

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE TO HABAKKUK

TEXT: HABAKKUK 1:1-11

Introduction:

1. Nothing is known of Habakkuk outside of the book which bears his name (cf. Scofield's introduction).
2. The date of the book is uncertain (Scofield Bible says 626 BC). He was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah. The book of Habakkuk was probably written during the time of King Josiah and his son and successor Jehoiakim.
3. The northern kingdom had already gone into captivity, and the southern kingdom was on the brink of falling.
4. King Josiah was a good king, but after him all of the kings of Judah were wicked.
5. It was a violent era. Nineveh had fallen in 612 BC under the attack of the Babylonians led by Nabopolossar, in alliance with the Medes and the Scythians.
6. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC. King Josiah died in this famous battle. Many scholars place the writing of Habakkuk after this event.
7. Habakkuk writes in the form of a dialogue. There are three chapters, and the opening two chapters contain a dialogue between the LORD and Habakkuk.
8. Habakkuk raises some perplexing questions, and the LORD, recognizing the prophet's sincerity, answers them.

9. Habakkuk wanted to know why God permits evil, and why God would use the Babylonians, an idolatrous heathen nation, and far more wicked than Judah, to punish them.
10. God's answer to Habakkuk was that He was not through with Babylon – God would surely judge Babylon too.

I. THE PERPLEXED PROPHET WHO BROUGHT HIS PROBLEM TO THE LORD (Chapter 1)

II. THE WAITING PROPHET WHO RECEIVED THE ANSWER FROM THE LORD (Chapter 2)

III. THE REJOICING PROPHET WHO WAS STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD (Chapter 3)

Another outline:

I. HABAKKUK IS WONDERING (Chapter 1).

II. HABAKKUK IS WAITING (Chapter 2).

III. HABAKKUK IS WORSHIPPING (Chapter 3).

I. HABAKKUK IS WAITING TO HEAR FROM GOD

1. Habakkuk had a "burden" (1:1) – "a heavy, weighty thing" (Scofield Bible, p. 724).
2. Habakkuk cried out, "O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" (1:2).
3. Habakkuk felt that God was not responding to his prayers. Throughout history God's people have often felt this way.
4. In Psalm 73:3, the Psalmist wrote, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

5. It is a wonderful psalm. The Psalmist says in verses 16 and 17, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.”
6. He concludes the psalm by saying, “But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works” (Ps. 73:28).
7. In Revelation 6:10, the martyrs cry “with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”
8. Whenever we feel discouraged, or that God is not responding to our prayers, we need to go to the Word of God. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).
9. The Word of God strengthens our faith.
 - “Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips” (Psalm 21:2).
 - “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Psalm 102:17).
 - “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7, 8).
 - “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).
 - “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14).
10. There are many, many other similar promises in the Bible. We know God hears our prayers, and we know God answers our prayers.

11. But Habakkuk cried out to God (1:2) because it seemed to him that God was not listening – “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!” (1:2a).
12. Habakkuk wanted to know why God permitted evil to exist. Why didn't God move in judgment? God appeared to be silent and indifferent (1:2-4).
13. Today many are asking similar questions. For example, why did God allow those bloodthirsty Muslim terrorists to kill all those innocent people in Mumbai, India?
14. Have you ever wondered why the newspapers refer to these terrorists as “militants” and “gunmen” and not “terrorists”?
15. Have you noticed that many reports fail to mention that the terrorists were Muslim?
16. Have you noticed that the news media has practically ignored the terrorism in Orissa, India? Why is that? It is because Hindu fanatics have murdered hundreds of innocent Christians, and the liberal news media is not interested in that.
17. A recent Voice of the Martyrs newsletter (Dec. 2008) reports that 70,000 people have been left homeless because of anti-Christian violence in Orissa. Hundreds have been killed, and thousands have been injured.
18. The Indian government has refused to do anything about it. They have allowed the violence and persecution of Christians to go on for months, and according to the Voice of Martyrs, the violence has now spread to six other states.
19. The Barnabas Fund website reports that, “Christians have been murdered, some cut to pieces and others burnt alive...About 18,000 people have been injured, many of them severely; numerous Christian women have been raped; some 4,400 homes have been destroyed; 300

- villages have been cleansed of all Christians; and several orphanages and hundreds of churches and church buildings have been torched and razed. Relief camps, where Christians have fled for safety and shelter, have been attacked and drinking water has been poisoned.”
20. “Over 50,000 Christians are thought to be homeless, and around 30,000, more than half of them children, are hiding in the jungle, many without any food and water. Starvation is a very real danger for many of them, especially for the children, the elderly and the sick. Christians wanting to return to their homes have been told by the Hindu extremists: ‘Come back as Hindu or don’t come back at all.’”
21. “Many who dare to return to their villages are forcibly converted to Hinduism. Sometimes the Hindu extremists pour petrol over the Christians and then ask them to convert; if they refuse they will be burnt. And still the government shows itself reluctant to act. Although there has been talk of banning the Bajrang Dal, one of the Hindu nationalist groups responsible for the gruesome acts, and of imposing presidential rule over Orissa, no action has been taken. Additional police and a helicopter have been sent to the area, which has helped to improve conditions in at least some districts, but officials still advise journalists and members of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) not to go into the affected areas as they cannot provide protection.”
22. I met a Christian from Orissa when I was preaching in Makati City, Philippines in October. He was in Manila for a conference, and he told me the Indian government would not even attempt to protect the Christians or arrest the Hindu radicals responsible for the violence.
23. So consider this the next time you hear someone ask, “Why does God allow this violence?” They need to read the Bible (cf. Genesis 6:5-8, 11-13; II Peter 3:3-13).

24. "The law is slacked" (1:4). We have a similar situation today in America. Wicked judges and lawyers, as well as ignorant and foolish juries have turned our judicial system upside down.
25. Often we will hear about some depraved criminals who rape and kill, only to discover they never should have been out on the street in the first place.
26. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).

II. HABAKKUK HEARS FROM GOD (1:5-11).

1. The apostle Paul quoted Habakkuk 1:5 in Acts 13:41, when he was preaching to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia.
2. God wanted Habakkuk to know that rather than being indifferent or insensitive to sin, God was raising up the Chaldeans as His instrument to chasten backslidden Judah (1:5, 6).
3. The Chaldeans originally were a nomadic desert tribe of Semitic origin. They were descended from Chesed, a son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham (Gen. 22:22).
4. The Chaldeans settled in Babylonia and were referred to by Habakkuk at a time when they were becoming the most powerful nation in the world, replacing the Assyrians, who replaced the Egyptians, etc.
5. Though the Bible often uses the terms Chaldeans and Babylonians interchangeably, there is a distinction.
6. How the LORD describes the Chaldeans:
 - "that bitter and hasty nation" (1:6).

- “They are terrible and dreadful” (1:7).
 - “their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves” (1:7b). They were self-confident.
 - They were swift and fierce (1:8; cf. verse 6, “hasty”).
 - They were violent (1:9).
 - They were proud and scornful (1:10).
 - They were worshippers of false gods (1:11).
7. Over 800 years earlier, Moses warned the Israelites that if they departed from the LORD, this is exactly what would happen. “The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand” (Deut. 28:49).

III. HABAKKUK IS STILL WONDERING (1:12-17).

1. Although the LORD answered Habakkuk, the prophet is still perplexed.

Nevertheless, Habakkuk was a man of great faith.

- Habakkuk believed God was eternal. “Art thou not from everlasting...” (1:12). God transcends time. God is not limited by time. God “is not hampered by being locked into the succession of events as they occur” (John Phillips).

- Habakkuk had a personal relationship with God – “O LORD my God...” (1:12).
 - Habakkuk understood that God was holy (1:12).
 - He believed God would preserve His people Israel – “we shall not die” (1:12).
 - Habakkuk understood that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (1:13).
 - That is why our Lord cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1).
 - “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).
2. Habakkuk understood that the LORD was using the Chaldeans to correct Judah – “Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction” (1:12b).
 3. But nevertheless, Habakkuk could not understand why God would allow the wicked to devour “the man that is more righteous than he” (1:13b).
 4. The Chaldeans were gathered up their enemies like fish in a net (1:14-17).

CONCLUSION:

Habakkuk has asked some good questions (1:17). These questions have long perplexed mankind.

- Why does God tolerate evil? Answer: God is longsuffering (II Peter 3:9).
- Why doesn't God judge the wicked? Answer: He will judge the wicked (cf. Matthew 24 & 25; II Thess. 1:6-10; Book of Revelation, etc.).
- Why does God use wicked people to chasten others that are less wicked? Answer: God answers this question in Habakkuk chapter 2. In the meantime, we must remember that "less wicked" is still wicked, and all sin must be judged.

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