

The Minor Prophets

HABAKKUK

- I. Central Message: No matter what may come, we must never forget that God is in control of the affairs of the world. "Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?"
- II. Introduction
 - A. About the prophet
 1. name means, "embrace"
 2. nothing about his family background
 3. nothing else in Bible about him, although many legends have been written concerning him (but none of them has any foundation)
 4. some say that the musical form of chapter three indicates that he was a musician of the tribe of Levi
 5. contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah
 - B. About the book
 1. written after destruction of Ninevah but prior to destruction of Jerusalem (late 7th century BC)
 2. Habakkuk 2:4 quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:37,38
 3. four sections
 - a. 1:1-11 - Habakkuk's first question and God's response
 - b. 1:12-2:4 - Habakkuk's second question and God's response
 - c. 2:5-20 - the five woes
 - d. 3:1-19 - Habakkuk's poems (two sections: judgment [1-16] and faith [17-19])
 4. summary of book: The wickedness of the Jews is going to be punished by God sending the Chaldeans against them. Habakkuk cannot understand why God would allow the Chaldeans, a people more wicked than Judah, to defeat His people. God tells Habakkuk that the Chaldeans' exaltation will be temporary and that they themselves will be punished while the righteous will live. Habakkuk resigns himself to God's will (see especially 3:17-19)
- III. First Section
 - A. While the books of the other minor prophets address themselves to Israel or Judah, pleading with these nations to repent, Habakkuk addresses himself directly to God with questionings concerning the state of events.
 - B. Verses 2-4
 1. Habakkuk begins his questioning
 2. he has pleaded and pleaded concerning the wickedness in Judah and it seemed to him as if God had not even heard
 3. he had tried to live righteously and had delivered a faithful message but still the wickedness continued with unfair judgments, abuse of the law, etc.
 4. how many times today do we still ask ourselves similar questions?
 - a. "How long will wickedness continue?" "When will the righteous have the scales balanced?" "How much more evil can the world get?"

- b. we believe in an all powerful, all righteous God, but when we see the abundance of wickedness we are tempted to think that maybe He is not all powerful, maybe He is not all righteous or maybe He does not even exist
 - c. many give in to these temptations and simply conclude that since wickedness exists, God must not
 - d. based on this conclusion, they stop trying to serve God and simply give up
- C. Verses 5-11
- 1. God answers: His punishment against the wicked Jews is coming and the Babylonians will be His tool of retribution
 - 2. verse 5
 - a. the Chaldeans were already wreaking havoc on surrounding nations, but Judah apparently thought itself above destruction
 - b. "You're not going to believe this"
 - i. why?
 - ii. because they were puffed up
 - iii. see II Peter 3 (how many people today disbelieve a personal and universal judgment?)
 - 3. verses 6-10
 - a. the Babylonians were certainly not a saintly people; God was merely using them for His purpose
 - b. the might of their armies described in verse 8
 - c. verse 9 - they are coming for one purpose and will not cease until it is accomplished
 - d. verse 10 - they will ridicule any challenges to them
 - 4. verse 11 - perhaps reference to Nebuchadnezzar

IV. Second Section

- A. 1:12-2:1
 - 1. Habakkuk asks, "Why would the great Jehovah use a wicked people like the Chaldeans to punish His people?"
 - 2. more about the Babylonians
 - a. they take up the nations with no more effort than the fisherment hauls in a net full of fish
 - b. what's more, they give the credit for their power to themselves
 - 3. Habakkuk declares that he is going to give close attention to God's answer
- B. 2:2-4
 - 1. verse 2 - Habakkuk was to write the vision in legible writing so that those who desired to understand in the destruction could understand
 - 2. the judgment against the Chaldeans is coming also
 - a. it is set for an appointed time, but their actions against Judah must come first
 - b. live by faith in God and regardless of what may come, all will be well
 - i. this is, in context, an ACTIVE faith (how can one live by dead faith?)
 - ii. this usage helps explain the New Testament usages of the same phrase

- c. in short, we may have our questions concerning things of this life, but if we will live daily by our faith, without compromise and without surrender to self-will and the pull of the world, we will overcome
- V. Third Section (Habakkuk 2:5-20)
 - A. Five "woes" against the opposing nations
 - B. Verses 6-8
 - 1. the "woe" against the plunderer, the aggressor
 - 2. he will himself be plundered
 - C. Verses 9-11
 - 1. the "woe" against the self-seeking soul
 - 2. the very buildings that were erected from his selfishness
 - D. Verses 12-14
 - 1. the "woe" against the violent
 - 2. some say verse 14 also has reference to the Messiah and the spreading of the Gospel
 - E. Verses 15-17
 - 1. the "woe" against the inhumane
 - 2. their inhumanities shall return to them
 - F. Verse 18-20
 - 1. the "woe" against the idolatrous
 - 2. the idols will never be of value to them
 - 3. the supremacy of Jehovah over idols emphasized
- VI. Fourth Section (Habakkuk 3:1-19)
 - A. Habakkuk's poem (Shigionoth = "a wandering song or ode")
 - B. Lyrics regarding judgment (verses 1-16)
 - 1. verse 2 - plea for mercy in judgment
 - 2. next comes a remembrance of how God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and led them through the wilderness into the promised land coupled with a plea to do for His people at this time as He had done for them then
 - C. Lyrics regarding faith (verses 17-19)
 - 1. Habakkuk declares that even if the situation gets as bleak as it could possibly look, he would retain his faith in God
 - 2. if ever we wonder about the goodness of God or ask, "Why do the wicked prosper?" the end of our questioning should be with a statement like Habakkuk's: Whatever may come in life, I will remain true to God.