

Minor Prophets...

THE MINOR PROPHETS

The Book of Habakkuk

Hab. 1:1-4

...Major Message

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Hab. 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

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TITLE AND WRITER

The title of the book is the name of its writer.

UNITY

The major challenge to the unity of the book has come from liberal scholars who view psalmic material such as chapter 3 as postexilic.

DATE

References in the book help us date it approximately, but make it impossible to be precise or dogmatic.

- King Jehoiakim ruled Judah from 609 to 598 B.C., so it was apparently during his reign that Habakkuk prophesied (cf. 2 Kings 23:36—24:7; 2 Chron. 36:5-8). This is the opinion of most evangelical scholars.

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- The background to Habakkuk is the decline of the Judean kingdom that began with the death of King Josiah in 609 B.C. Leon Wood dated this book more precisely at about 605 B.C. Richard Patterson favored a date of composition about 655-650 B.C., during Manasseh's reign.

PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Since the Chaldeans were on the rise when Habakkuk wrote, the prophet must have lived in Judah.

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

The people to whom Habakkuk ministered were Judeans who apparently lived under the reign of King Jehoiakim.

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Minor Prophets... **LITERARY FORM**

This book employs a variety of literary forms.

- The first part of the book contains a dialogue between Habakkuk and his God that alternates between lament and oracle (1:2—2:5).
- The second part is a taunt or mocking song that the prophet put in the mouths of the nations that had suffered under Babylon's oppression. It consists of five "woes" (2:6-20).

Hab. 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19

- The third part is a psalm, complete with musical directions (ch. 3).

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DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Habakkuk is a unique book.

- Unlike other prophets who declared God's message to people this prophet dialogued with God about people.
- The righteous ones are to live by faith.

MESSAGE

- Habakkuk is unusual among the prophetic books in that it tells a story. In this, it is similar to Jonah, which is also the record of a prophet's experience.

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I. THE PROPHET IS TROUBLED (Wondering and Worrying) – 1:1-17

Hab. 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

A. The Crimes of Judah, 1:1-4

1. A Personal Sorrow, 1:1-2a

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Hab. 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2a O LORD, how long shall I cry...

1 Kgs. 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, **How long** halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Ex. 16:28 And the LORD said unto Moses, **How long** refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

Num. 14:11 And the LORD said unto Moses, **How long** will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

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Num. 14:27 **How long** shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

Josh. 18:3 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, **How long** are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?

Psa. 94:3 LORD, **how long** shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

Prov. 1:22 **How long**, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Prov. 6:9 **How long** wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

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Isa. 6:11 Then said I, Lord, **how long**? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

Jer. 4:14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. **How long** shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Rev. 6:10 And they cried 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?

2. A Perilous Situation, 1:2b-3

Hab. 1:2b "...even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention."

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3. A Permissive Society, 1:4

Hab. 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

a. The Law's Power Was Curbed, 1:4a – "Hab. 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth..."

Psa. 119:126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

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Jer. 5:26 For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

29 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

b. The Lord's People Were Careless, 1:4b – "...for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth."

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Psa. 17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.

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Conclusion

- *History is under God's control.*
- *History follows a divine plan.*
- *History follows a divine timetable.*
- *History is bound up with the divine kingdom.*

~D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones

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Eccl. 8:11 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.

Ezek. 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

30 **And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land,** that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

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