

The Prayers of Habakkuk

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INTRODUCTION TO HABAKKUK

The Structure of the Habakkuk

Lament One: How long before you judge Judah (1:2-4)?

Answer One: Not long; Babylon is coming (1:5-11).

Lament Two: Why Babylon (1:12-2:1)?

Answer Two: There is an appointed time for Babylon as well (2:2-5).

Woe Oracle: The sins of Babylon are many (2:6-20).

Praise: Rejoice in God's saving judgment and his faithful presence (3:1-19).

Contemporary Prophets

<u>Prophet</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Jeremiah	ca. 627-586	The royal counselor who speaks for God before the king.
Zephaniah	ca. 627	Predicts severe punishment for Judah's sins of idolatry.
Nahum	ca. 612	Speaks judgment against Nineveh.
Habakkuk	ca. 609-605	Questions God about Judah's sins.
Daniel	ca. 605-530	A royal counselor for Babylonian and Persian kings
Ezekiel	ca. 593-571	A prophet for the people exiled in Babylon

WHO WAS HABAKKUK?

Historical Introduction

The Kings of Judah

<u>King</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Texts</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Josiah	640-609	2 Kgs 21:1-23:30 2 Chr 34-35	Became king at 8 years of age, and led a religious reformation. One of the best kings of Judah. However, he died in an attempt to defeat Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt at the battle of Megiddo in 609.

Jehoahaz	609	2 Kgs 23:31-33 2 Chr 36:1-3	Middle son of Josiah, but ruled only 3 months. Was deposed by Necho, and he died as a prisoner in Egypt.
Jehoiakim	609-597	2 Kgs 23:34-24:7 2 Chr 36:4-8	Oldest son of Josiah; an evil ruler who persecuted Jeremiah; Babylon's first captives taken in 605.
Jehoiachin	597	2 Kgs 24:8-16 2 Chr 36:9-10	Son of Jehoiakim, reigned only four months, and was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597. He died in Babylon.
Zedekiah	597-586	2 Kgs 24:17-25:21 2 Chr 36:11-21 Jer 39:1-10	Josiah's 3rd son; rebelled against Babylon, but was taken into captivity after his sons were killed.

World Politics

640 -- Assyria is the dominant world power.

616 -- Egyptians and Assyrians defeated by Medes and Babylonians near the Euphrates.

614 -- The Medes and Babylonians sack the city of Assur.

612 -- The Medes and Babylonians sack the city of Nineveh.

610 -- The Babylonians sack the city of Haran and Assyrian power is destroyed.

609 -- Pharaoh Necho II defeats Josiah at Megiddo.

609 -- Nabopolassar of Babylon defeats Necho II at Haran.

605 -- Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeats Necho II at Carchemish on the Euphrates.

605 -- Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem.

601 -- Nebuchadnezzar and Necho II fight to a draw at the border of Egypt.

597 -- Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem because of an alliance with Egypt.

586 -- Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem because of an alliance with Egypt.

586 -- Judah is annexed by Babylon.

How Long, O Lord? Habakkuk 1:2-11

The First Lament (1:2-4)

The Question: How long? Will you not hear?

The Problem: Sin is pervasive in Judah's culture. There is:

destruction and violence
strife and contention

The Result: There is no justice in the land.

the law is paralyzed
the wicked oppress the righteous

Example: The Reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim (Jer. 23).

sins of innocent blood
oppression of the poor, alien, widow
luxurious living on the backs on the poor

God's Answer (1:5-11)

1. God is going to something incredible in answer to Habakkuk's prayer.
2. God will raise up the Babylonians to punish Judah (1:6).
 - a. They seize homes that do not belong to them (1:6).
 - b. They are a law unto themselves and prideful (1:7).
 - c. They are unstoppable (1:8-9).
 - d. They destroy kings and their cities (1:10-11).
3. The point: God will judge the injustice of Judah's Kings.

Why, O Lord? Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

The Second Lament (1:12-17)

The Questions: Why do you tolerate evil?
Why do you use the greater evil to punish the lesser evil?

The Problem: The Holiness of God.

God is the Holy One
God cannot look on or tolerate evil.

The Accusation: God is unfair.

You have made Babylon ruler over us.
We are like fish caught in his net.
He credits his net rather than you.
He uses his net for luxury.
He shows no mercy.

Habakkuk's Determination (2:1)

"I will stand at my watchpost,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he will answer concerning my complaint" (NRSV).

1. Habakkuk will wait for God's answer; he expects it.
2. He characterizes his prayer as a "complaint" (reproof, argument; cf. Job 13:6; 23:4; Proverbs 1:23,25,30; 3:11; 5:12; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,10,31,32; 27:5; 29:1,15).

THE LORD ANSWERS! Habakkuk 2:2-5

Preparation for the Answer (2:2)

Write it Down : God has given a vision/revelation.

Announce it: the runner must herald it .

The Answer

Wait but Expect God's Action (2:3)

The Principle: Pride vs. Faith (2:4)

The Proudful will Fall (2:5)

Habakkuk 2:4 in the New Testament

Romans 1:16-17 -- The righteousness of God comes by faith.

Galatians 3:11 -- Righteousness does not come by works.

Hebrews 10:35-39 -- A call for faithful endurance.

Contemporary Application

Humility in the Face of Suffering

Humble Patience while Waiting for God's Response

Faith as the Principle of Acceptance before God.

WOES ON BABYLON

Habakkuk 2:6-20

Introduction: The Ridicule of the Peoples (2:6a).

The Woes:

1. Woe One (2:6b-8): Profit from Debtors & Bloodshed.
2. Woe Two (2:9-11): Unjust Gain and Cutting off the Peoples.
3. Woe Three (2:12-14): Crime and Bloodshed.
4. Woe Four (2:15-18): The Rape of Peoples and the Earth.
5. Woe Five (2:19-20): Idolatry.

The Theological Statements:

Structure: 2:6b-14 is 10 lines in Hebrew
 2:15-19 is 10 lines in Hebrew

Two Structural Statements:

1. 2:14 -- the earth is filled with God's glory.
 contrast: 2:8, with what Babylon filled the earth.
2. 2:20 -- God is in his holy temple; let the earth be silent.
 contrast: 2:19, Babylon's own pride/gods.

THE SANCTUARY EXPERIENCE

Habbakuk 3:1-19

Context

1. Literary Genre: A Psalm or tepillah (prayer; occurs 32 times in the Psalms or in the superscription of a Psalm [e.g., 90, 102, 142]).
2. Musical Setting (musical notations including musical accompaniment; 3:1,3,9,13,19).
3. Temple Setting: intended to be sung in the temple among the assembled people of God.

Structure

1. Title (3:1)
2. Petition: A Request to God (3:2)
3. Theophany: The Appearance of God (3:3-7)
4. The Battle: The Work of God (3:8-15)
5. Response of Faith (3:16-19).

The Prayer of Faith

1. Fear, but Patience (3:16).
2. Devastation, but Joy (3:17-18).
3. God will Enable (3:19).