

HABAKKUK

The only times this name is found in Scripture are in this prophecy: 1:1; 3:1. We know that he was a prophet, and ch. 3, v. 19b, gives some evidence that he was a Levite since the Levites were responsible for the temple music.

He prophesies to Judah and to Jerusalem, even though he does not mention either one. Evidently it was obvious that it could apply to no one else. This is seen in the following:

- 1) The warning is against "the Chaldeans" (1:6), i.e., the Babylonians. They were the nation which finally took the people of Judah into captivity in 586 B.C.
- 2) However, this was such a surprising announcement that it must have been made before Babylon became the supreme power. Cf. Babylon overthrew Nineveh and Assyria in 625 B.C.
- 3) At the same time, the expression in 1:5, "in your days," would indicate that all of this was within the lifetime of those who were living when Habakkuk prophesied. Therefore, it could not have been much before 625.
- 4) Finally, in 2 Kings 21:10-15 reference is made to the prophets who prophesied concerning the overthrow and exile of Judah and Jerusalem. Habakkuk must have been one of these prophets.

Therefore, Habakkuk must have prophesied late in the reign of Manasseh. (Some put him early in the reign of Josiah. Manasseh and Josiah were divided in time by the brief reign of Amon.)

A PROPHET
WITH A
PROBLEM -

The contents of the prophecy show Habakkuk to be:

- 1) A man who hated sin, and who was jealous for God's righteousness.
- 2) A man of prayer (cf. 1:2-4, 12-17). Also, all of ch. 3.
- 3) A man of faith.
- 4) A man responsive to the Word of God.
- 5) A man of worship (ch. 3).

Cf. Job & Hab.
the same
prob., one
personal, the
other national.

Theme: Habakkuk's problem is one which comes up quite often in Scripture: Why do the wicked prosper, and it seems that God does nothing about it? Cf. Psa. 73. He is given the answer: God will do something about it!

The Outline: I. Introduction (1:1). Only the prophet's name is given, and the fact that the prophecy is a "burden," i.e., a message of judgment.
II. Habakkuk's first prayer (1:2-4). He is lamenting about his own people. The mention of "the law" (v. 4) indicates this. He is distressed over (1) the wickedness of the people, and (2) the apparent fact that God has not heard his prayer.
III. God's first answer (1:5-11). Here we have the prophecy of the Babylonian captivity.
IV. Habakkuk's second prayer (1:12-17). It seems now that what God has said only makes matters worse. How can a nation as evil as the Babylonians be used to bring such a devastating judgment upon a nation (Judah) which "shall not die" (1:12). This seems to place Habakkuk's holy God in a very compromising position.
V. God's second answer (2:1-20).

A. Habakkuk's expectancy, and his position as a watchman upon the wall (2:1). He wants to know how he will answer those who will reprove him.

B. God declares the absolute certainty of what he is about to say (2:2-4). Here we come to the most important statement in Habakkuk's prophecy: "The just shall live by faith" (2:4). Cf. its use in the NT: Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38. Faith is not guessing what God will do, nor assuming what He will do. FAITH IS TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD. IT IS BELIEVING WHAT HE HAS SAID HE WILL DO!

Faith means, not only trust, but also which faith produces: "faithfulness, steadfastness, firmness, persistency, endurance, patience, even loyalty" (Robinson, p. 128). Like = "moral security, even in the midst of calamity" (ibid.).

C. Babylon to be judged (2:5-20). The reasons for the judgment are stated as FIVE WOES. Cf. vv. 6, 9, 12, 15, 19. They include:

- 1) The way they have plundered other nations.
- 2) The way they have tried to secure their position forever.
- 3) The way they have sinned.
- 4) The way they have contaminated (morally) others.
- 5) The way they have been idolaters.

VI. Habakkuk's third prayer (3:1-19). V. 19b makes it clear that this is a psalm for worship. Here again we see his faith. His prayer is in v. 2. From v. 3 to v. 15 he traces the past deliverances which God had brought about for His people (expressed poetically). From v. 16 to the end we have Habakkuk's rest and hope in the Lord. It is quite common for the people of God ^{in Scripture} to think of the past when they are concerned about the present + the future.