14 and 2: 20.

7. After hearing from God Habakkuk utters a prayer for revival-3: 2.
8. A psalm of praise for God's ultimate deliverance of His people. This is in beautiful, highly poetic language. In some instances, in this poetic fashion, he is apparently referring to actual historical events when the Lord had delivered His people from seemingly invincible enemies-Ch. 3: 3-16.
9. This short prophecy closes with a magnificent expression of the conquering faith that God gives to His children to enable them to deal with staggering adversities. This is some of the most expressive

and lovely language in the entire Bible!-Ch. 3: 17-19.

Gleanings

When Habakkuk began to fervently cry out to God because of the sins of Judah, He did not realize that the “cure” would be worse than the “disease.” When we lament the dismal condition of professing Christianity today and pray for revival, we must be aware that God may do something drastic to purge away our dross that so revival may come. When a patient is very sick radical cures may be necessary.

It is good to pour out our hearts before God when we are troubled and perplexed. We have the privilege of coming boldly to God in prayer. We read in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This boldness is expressed in the New Testament Greek word *parrh?sia*. It signifies “freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance.” Habakkuk did just this in 1: 12-17.

After we have told God all our hopes and fears, then we need to learn to still our hearts and listen to Him. The prophet did this in 2: 1. The Lord graciously began to answer his prayer and to show him what He was doing. We need to learn the art of quietly listening to God.

Sometimes we almost think that God does not see what the wicked are doing and that they are getting by with their injustices. This, of course, is not true. God knows exactly what the wicked are doing in detail. This is plainly taught in 2: 5-19.

I personally believe that 2: 14 will not be fulfilled in its fullest sense until we are in the eternal state in the “new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” It no doubt had a partial fulfillment when the gospel began to be preached on and after the Day of Pentecost.

All too lacking today, even among genuine Christians, is a holy reverence for God. The prophet majestically wrote in Habakkuk 2:20, "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." Another verse which teaches this profound truth is Hebrews 12:28, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:" When we assemble to worship Him, we should follow the exhortation of Psalms 89:7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."