

Habakkuk: The Puzzled Prophet who Discovered his Faith

The Background and Historical Setting:

1. Unlike many of the prophets of Israel who emphasized the unequivocal "Thus says the LORD," **Habakkuk** took his _____ and _____ to the LORD as he wrestled with the evil that was rampant in Judah (the Southern Kingdom) in the latter part of the 7th century.
2. Habakkuk is unique (however, see Jeremiah for a few similarities) among the prophets because he did not speak for God to the people, but rather to God about his people and the nation. However, as with virtually all prophets, he was passionate about the honor of God. Violence and law-breaking (covenant violations) abounded and the wicked seemed to triumph, which seemed to be an affront to the holiness of the LORD, the covenantal God of Israel (see Deuteronomy 26-33) who was not taking action to correct these grievous sins.
3. The Assyrian Empire (*which reigned supreme in this region from ca. 900-600 B.C.*) experienced a remarkable resurgence of power under Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC) and under Shalmaneser V (727-721 BC) would defeat the Northern Kingdom (*the 10 tribes that split from Judah in 922 B.C. at Solomon's death*) in 722 B.C. This dominating empire would reach its height of power under Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC). The ancient Assyrians, whose capital was Nineveh, were Semitic people and most likely resembled the Israelites.
4. Beginning in 626 B.C. Babylonia, Assyria's fellow Akkadian speakers and northern neighbors in Mesopotamia, began to ascend to power and prominence, ultimately replacing Assyrian as the ruler of the "greater Fertile Crescent" region in 612 BC with the overthrow of Nineveh. Their power was confirmed with the defeat of the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC (note that Judah's good king Josiah was killed by the Egyptians at the battle of Megiddo in 609 BC).
5. Under Babylonian rule, there was some general improvement in economic life and agricultural production as well as the flourishing of architectural projects, the arts, and the sciences.

The Book as a Whole:

1. It is the 8th book in "The Book of the Twelve" in the Hebrew Bible and is a dialogue between the prophet and the LORD in the first 2 chapters that is concluded with a _____ (complete with musical instructions) in chapter 3 in which the prophet proclaims his choice to live with his _____ firmly _____ in the God who sees, knows, and acts in His _____ for His _____.
2. This book, in the form of a dialogue with God, emphasizes that "faith" (or "faithfulness") is the key to knowing God (some call him a "forefather

of the Reformation" since 2:4 is a theme of it as found in Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb.10:37-38; cf. Rom. 8:28-39). Life's questions demand faith (see Heb. 11).

The Prophet Himself:

1. We know nothing about Habakkuk except his name, which may mean, if it is to be derived from the Assyrian plant *hambakuku*, " _____;" but even that is uncertain.
2. The reference to him as "the prophet" may indicate he was well known and/or that very few other people were named Habakkuk.
3. Habakkuk is clearly having a dialogue with God in 1:1-2:5, in which his "complaints" (or perhaps simply honest questions during a horrific moral and spiritual decline among God's people) are answered by surprising and penetrating replies.

The Outline:

- I. How _____? God, why don't You _____ something? (1:1-4)
- II. I _____! Habakkuk, _____ around and be _____ at what is happening in the world! (1:5-11)
- III. Oh, _____! God, Aren't You too _____ to use those _____ people? (1:12 – 2:1)
- IV. Just _____! Habakkuk, I am the Sovereign Lord who performs My _____ in My _____ so just _____! (2:2-20)
- V. The Prayer _____ should pray: God, I _____ in YOU and I will _____ until YOU perform Your _____ deeds! (3:1-19)

The Prophet's Purpose: To proclaim that the way of faith/faithfulness is the only choice for those who follow the One True God.

Key Verses: "... but the righteous shall live by his faith... Though the fig tree should not blossom, ... and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength;" (2:4; 3:16-19)

The Understanding of God's Mysterious Ways is Found through Faith in God Alone.

1. Keep _____ to God even when He seems _____. (1:1-11)
2. Keep _____ God at His word even when His ways appear _____. (2:12-2:20)
3. Keep _____ in the One True God to work in and through You even when you can't _____ Him (3:1-19)
 - (1) We _____ with God in His work through _____.
 - (2) We _____ God's provision for us through _____.