

6/5/16

Intro To Habakkuk

We want to look at an introduction to the book of the Prophet Habakkuk who is the ninth Minor prophet in a date chronology and the last who spoke prior to the captivity of Judah at Babylon, after Zephaniah.

He is a different prophet from the others in that he provides for us a snapshot of an often human dilemma man has with God when it comes to His dealing with the affairs in the world and wickedness.

Often man forgets that the world we see is not what God intended, but is a result of the fall through Adam.

Therefore what we often see is the sowing and reaping of sin and its nature on the just and unjust, which puzzles us and at times angers others.

* But even Jesus declared that the rain falls on the just and the unjust, revealing that even evil people receive certain natural benefit from God, but it is not due to their righteousness!

I. The prophet Habakkuk.

A. The name of the prophet.

1. The name of the prophet is Habakkuk “chabaquwq” means “to embrace”, found two times in the book. Hab. 1:1; 3:1

* Some scholars believe the name to be an Accadian word for a garden plant.

2. Martin Luther said he was one who embraces his people and takes them in his arms to comfort and lift them up as one embraces a weeping child or person.
 3. Only those who are embraced by God and embrace God can and will embrace people!
 4. The title of prophet in the superscription is only found in two other Minor prophets. Hag 1:1; Zech. 1:1
 5. He is a prophet, one who was the mouthpiece of God to His people.
 - a. The word burden “massa” in the Hebrew means a load carried or born and used in the Scriptures in different contexts.
 - b. The prophet uses it in the context of what he saw “chazah” a vision he received, an oracle from God to be born, the origin of the message being divine, not his own. 2Pet. 1:20-21
 - c. A vision beign while he is awake, in contrast to a dream while being asleep.
- B. The name of his hometown or family is not given.**
1. The prophet records no genealogy or family background.
 - a. The only thing we know is that he was a prophet of God, nothing else is stated.
 - b. He is one of the six Minor prophets who doesn’t date his prophecy in the opening.
 - * The others are Obediah, Joel, Jonah, Nahum and Malachi.
 2. There are various traditions.

- a. There is a Rabbinical tradition teaching he was the son of the Shunammite woman whom Elisha restored to life. 2Kings 4:16
- b. Another one is that he was a Levite, due to a reference to him in a apocryphal writing that were written between the Old and New Testament time.
 - 1) The evidence used for this is the musical association to his prayer, which has the greatest merit, being internal evidence. Hab. 3:1, 19
 - a) The prayer is a liturgical Psalm Hymn on Shigionoth, the meaning is uncertain, but it was set to string instruments for the temple choir. Hab. 3:1
 - b) This Psalm and hymn was directed to the chief musician with stringed instrument with a certain rhythm.
 - c) Many of the Psalms were to be accompanied with musical instruments, Asaph being the head overseer. 1Chron. 15
 - 2) We know Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah were prophets of the priestly line, so maybe also Habakkuk.
 - a) But most of the prophets were not of the priestly line.
 - b) In fact they were were called out by God to warn His people because

even the priest had corrupted themselves. Amos 7:14

- C. The place of the prophet is among the twelve Minor prophets of the Old Testament.
 - 1. There are six Minor Prophets prior to the captivity of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria in 722 B.C.
 - a. Obadiah 845 B.C.
 - b. Joel 835 B.C.
 - c. Jonah 765 B.C.
 - d. Amos 760 B.C.
 - e. Hosea 740 B.C.
 - f. Micah 735 B.C.
 - 2. There are three contemporary Minor Prophets prior to the captivity of the Southern Kingdom by Babylon from 606-586 B.C.
 - a. Nahum 710 B.C. (more accurate 660-650 B.C.)
 - b. Zephaniah 625 B.C.
 - c. Habakkuk 608 B.C.
 - * Habakkuk is the eighth in order of the Masoretic, Greek texts and our English Bible, but ninth in the chronology of date.
 - 3. There are three Minor Prophets after the return from captivity of Babylon from 536-425 B.C.
 - a. Haggai 520 B.C.
 - b. Zechariah 520 B.C.
 - c. Malachi 430 B.C.

This was the prophet Habakkuk!

II. The book of Habakkuk.

- A.** The book has had its critics which have attempted to rearrange the order of the book.
1. They have denied certain portions.
 2. They have concluded that chapter three is not original, due to the fact that it did not appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947-48.
 3. But the book has no record of Jewish or Christian questioning its authenticity, till modern times.
- B.** The book of Habakkuk is slightly different from the usual prophetic message in that it consists of a dialogue between the prophet and God, though there is also the revelation of God's mind.
1. Habakkuk did not speak for God to the people.
 2. Habakkuk spoke to God about the people.
- C.** The observations.
- a. Chapter one has two problems.
 - a. The wicked triumph over the righteous and God seems indifferent and inactive. Hab. 1:2-4
 - b. The wicked are used by God to judge His people, Judah. Hab. 1:5-17
 2. Chapter two has two promises.

- a. For the present: The just shall live by faith, the revelation of God, in the midst of evil and imperfection. Hab. 2:1-4
 - b. For the future: The just shall live by might in the midst of righteousness and perfection in the Millennium. Hab. 2:3, 14
- 3.** Chapter three has two proclamations.
- a. A Prayer and praise for the present, based on God's past record. Hab. 3:1-15
 - b. A Personal assurance of the future. Hab. 3:16-19
- D.** The content of the book.
1. The central message for man.
 - a. The just shall live by faith trusting and obeying God's word in spite of the circumstance and situation.

* The key verse quoted three times in the New Testament. Hab. 2:4-b; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38
 - b. Paul quotes Habakkuk to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia and applied it to the work of salvation in Christ alone and warned them of not believing. Hab. 1:5; Acts 13:41
 2. The central message about God.
 - a. God is sovereign.
 - 1) God is going to use Babylon to judge Judah. Hab. 1:5-6
 - 2) The burden as we stated means an oracle, implying judgment.
 - 3) Considered by many to be some of the best poetry in chapter three.

3. The central message to Israel.
 - a. God will establish His future Kingdom. Hab. 2:3, 14
 - b. The nation will be restored.
 4. God is in control and active in world affairs. Hab. 1
 - a. Faith is hindered by our sight.
 - b. Man is to go to God in his confusion.
 5. God will judge the wicked. Hab. 2
 - a. Faith trusts in God's holy justice.
 - b. Man is to wait upon God for an answer.
 6. God strengthens and blesses the righteous. Hab. 3
 - a. Faith rejoices in God's promises.
 - b. Man is to praise God having heard Him.
 7. The contrasts in the book.
 - a. Faith vs. sight.
 - b. Pride vs. humility.
 - c. Righteousness vs. wickedness.
 - d. Gloom vs. joy.
 - e. Confusion vs. confidence.
 - f. Talking vs. listening.
 - g. Problems vs. promises.
 - h. Pleading vs. intercession.
 - i. Understanding vs. trusting.
- E. The simple division.**
1. A burden: The problem of the prophet. Hab. 1
 2. A vision: The proclamation of God. Hab. 2
 3. A prayer: The petition and praise of the prophet. Hab. 3 (J. Sidlow Baxter)

1. The confusion of the prophet expressed in prayer. Hab. 1
2. The perception of the prophet cleared up by prayer. Hab. 2
3. The revelation of the prophet revealed through prayer. Hab. 3 (Xavier Ries)

This is the book of Habakkuk!

III. The times of Habakkuk.

- A. The leading power.**
 1. Babylon was a rising power having obtained their independence from Assyria in 625 B. C. under Nabopolassar.
 2. Nahum prophesied of the destruction of Ninevah by Babylon and it took place in 612 B.C.
 3. In 605 B. C. Babylon defeated Egypt at Carchemish.
 4. Babylon came in the first siege to Jerusalem in 606 B. C. followed by two others 596 and 586 B. C.
- B. The reigning kings.**
 1. Josiah reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem, from 640-609 B.C. 2Chron. 34:1b
 - a. Josiah listened with a deaf ear. 2Chron. 35:20-22; 2Kings 23:28-30
 - b. He finished preparing all the temple, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt came up to fight at Carchemish by the Euphrates and he went out against him. 2Chron. 35:20

- * Neco came up against Assyria not Jerusalem.
- c. He was sent a message from Neco that he meant no harm to him and warned him not to meddle with him lest he destroy him. 2Chron. 35:21
 - d. He did not pay heed to the warning from the mouth of God it says and disguising himself proceeded to the Valley of Megiddo. 2Chron. 35:22
 - e. Josiah lost his life being struck by an archers he requested his servants to take him away for he was severely wounded and die in Jerusalem. 2Chron. 35:23-24; 2Kings 23:28-30
 - f. Josiah was lamented by all of Judah and Jerusalem as well as Jeremiah the prophet, 609 B. C. 2Chron. 35:24d-25
2. Jehoahaz reigned three months. 2Kings 23:31-34
 - a. He was twenty-three years old when he became king.
 - b. He reigned for only three months.
 - c. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord as his fathers.
 - d. He was placed in prison in Egypt and the land was put under tribute of one-hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold.
 3. Jehoiakim reigned after Jehoahaz. 2Kings 23:35-37
 - a. He was the brother of Jehoahaz.

- b. His name was Eliakim and Pharaoh Necho placed him on the throne and he changed his name to Jehoiakim. 2Kings 23:28-37; Jer. 22:13-19
 - f. He was twenty-five years of age when he began his reign and he reigned for eleven years, doing evil in the sight of the Lord. 609-598 B. C.
4. The date of Habakkuk's prophecy.
 - a. Some place the prophecy in Manasseh's reign, but that appears to early.
 - b. Others place his prophecy towards the end of Josiah's reign, 639-608 B. C. and certainly he was alive then.
 - c. Probably it fits best in the reign of Jehoiakim, 609-598 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and made him his vassal. 2Kings 24
 - 1) Babylon was a rising power having obtained their independence from Assyria in 625 B.C. under Nebopolassar.
 - 2) Nahum prophesied of the destruction of Ninevah by Babylon and it took place in 612 B. C.
 - a) Zephaniah told us God would make Ninevah desolate showing it yet future and Habakkuk was his contemporary and says nothing of Nineveh. Hab. 2:13
 - b) If it is because Ninevah had been destroyed, then Habakkuk's prophecy would fall between 611-605 B.C.

- 3) In 605 B.C. Babylon defeated Egypt at Carchemish as well as the Babylon's first siege to Jerusalem in 605-6 B. C., followed by two others 596 and 586 B. C.
- d. The contemporary prophets were Nahum, Zephaniah and Jeremiah.
 - * The times of a nation regarding its moral and ethical condition will always be a true indicator whether it is rising or dying as Habakkuk's!

These were the times of Habakkuk!

IV. The message of Habakkuk.

- A. God is in control and active in world affairs. Hab. 1:1-17
 - 1. Introduction to the book. Hab. 1:1
 - a. The burden is the oracle that he saw in a vision.
 - * The term is usually identified with judgment.
 - b. The prophet is the mouthpiece of God for himself.
 - 1) He is a prophet distinct in that he is dialoguing with God and being instructed, rather than being the mouth piece of God primarily.
 - 2) He is not so much delivering a message, as he is attempting to resolve the problem he has with God.

- 3) He is named Habakkuk again means to embrace, indicative of his need to embrace the faithfulness of God.
- 2. The prophet's first complaint is God's seeming indifference and inactiveness regarding evil, as the wicked prevail over the righteous. Hab. 1:2-4
 - a. He complains to God that he is not hearing his cry against the violence because He has not intervened. Hab. 1:2
 - 1) His impatience is marked by the phrase, "How long?"
 - * Like many of the Psalms and the martyrs under the 5th seal. Rev. 6:10
 - 2) His perception of God is that he is not saving the righteous.
 - * Notice he went to God not man!
 - b. He asks why God allows him to see all the evil? Hab. 1:3
 - 1) He is in affect blaming God.
 - 2) He is indirectly saying he was more sensitive than God.
 - a) But Jeremiah stood at the house of the Lord and denounced the spiritual evil and they wanted to kill him. Jer. 26:1-11
 - b) Jeremiah said their repentance was superficial. Jer. 7
 - c. He declared the consequence was that the law is powerless, justice is never carried out, the wicked outnumber the righteous, consequently twisted judgment goes forth. Hab. 1:4

2. God answers the prophet's first complaint and tells Him that He is not only aware, but is bringing the Chaldeans to judge Judah. Hab. 1:5-11
 - a. God's work is in affect, though unknown to man. Hab. 1:5
 - * The verse is quoted in Acts by Paul at Antioch at the Jews unbelief in the gospel. Acts 13:40-41
 - b. God's instrument of judgment was to be Babylon whose character is bitter and hasty as a nation. Hab. 1:6
 - c. They are arrogant. Hab. 1:7
 - d. They are destructive and merciless. Hab. 1:8
 - e. They conquer all. Hab. 1:9
 - f. They are proud and invincible. Hab. 1:10
 - * The Babylonians would raise dirt mounds next to the city wall to climb the wall!
 - g. They give credit to their idols. Hab. 1:11
 - * Belshazzar took the vessels of God to praise his idols of gold and silver. Dan. 5
3. The prophet's second complaint is his confusion regarding God using a more evil nation to chasten and judge His people. Hab. 1:12-17
 - a. Knowing God was holy he couldn't reconcile His using a more wicked nation to judge His people. Hab. 1:12
 - 1) We shall not die.

- 2) You have marked them for correction, Babylon.
 - b. Knowing God can not condone evil how could God do this? Hab. 1:13
 - 1) This reminds us of Peter when he rebuked Jesus for proclaiming His death and resurrection. Matt. 16:22
 - 2) When God doesn't act according to our reason or understanding we seek to become confused and childish at times. Prov. 3:5-7
 - c. The Chaldeans were cruel in their warfare. Hab. 1:14-17
 - 1) By their affliction and torture of the people they take. Hab. 1:14-15
 - 2) By the ascribed worship of their gods. Hab. 1:16
 - 3) By their ongoing lack of pity. Hab. 1:17
- B. God will judge the wicked. Hab. 2:1-20**
1. The prophet resolves to wait on God with a contrite heart. Hab. 2:1
 - a. He would stand his watch as he set himself in his tower.
 - b. He would do so with the intent and purpose to see what God would answer him.
 - c. He would do so to know what to say to God, knowing he was wrong in his assessment of Him.
 - * He knew he was wrong because he knew the nature and attributes of God

- and that He cannot violate them and remain true to them!
2. God answers the prophet's second complaint, evil will not always prevail and that the believer lives by faith, knowing he waits for the future kingdom of righteousness. Hab. 2:2-5
 - a. God answers the prophet a second time. Hab. 2:2
 - 1) The prophet is commanded by God to write the vision clearly.
 - 2) The prophet is told the reason, so that he who reads it may run.
 - b. The prophet is told the nature of the vision. Hab. 2:3
 - 1) The vision is for an appointed time, the future. Hab. 2:3a
 - 2) The vision will come to pass, at the end it will be the last days. Hab. 2:3b
 - 3) The vision is certain, though it tarry, wait for it will be fulfilled, it will surely come. Hab. 2:3c-e
* Patience is an essential for life in the Spirit!
 - c. The prophet is given God's kingdom principle. Hab. 2:4
 - 1) The proud are not upright in themselves. Hab. 2:4a-b
 - 2) The just shall live by faith in God's revelation. Hab. 2:4c
 - a) This was Martin Luther's battle cry for the Reformation

- b) It is quoted three times in the New Testament. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38
* Without faith is impossible to please God... Heb. 11:6
 - d. The greed and unsatisfied life of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar is declared. Hab. 2:5
3. The woe's of God regarding the wicked. Hab. 2:6-19
* We have five woes, some are very clearly addressed to Babylon, while others could apply to Judah.
 - a. Their dishonest gain is the first woe. Hab. 2:6-8
 - 1) The pledges were the deposits for security greater than needed, being capitalist. Hab. 2:6
 - 2) The retribution will come to them. Hab. 2:7-8
 - b. Their covetous gain is the second woe. Hab. 2:9-11
 - 1) To those who enrich themselves dishonestly to secure his safety. Hab. 2:9
 - 2) To those who give evil counsel that destroys them. Hab. 2:10-11
 - c. Their oppressive ruling is the third woe. Hab. 2:12-14
 - 1) Those who establish themselves in authority through blood and iniquity. Hab. 2:12

- 2) Those who do so do it in vain. Hab. 2:13
- 3) The Lord will ultimately be the ruling authority in the Kingdom Age. Hab. 2:14
* Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain., who build it! Ps. 27:1a
- d. Their drunken sexual exploitation is the forth woe. Hab. 2:15-17
 - 1) Those who seduce people through alcohol. Hab. 2:15
 - 2) Those people will be punished by God for being perverse and treacherous. Hab. 2:16-17
- e. Their idolatry is the fifth woe. Hab. 2:18-19
 - 1) They can't talk or hear. Hab. 2:18; Ps 115:4-8
 - 2) They are lifeless idols. Hab. 2:19
 - a) Elijah on Carmel said, "Maybe he is asleep." 1Kings 18
 - b) Jeremiah condemned idols. Jer. 10:3-16
- f. They are in contrast to the Lord. Hab. 2:20
 - 1) The Lord is alive and well ruling and is in control from His holy temple in heaven and all should be silent before Him. Is. 6
 - 2)) The implication being that no evil person will escape eternal judgment

though they seem to escape the consequences in this life time.

- C. God strengthens and blesses the righteous. Hab. 3:1-19
 - 1. The prophet's prayer of intercession. Hab. 3:1-2
 - a. The prayer is ascribed to Habakkuk. Hab. 3:1
 - 1) The prayer is a liturgical Psalm Hymn on Shigionoth, the meaning is uncertain, but it was set to string instruments for the temple choir. Hab. 3:1
 - 2) Verse nineteen tells us it was directed to the chief musician with stringed instrument, perhaps giving us a hint that Habakkuk was a Levite?
 - b. The prayer. Hab. 3:2
 - 1) He acknowledges hearing God's voice resulting in fear.
 - 2) His petition is three-fold.
 - a) To revive His work in the midst of the years, literally keep alive.
 - b) To execute His plan as revealed.
 - c) To remember mercy in wrath.
 - 2. The prophet's praise of God for His power and involvement in world affairs in man's history. Hab. 3:3-15
* Here the prophet reveals the Coming of Jesus to set up the Kingdom, yet uses God's past events dealing with Israel.
 - a. The future return of Christ. Hab. 3:3-6

- 1) The Holy One comes from Teman, Edom. Hab. 3:3a-b; Is 63:1-6
- 2) His glory covers the heaven and earth full of His praise at His return. Hab. 3:3c-d
* Solomon's temple was filled and men had to run out. 1Kings 8:11
- 3) The brightness and power are seen. 3:4
* Moses face shined, Jesus was transfigured on the Mount. Ex. 34:29-30; Matt. 17
- 4) His Coming is preceded by judgment and pestilence in the Great-Tribulation. Hab. 3:5
- 5) The coming will bring about the judgment of the nations. Hab. 3:6; Matt. 25
* Mount of Olives will split. Zech. 14:1-7
- b. The past judgments of God. Hab. 3:7-15
* God's past acts perhaps referring to the days of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, etc.
 - 1) God will be feared by all. Hab. 3:7
 - 2) God was displeased with man not creation, but used creation in His judgment. Hab. 3:8
 - 3) God judges by an oath. Hab. 3:9
* Deut. 32:40-42
 - 4) God did so at the flood, Red Sea and the Jordan River. Hab. 3:10
 - 5) God intervened for Joshua. Hab. 3:11; Josh. 10:12-14

- 6) God destroyed the people of the land of Canaan. Hab. 3:12-15
3. The prophet's proclamation of faith and trust in God for joy and strength in spite of coming judgment because he feared the Lord. Hab. 3:16-19
 - a. His response in view of God's past judgments. Hab. 3:16
 - 1) Habakkuk heard the past judgments of God and feared and trembled in reverence. Hab. 3:16a-d
* He was like Isaiah in fear and awe, woe is me!
 - 2) Habakkuk could rest now in God's plan and judgment trusting His ways. Hab. 3:16e-g
 - b. His repentance was in view of Israel's judgment. Hab. 3:17-18
 - 1) He would be a man of faith, believing God, though the present evidence was to the contrary. Hab. 3:17
 - 2) He would rejoice in the Lord and God of his salvation not in the situation. Hab. 3:18
* I will jump up and down and spin around, literally!
 - c. His resilient strength through Judgment by depending on God. Hab. 3:19
 - 1) He would draw from God's strength. Hab. 3:19a
 - 2) He would be an overcomer as a deer hitting the high places and not be tripped up. Hab. 3:19b-c

* Neh. 8:10g; 2Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13;
Jn. 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:20-21;
Is. 40:29-31

4. The prophet is a model for us.
 - a. He began with his prayer of complaint.
Hab. 1:1:2
 - b. He moved to a prayer of confusion. Hab. 1:12-13
 - c. He responded with a prayer of contrition.
Hab. 2:1
 - d. He ended up with a prayer of confident intercession. Hab. 3:1-2, 18-19

D. Lessons noted to be learned from Habakkuk.

1. The prophet begins in gloom, ends in joy.
2. The prophet begins confused in prayer, ends confident because of prayer.
3. The prophet begins by talking to God, ends by listening to God.
4. The prophet begins with a problem, ends believing God's promises.
5. The prophet begins pleading judgment, ends interceding for revival and mercy.
6. The prophet begins not understanding the work of God, ends up trusting the ways of God.
7. The prophet begins hopeless and ends up with great hope.

This was the message of Habakkuk!