

PART 4 THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

It is advisable first to read the Preface in Part 1, also the Introduction to the Minor Prophets which precedes the Study on Hosea and to read each book prior to studying it. The section on each prophet is a complete Bible Study. Only a brief summary of the words of the *Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed.

HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

Unlike other prophets, his message was expressed indirectly to Israel in conversational form with the Lord answering Habakkuk's many troubling questions. Referring to himself as a prophet, he received his revelations at end of Josiah's reign or the beginning of Jehoiakim's wicked reign. Habakkuk was therefore a contemporary of Jeremiah; but otherwise little is known about him.

Like Jeremiah, Habakkuk probably lived to see the initial fulfilment of his oracle when Jerusalem was attacked in 597 B.C. by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. As the Assyrians before them, the Babylonians deported peoples far from their own lands. Ultimately, Habakkuk trusted that the cruel Babylonians would be punished. The military conquests and the power of the Babylonian empire would end according to the *Voice of the Lord*.

HABAKKUK'S FIRST QUESTIONS

Habakkuk Chapter 1

Firstly, Habakkuk cannot understand why the Lord was tolerating the evil and violence in Judah to go unpunished.



To Habakkuk and the God-fearing, their holy God was not doing anything to stop such evil practices.

The reforms made by good King Josiah, after the discovery of the Book of the Law, had not lasted.

*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and You will not hear?
Or cry out to You of violence and You will not save?*

Habakkuk 1: 2

Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph and exult? (Psalm 94: 3)

GOD'S ANSWER

God answered Habakkuk's complaints with the astonishing words that the ruthless and idolatrous Babylonian nation was appointed to punish Judah.

Behold, I am rousing up the Chaldeans, (Babylonians) that bitter and impetuous nation who march through the breadth of the earth to take possession of dwelling places that do not belong to them. The Chaldeans are terrible and dreadful; their justice and dignity proceed only from themselves.

Habakkuk1: 6, 7

MORE QUESTIONS

Habakkuk next failed to understand why Judah is to be punished, especially the godly, by an even more wicked and unholy people – the cruel Babylonians.



You are of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon injustice. Why then do You look upon the plunderer? Why are You silent when the wicked one destroys him who is more righteous than the Chaldean oppressor?
Habakkuk 1: 13

GOD'S SECOND ANSWER AND THE FIVE WOES

Habakkuk Chapter 2



As if standing guard on a watchtower, Habakkuk waited to hear what God, the Holy One, would answer.

*The Lord answered me and said:
Write the vision and engrave it upon tablets that everyone who passes may read it easily as he hastens by.*

For the vision is yet for an appointed time and will hasten to fulfillment; it will not deceive or disappoint. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come; it will not be behindhand on its appointed day.

Habakkuk 2: 2, 3

Although not a direct answer, Habakkuk conveyed the Lord's message of assurance to the faithful – the godly in covenant relationship with the Lord requiring obedience.

The just and righteous man shall live by his faith and in his faithfulness.

Habakkuk 2: 4b (Romans 1: 17b) (Galatians 3: 11)

FIVE WOES

The *Voice of the Lord* to Habakkuk condemned the corrupt Babylonians in Five Woes.

Habakkuk prophesied the Lord's punishment for their aggression, greed and cruelty to both man and animals, their indecency and idolatry.

Shall not all these victims of his greed take up a taunt against him and in scoffing derision of him say,

1. Woe to him who piles up that which is not his! How long will he possess it?

Habakkuk 2: 6

2. Woe to him who obtains wicked gain for his house!.

Habakkuk 2: 9

Except the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it.

Psalms 127: 1a

3. *Woe to him who builds a town with blood and establishes a city by iniquity!*

Habakkuk 2: 12

Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.

Psalm 127: 1b

4. *Woe to him who gives his neighbour drink and makes them drunk, that you may look on their stripped condition!*

Habakkuk 2: 15

5. *Woe to him who says to the wooden image, Awake! and to the dumb stone,*

Arise, teach!

Habakkuk 2: 19a

Unlike the *Voice of the Lord*, idols of wood or stone are silent and cannot speak.

But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Habakkuk 2: 20

The time is coming when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2: 14

HABAKKUK'S PRAYER

Habakkuk Chapter 3

Habakkuk believed God's answers and rejoiced in steadfast faith. His prayer of trust in his victorious and saving God was set to triumphant music, like a psalm, for public praise. The poetic words were to encourage the people in adversity.

This prayer is an account of God's glory and the many wonderful acts of power and deliverance, especially the Exodus, throughout the history of His Chosen People. Like the mountains that trembled, Habakkuk also trembled at the awesome power of the Lord as he awaited the coming time of invasion and dreadful calamity.

The Book of Habakkuk records the following memorable words of the prophet's faith and patient trust in God.

Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation!

Habakkuk 3: 17, 18



CONCLUSION

HABAKKUK'S REVELATIONS FULFILLED

Habakkuk's revelations that Babylonian rule would eventually end took place over half a century later in 539 B.C. when Babylon was destroyed by the Persians.

In retribution, their cruelty to others would then be done to them.

Though the vision tarried, Habakkuk's word from the Lord did come to pass. Judah and Jerusalem were delivered and the Jewish exiles did return to the land of Israel.

In the last verse, Habakkuk records the source of his strength is the Lord.

Habakkuk likens his firm trust in God, as he awaits the coming time of trouble and affliction, to the sure-footed deer climbing steep mountain slopes.

The Lord God is my Strength.

*He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk
upon my high places of trouble and suffering!*

Habakkuk 3: 19



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