

Books of The Bible

A Survey of Habakkuk

Introduction

There are times in life when that which is happening to us or our associates seems all wrong and the question is asked, "Why?" At this time I think of the saints in India, etc., whose buildings are being burnt to the ground and saints being slaughtered. Whither it is a local persecution or national, saints are being persecuted and the wicked are blatantly destroying them. At times it is because of the hatred of Christianity and the fidelity of the saints. This is a situation that happens to all the saints on their pilgrimage and one is only to think of:

- a) Job who in one day lost everything
- b) Joseph who in a matter of days went from being the father's beloved son and favorite of the boys to being an outcast sold as a servant and slave.
- c) Paul the apostle went from being a great preacher traveling for God, doing the work for Him, to sitting in a Roman jail. How despondent at times he must have been.

However, that is not the case in Habakkuk. In that place the people of Judah were exceedingly wicked. This can be observed by reading chapter 1:2-4 and the "Woe" sections. This outline is by another, I do not know who:

- a) Woe to the Proud (ch. 2:4-5)
- b) Woe to the Greedy (ch. 2:6-8)
- c) Woe to the Dishonest (ch. 2:9-11)
- d) Woe to the Violent (ch. 2:12-14)
- e) Woe to the Sensual (ch. 2:15-17)
- f) Woe to the Idolater (ch. 2:18-20)

To understand the workings of God one needs to get into the sanctuary (Psa. 73:17) for it is there one sees the all wise governmental workings of God. The same is true when we come to the book of Habakkuk for this man of God saw a pagan nation coming to destroy Israel. How could this be right? It is the same problem for saints down through the ages. How can we reconcile the present corruption with God's morality, especially when after a long time there is no sign of ease from the sufferings?

The answer is God is not blind to the wickedness of men. He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (ch. 1:13). Judgment will come.

The prophecy of Habakkuk is very much in line with Psalm 73 where A.G. Clarke, in his book on the Psalms, has the following outline of Psalm 73. By reading both the Psalm and Habakkuk one can see the corresponding situations:

- a) The testimony of the Psalmist
- b) The perplexity of the Psalmist
- c) The prosperity of the perverse
- d) The punishment of the perverse
- e) The portion of the Psalmist
- f) The ending of the perverse
- g) The ending of the Psalmist

Author

Concerning the prophet Habakkuk, we know nothing at all of his personal life. He was a man in sympathy with the heart of God in seeing the devastation of God's people. As he beheld the captivity and ruination of Jerusalem and his unanswered prayers, his heart was burdened (ch. 1:1-2), yet he knew that somehow God would bring about blessing. However, Habakkuk was mystified by the fact that despite Israel outwardly following the law of God, God was going to use a pagan nation to destroy them. How could this be right and yet because the just shall live by his faith (ch. 2:4) he must not judge by appearance, but believe the sovereign all-knowing God was in control and being true to His own character.

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- a) When faith is focused on God then it will ascend to its watchtower to see how God will act and to listen to that which He will say, and respond to the divine commission. Thus, Habakkuk is to write the vision and position it so that all can read it.

Spiritual / Moral Condition of The Children of Israel

Their condition (ch. 1:2-4)

- a) The people of God were constantly in the middle between the opposing forces of Egypt and Babylon. They were constantly being overrun, losing all self worth and glory. Their heritage meant nothing and moral departure marked them. When this happens to the people of God it takes a very spiritually strong individual to stand against the natural inclinations of giving up.
- b) This book explains some of the difficulties of the life of faith when two very opposite forces are at work:
 - i) The matter of unanswered prayer
 - ii) The matter of unrestrained evil with its dire consequences of:
 1. Violence (ch. 1:3)
 2. Contention (ch. 1:3)
 3. Strife (ch. 1:3)
 4. Injustice (ch. 1:4)

God

To the ancients, they believed that in a conflict the army which won the battle was because their God was stronger. To those who defeated Israel, they failed to understand that the reason they overcame Israel was because God, in His supremacy, used them to discipline Israel. To help the people of Judah understand the situation, Habakkuk was used to direct their faith to Him who is eternal and just, thus at the end it will be the Babylonian who will know the judgment of God.

- a) Israel was being punished as would every world power for:
 - i. God can never overlook man's sin (ch. 1:12)
 - ii. God cannot remain forever silent to man's inhumanity to man in treating them as fish to be caught (ch. 1:15), glorying in his inhumanity (ch. 1:16), and worshipping the means by which his blinded mind understands how he attained his wealth (ch. 1:16).
- b) There are times when God seems inactive or unconcerned about the pressing situation but such is never the case. The Babylonians were doing what they wanted or so they thought, but they were under the control of God (ch. 1:12) and he was using them for His own purposes.
 - i) God hears and answers prayers. This is wonderful. Habakkuk asked the questions, "How long?" (ch. 1:2); "Why dost Thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" (ch. 1:3), which God answers (ch. 1:5; 2:2).
- c) Because God is everlasting and personal, our faith must find its foundation in God. Faith does have its trials, but faith which is centered in the eternal God will inevitably triumph. The Christian religion is one of a personal pronoun, "My God, mine Holy One" (ch. 1:12).

The Message

God never makes idle threats. He says what He means and means what He says. When He gives a pronouncement of judgment, even though it's in the future, that does not remove the certainty of it happening. The individual will either drawback or obey the Lord's admonition, and all men are judged according to their reaction to that message. It is just the same today. When the gospel is preached the individual may hear of coming judgment, and determined not to accept the way of salvation, the drawback for them the ultimate result is to be banished from God for all eternity. For the believer, they wait with anticipation for that which happens when the Lord comes, or at ones death.

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Despite the preaching of today which is, “name it and claim it gospel” and “send your tithes and God will reward you”, this is not how God sees things at all. The preacher who is preaching the gospel in truth must, with firmness and love, denounce the sentence of judgment on the individual due to birth and personal sinning. Just like today, Habakkuk's day was a time of intemperance, arrogance, and unsatisfied covetousness for possessions and that which belongs to others. Despite the fact they think that they are getting away with it, God will speak the awful word "wall" (the Spirit of God will cause it to be written, "woe to those who build the look upon his nakedness" (ch. 2:15; wall to the idolater (ch. 2:19). Sadly, it is a lesson that the nations of today's world have absolutely ignored. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Furthermore, if a nation stands a rebellion against God's laws, it sows the seed of its own ruin.

God was going to raise up the Chaldeans. They will “march through the breadth of the land” (ch. 1:6) and are known for their taking possession (ch.1:6); “terrible in their dignity” (ch. 1:7) that is, vicious and elevated; fast moving (ch. 1:8); fierce, violent, mockers of kings and princes, and make light of every strong hold”(ch. 1:10). God would use this nation to achieve His purposes, but the worst activity is the double sins of idolatry and displacing God’s glory and supremacy (ch. 1:11)

- a) The prophet trembles when he hears of impending judgment.
 - i) He did not have to wait for its fulfillment and then enter into the reality of that which had happened. He believed God in that judgment was going to fall. God answers by telling the prophet to warn the nation of the impending doom (ch. 2:2) but they would not change for the pride of their hearts (ch. 2:3), but there would be no repentance and judgment will come (ch. 2:3).

In the darkness of the hour, faith always has experience of the past and the prospect of the future in front of it. Therefore, Habakkuk remembers the glory for God in manifested power in days of old at Sinai. God once again will march in victory and when He marches in majesty, it is always for the judgment of the rebellion and blessing of His people.

- a) In that devastating time God gives a ray of hope and assurance (ch. 2:14, 20; 3:17) and the prophet is encouraged (ch. 3:18). At the end he has a joy, not just a happiness which is dependent on circumstances, but joy comes from all that the Lord is and does (ch. 3:19).

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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