

STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

HABAKKUK

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Title and Name of Author, 1:1

- I. God's judgment upon Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Chaldeans, 1:2 - 2:3.
 - . First perplexity, and Jehovah's reply, 1:2-11.
 1. The prophet's lamentation over the rule of wickedness and violence, vv.2-4.
Perplexity: How can Jehovah justify His indifference in the presence of wickedness and violence?
 2. Jehovah's reply: He is not indifferent; He will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment, vv. 5-11.
 - a. Their rise is of Jehovah, vv.5,6.
 - b. Their character is of themselves, vv. 7-11.
 - . Second perplexity, and Jehovah's reply, 1:12-2:3.
 1. How can a holy God employ an impure and godless agent? 1:12-17.
 - a. The confident hope that God's people will not perish, v.12.
 - b. The perplexity: God's use of so wicked a nation as Chaldea, vv.13-17.
 2. Jehovah's reply: The judgment is sure, but not immediate, 2:1-3.
 - a. The prophet's decision: wait, 2:1.
 - b. The command: write plainly, for the promise is certain, 2:2,3.
- II. God's judgment upon the Chaldeans, the ungodly world power, 2:4-20.
 - . Fundamental principle in world government, vv. 4,5.
 1. The righteous - live by faith, v.4.
 2. The wicked- drunken on pride, power, greed - will not continue, v.5.
 - . Woes upon the Chaldeans: a taunt song, vv. 6-20.
 1. Woe upon lust of conquest and plunder, vv.6-8.
 2. Woe upon effort to build a permanent empire through cruelty and godless gain, vv.9-11.
 3. Woe upon the building of cities with blood, vv.12-14.
 4. Woe upon cruelty in the treatment of conquered kings and nations, vv.15-17.
 5. Woe upon idolatry, vv.18-20.
- III. Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment, ch. 3.
 - . Petition, vv.1,2.
 1. Title: author and melody, v.1.
 2. Revive thy works, v.2a.
 3. In wrath remember mercy, v.2b.
 - . The mighty works of Jehovah in the past: judgment and salvation, vv.3-15.
 1. Jehovah's terrible approach, vv.3-7.
 2. Question: Why did Jehovah appear? vv.8-12.
 3. Answer: For salvation of His people, vv. 13-15.
 - . Implicit confidence in Jehovah, the God of salvation, vv.16-19.
 1. Fear and trembling at the tribulation, vv.16,17.
 2. Joy and confident trust, vv. 18,19.

INFORMATION ON THE BOOK

DATE WRITTEN

Various dates have been suggested which range from 630 B.C. to a date sometime during the Babylonian captivity. The most likely is somewhere between 612 and 606 B.C.. In light of Habakkuk's statement in Habakkuk 3:16, "...I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops," some have placed this before the Chaldean invasion in 605 B.C.. Assyria fell to Babylon in 612 B.C.. When Habakkuk wrote, Nebuchadnezzar was already moving west, but had not yet reached Jerusalem. The oppression of Judah and carrying of the first group into captivity was still in the future. So the dates of 606 - 612 B.C. seem quite plausible.

THE MAN

The name Habakkuk means _____ . His home is unknown, as is his occupation. We know that he was a prophet, for he so identifies himself in 1:1. Some have concluded that he may have been a Levitical chorister serving in the temple, as those described in 1 Chronicles 25:1. This is concluded from the musical notation at 3:1, "shiggayown {shig-gaw-yone}"; or shiggayonah {shig-gaw-yonaw}"; a dithyramb or rambling poem: -Shiggaion, Shigionoth," and at the end of the book, "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." Regardless, he served as a prophet of Judah, and was contemporary with Jeremiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah. Jeremiah was Judah's last prophet before the Babylonian captivity.

MAIN THEME

This can be summed up in five statements: 1) Iniquity does *not* triumph; 2) God does not overlook sin; 3) The righteous man lives by his faith; 4) The Lord is God of the universe, and happy is the believer who waits patiently for the manifestations of His will; 5) God wants His children to talk with Him.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The situation was about the same as the time of Zephaniah, but upon the death of Josiah at Megiddo, Jehoahaz, his son, was made king at the age of twenty-three. His reign is summed up in one sentence: "he did {that which was} evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done." (2 Kings 23:32) The young king had reigned only three months when Pharaoh-necho deposed him and set his brother, Eliakim, on the throne. Pharaoh-necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiachin, the name by which he is usually known. He reigned for eleven years and his reign was equally as wicked as his brother's.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book of prophecy differs from others in that it is the presentation of the complaint of the people unto the Lord. The lawlessness and injustice in Judah and Jerusalem and the rising power of Babylon caused the prophet to turn to the Lord with his problem of faith.

The book opens with a cry to the Lord which enumerates the wickedness, injustice, and lawlessness in Judah. In response, the Lord points to the rising Chaldean power, and says that they will be His instrument of judgment against the sins of Judah. This causes the prophet to be confused, and to wonder how God could punish Judah by using a nation more wicked than itself? God points out, as the apostle Paul does many years later, that the righteous shall live by faith (Romans 1:17). And so, Habakkuk and the few who were still righteous, must live on by faith, and wait for the Lord to do what He has promised. The prophet reviews God's dealings with His people in the past, and notes how He has often come to assist them in times of need. And then he realizes that God's judgments are for the salvation of His people, and he begins to see that this judgment will serve this purpose once again. Then the prophet extols God's virtues, and proclaims the way in which the Lord permits tyrannical, evil nations, to accomplish His divine purpose in bringing His people to repentance; and that He will yet punish the tyrannical nations.

QUESTIONS ON HABAKKUK

Title and Name of Author, 1:1

- I. God's judgment upon Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Chaldeans, 1:2 - 2:3.
- . First perplexity, and Jehovah's reply, 1:2-11.
 - 1. The prophet's lamentation over the rule of wickedness and violence, vv.2-4.
Perplexity: How can Jehovah justify His indifference in the presence of wickedness and violence?
1. What does the word "burden" suggest about the work of the prophet, and how did it come to him? 1:1 _____

2. What is implied by the words of the prophet in 1:2? _____

3. The word "violence" occurs in verses 2 and 3. What does it mean? _____

4. How would you characterize what the prophet is saying in 1:2-4? _____

5. Explain the meaning of "the law is slacked?" 1:4 _____

- 1. Jehovah's reply: He is not indifferent; He will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment, vv. 5-11.
 - a. Their rise is of Jehovah, vv.5,6.
6. Who is speaking in verses 5 & 6? _____

7. What is the nature of the things that the prophet would see come to pass? 1:5 _____

8. Who is coming and what will they do? 1:6 _____

b. Their character is of themselves, vv. 7-11.

9. In the description of the Chaldeans, God says that something proceeds from them. What is it? 1:7

10. Chapter one, verses 8-10 contain terms which describe the Chaldeans. Consider each and what they say about them.

11. Verse eleven of chapter one is worded differently in some versions. Compare these readings with the King James Version: NASB "Then they will sweep through {like} the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god." ASV "Then shall he sweep by {as} a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, {even} he whose might is his god." NKJV "Then {his} mind changes, and he transgresses; he commits offense, {imputing} this power to his god." Discuss these differences and please explain the meaning.

. Second perplexity, and Jehovah's reply, 1:12-2:3.

1. How can a holy God employ an impure and godless agent? 1:12-17.

a. The confident hope that God's people will not perish, v.12.

12. What characteristics of God does the prophet mention in 1:12? _____

13. Who are the "we" and "them" in 1:12? _____

b. The perplexity: God's use of so wicked a nation as Chaldea, vv.13-17.

14. What is the seeming conflict the prophet observes in 1:13? _____

15. Of whom is the prophet speaking when he refers to "the man that is more righteous than he?" 1:13

16. In 1:14-17, who is the fisherman or hunter, and what is the point of this picture? _____

2. Jehovah's reply: The judgment is sure, but not immediate, 2:1-3.
 - a. The prophet's decision: wait, 2:1.

17. How did the prophet decide to deal with the questions he had for God? 2:1 _____

- b. The command: write plainly, for the promise is certain, 2:2,3.

18. What was God's reply to the prophet? 2:2 _____

19. How would people react who read the prophecy? 2:2 _____

20. When would this vision come to pass? 2:3 _____

II. God's judgment upon the Chaldeans, the ungodly world power, 2:4-20.

. Fundamental principle in world government, vv. 4,5.

1. The righteous - live by faith, v.4.

21. What is the contrast presented by the prophet in 2:4? _____

2. The wicked- drunken on pride, power, greed - will not continue, v.5.

22. Explain the relationship the prophet expresses between wine and pride in the case of the Chaldeans. 2:5 _____

23. Be prepared to discuss the prophet's use of hell and death with regard to the Chaldeans. 2:5 _____

Woes upon the Chaldeans: a taunt song, vv. 6-20.

1. Woe upon lust of conquest and plunder, vv.6-8.

24. Who is referred to by the "all these" of 2:6, and what will they do? _____

25. What will happen to the Chaldeans, and why? 2:7,8 _____

2. Woe upon effort to build a permanent empire through cruelty and godless gain, vv.9-11.

26. Verses 9-11 of chapter 2 describe the Chaldeans. What are the metaphors used, and what do they tell us about them? 2:9-11 _____

3. Woe upon the building of cities with blood, vv.12-14.

27. What is the significance of "blood" (bloodshed) and "iniquity" in 2:12? _____

28. Explain the significance of laboring and the fire in 2:13. _____

29. Why does the prophet say that "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" would cover the earth? 2:14 _____

4. Woe upon cruelty in the treatment of conquered kings and nations, vv.15-17.

30. Of what is Babylon accused, and what would happen to them? Is this literal or figurative? 2:15,16

31. What is meant by the reference to Lebanon, and how does it relate to what will happen to Babylon? 2:17

5. Woe upon idolatry, vv.18-20.

32. Explain the contrast presented in 2:18-20, and how it related to the situation in Babylon. _____

III. Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment, ch. 3.

. Petition, vv.1,2.

1. Title: author and melody, v.1.

33. What does the prophet mean by the word "Shigionoth," and what other word might be used to describe this prayer? 3:1 _____

2. Revive thy works, v.2a.

34. The prophet said that something made him afraid. What was it? 3:2 _____

35. What does he ask the Lord to revive, and what does this mean? 3:2 _____

3. In wrath remember mercy, v.2b.

34. God is asked to remember something in something. What are these things? 3:2 _____

. The mighty works of Jehovah in the past: judgment and salvation, vv.3-15.

1. Jehovah's terrible approach, vv.3-7.

35. What is the prophet saying about God in 3:3? _____

36. Explain the meaning of Selah, and note any other occurrences of this word in the Old Testament.
3:3 _____

37. What attributes of God are represented in 3:4? _____

38. Is there some specific event in time under consideration in 3:5? If so, what is it? _____

39. How is God pictured in 3:6, and how are "his ways everlasting?" _____

40. What had happened to Cush and Midia? 3:7 _____

2. Question: Why did Jehovah appear? vv.8-12.

41. Why does the prophet ask the question in 3:8? _____

42. Who set the rivers in their place, and what does it say about God? 3:9 _____

43. What does the prophet say about God's power over the universe? 3:10,11 _____

44. In the past, what does the prophet say God had done? 3:12 _____

3. Answer: For salvation of His people, vv. 13-15.

45. Why does the prophet say that God has done all of these things and Who is the One referred to as His Anointed? 3:13 _____

46. How does the prophet describe what God had done for the salvation of His people? 3:13a-15 _____

. Implicit confidence in Jehovah, the God of salvation, vv.16-19.
1. Fear and trembling at the tribulation, vv.16,17.

47. How did the prophet react to the things God revealed through him? 3:16 _____

48. What does the prophet contemplate the possibility of happening? 3:17 _____

2. Joy and confident trust, vv. 18,19.

49. How does the prophet react to all of these things? 3:18,19 _____

50. How should we react to such circumstances in our own lives? _____
