

NAME

Mitchell:

The name “Habakkuk” means “embracing or caressing.” Martin Luther once said, “*Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another. He takes him into his arms. He embraces his people and takes them into his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up as one embraces a weeping child to quiet it with words, 'If God wills it will soon be better.'*”

AUTHOR

Little is known about Habakkuk except that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah (626-585 B.C) and a man of vigorous faith rooted deeply in the religious traditions of Israel. He does reveal an intimate knowledge of the priesthood and its work, so he could have possibly been a priest. The third chapter is a majestic psalm, so he could possibly have been a musician in the Temple.

DATE

NASB - Introduction to Habakkuk:

The Babylonian invasion is yet future, but seemingly very near, so he probably lived and wrote during the last days of the kingdom of Judah. The prediction of the coming Babylonian invasion (Habakkuk 1:6) indicates that Habakkuk lived in Judah toward the end of Josiah's reign (640-609 B.C.) or at the beginning of Jehoiakim's (609-598 B.C.). The prophecy is generally dated a little before or after the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.), when Egyptian forces, who had earlier gone to the aid of the last Assyrian king, were routed by the Babylonians under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar and were pursued as far as the Egyptian border (Jeremiah 46). Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, probably lived to see the initial fulfillment of his prophecy when Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonians in 597 B.C.

The prophecy belongs to the period between 625 and 606 B.C. It probably dates to about 607 B.C., early in Jehoiakim's reign.

THEME

Halley (page 44): “*The Just Shall Live By Faith*”

Mitchell: “*The Just Shall Live By Faith*” (2:4)

Carl: “*Keep the faith baby*”

Mitchell:

This statement (“*The just shall live by faith.*”) is basic to Christian living. How do I know that passages like Romans 8:28 are true? Do I know it by empirical testing or by experience... No! I know it is true because God who cannot lie has categorically told me that it is true! Truly, the just shall live by faith! Paul used this statement as the basis for three New Testament epistles: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 (assuming Paul wrote Hebrews).

This book is not a prediction or a condemnation of sin so much as it is a complaint. Unlike the other prophets, Habakkuk does not address his speech to his own countrymen or a foreign people, but rather directs it to God alone (see below - recipient). His main burden is the solving of a very perplexing problem: Why was God silent when wickedness prevailed on every hand? Men were

defying God and getting away with it.

Habakkuk has often been referred to as “The free-thinker among the prophets” because he actually questions the government of God. He could not reconcile a good and righteousness God with the facts of life as he saw them.

NASB - Introduction to Habakkuk:

Habakkuk was perplexed that wickedness, strife, and oppression were rampant in Judah but God seemingly did nothing. When told that the Lord was preparing to do something about it through the “fierce” Babylonians (1:6), his perplexity only intensified: How could God, who is “*too pure to approve evil*” (1:13), appoint such a nation “*to judge*” (1:12) “*those more righteous than they*” (1:13)?

God makes it clear, however, that eventually the corrupt destroyer will itself be destroyed. In the end Habakkuk learns to rest in God’s appointments and await His working in a spirit of worship.

Key Word (Nelson’s): The Just Shall Live By Faith - Habakkuk struggles in his faith when he sees men flagrantly violate God’s law and distort justice on every level, without fear of divine intervention. He wants to know why God allows this growing iniquity to go unpunished. God’s answer satisfies Habakkuk that he can trust Him even in the worst of circumstances because of His matchless wisdom, goodness, and power.

Key Verses (Nelson’s):

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

“Thought the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer’s; He makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments” (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

Key Chapter (Nelson’s): 3 - The Book of Habakkuk builds to a triumphant climax reached in the last three verses (Habakkuk 3:17-19). The beginning of the book and the ending stand in stark contrast: mystery to certainty, questioning to affirming, and complaint to confidence.

Nelsons:

In what seems to be merely an incidental contrast between the arrogance of the Babylonians and the humble submission of the righteous to God, Habakkuk states a fundamental principle of the gospel: “*The just shall live by his faith.*” When Paul (Romans 1:7; Galatians 3:11) and the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 10:38) quote this verse, they merely apply the principle laid down by the prophet regarding the importance of faith in man’s relationship to God.

The prophet’s response to the difficult questions put to him: The just shall live by faith.

- Question 1: Why does God not respond to the wrong and injustice in the land (Habakkuk 1:2-4)?
- Answer: He is about to respond by using Babylon as a tool of judgment (Habakkuk 1:5-11).

- Question 2: Why does God use the wicked Babylonians to punish those more righteous than themselves (Habakkuk 1:12,13)?
- Answer: God has chosen this plan of action (Habakkuk 2:2,3). The just person will live by faith in God (Habakkuk 2:4). Woe to the unrighteous (Habakkuk 2:6-20).

Outline:

- I. Faith Tested 1
- II. Faith Taught 2
- III. Faith Triumphant 3
 - A. The Petition 3:1,2
 - B. The Panorama 3:3-15
 - C. The Praise 3:16-19

RECIPIENTS

NASB - Introduction to Habakkuk:

Among the prophetic writings, Habakkuk is somewhat unique in that it includes no oracle addressed to Israel. It contains, rather, a dialogue between the prophet and God (see above - theme)... This account of wrestling with God is, however, not just a fragment from a private journal that has somehow entered the public domain. It was composed for Israel. No doubt it represents the voice of the godly in Judah, struggling to comprehend the ways of God. God's answers therefore spoke to all who shared Habakkuk's troubled doubts. And, Habakkuk's confession became a public expressions as indicated by his liturgical notations (Habakkuk 3:1ff).

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

Some key lessons which can be learned from Habakkuk:

1. God wants our honest heart - an honest heart is a prerequisite to being taught
2. Happiness is a different thing than joy
3. Happiness is dependant upon circumstances. Joy endures despite circumstances.
4. Rejoicing triumphs over turbulence
5. God's ways are not our ways - we need to respect God's timing (His timing of His response)

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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