

Minor Prophets  
Habakkuk  
Lesson one (introduction)

**Intro:** How many of us sit and watch the news, and see things that make us wonder about the wickedness of the world, and why God would let it continue? We see good people suffer, children affected by natural disasters. Entire countries affected by something that is out of their control. C.S.Lewis pondered the question in the Second World War. He noted that as the bombs were being dropped on England during the blitz that there must be one of two conclusions concerning God. One, God is able to stop it, but unaware of it. Two, God is aware but unable to stop it. Habakkuk has a similar question that he questions God with. And in his inquiry, he discovers some truths about the justice of God, His holiness, and sovereignty. And that is what we want to discover as well.

## I. Title

### A. The Name of the Prophet

#### i. Habakkuk

a) Ha-Baa-Couk

b) the name means:

- to wrestle
- to embrace
- In the book we will see that he does both.
  - He wrestles with God, concerning the troubles he and his nation goes through, and questions how a holy and just God would allow something like this to happen.
  - As we go through this book there are a few questions concerning this I want to ask as well.
  - Often we have people come up to us, and ask why would God allow this to happen to me, but as we study this book, I am tempted to ask the question: What do I think is so special about me, that God would keep certain things from me.
  - None the less, Habakkuk ask this type of question when he wrestles with God.
  - He also embraces God as being holy and just clinging to the promises God gives.
- Jewish teachers teach is as meaning “Double embrace” and they derive who they think Habakkuk is and they may be right, the bible does not give us the lineage of him but, according to the Hebrew tradition, Habakkuk is the son of the Shunammite woman found in **II Kings 4**
  - The way the story goes is: Elisha goes by a place called Shunme (**II Ki.4:8**) and a “great woman” (well respected woman) asked him to stay with her and her husband.
  - Elisha stayed, and then made the practice that when he would travel by that way, he would stay there. Eventually the woman had her husband to build a separate room just for the prophet and when he would come by, he stayed there.
  - In return for her kindness, Elisha asked her what he could do for her. She was old with no children and asked for a child, to which the

prophet promised her a child. And soon she had one. One day when the boy was older, he went out to the field where his father was, complained about his head hurting and fell dead. When they took the boy back to his mother, she immediately put him in the prophets room, and sent for the prophet.

- When Elisha got there, he laid on the boy, eyes to eyes, nose to nose, and breathed into him, and he came back to life, so the tradition Jewish teaching refers to the two embraces as the first with his mother, and the second with Elisha.
- But like I said, we can't prove that, neither can we disprove it.

## ii. He is a Prophet

### a) Verse one calls him a prophet

- Is this a title put on him after the delivering of his message, or was it on him before
  - Once again we don't really know.
  - If we listen to the traditional Jewish teaching, then he was a prophet before, and worked in the temple.
  - Just looking at the writing of the book, it is clear that he had a good understanding of the word of God, the Torah, and the character of God.
    - So the reasonable assumption is that he was a prophet, and worked in the priesthood.
      - Speaking of him being a “Holy Person” as a prophet, two of the signs that according to Jewish teaching Elisha was reconsigned as Holy by the Shunammite woman was: first no flies bothered him, and second his sheets were always clean.
  - Some have even suggested that his work in the temple was to assist in the music.
    - This could explain the poetic form he uses, and the psalm type of written he uses form time to time.
      - After all what were the Psalms? The Jewish songbook.

## B. Historical setting

### i. Date: 626-605 B.C.

- a) He prophesies the plan of God to rise up the “Chaldeans (neo-Babylonians) to judge Judah
  - This would have begun with Babylon’s defeat of Egypt and Assyria at Carchemish in 605 B.C. and its subsequent entrance into Palestine.
    - We can see this in the book of **Daniel ch.1**.
    - So the prophecy would have to come before that time.
- b) Also the Babylonians have a reputation by the time of Habakkuk's writing. He makes reference to them several times.
  - This would also place it no later than 605 B.C.
  - To complicate the dating of this book, Habakkuk does not mention any of the kings during his time.
- c) Refer to the chart handed out in class.
  - You will notice on the chart, that:
    - Habakkuk was prophesied about the same time as:
      - Lamentations; Jeremiah; Zephaniah; Nahum; Ezekiel; Daniel

- If we accept the Jewish tradition of Habakkuk being the son of the woman, then in the kings it would be after II Kings 4.
- It took place at the very beginning of the Exile period.

C. The Purpose of Habakkuk

**i. Proclaim God as Judas's sovereign warrior.**

- a) God will appropriately judge the evil of Judah by allowing Babylon to come against them.

**ii. Proclaim God the protector of His people.**

- a) God will sustain those who trust and rely in Him.

**iii. Proclaim God as the deliver of His people.**

- a) God will deliver Judah from the forces of Babylon one day.  
 b) And on that day he will all do justice on the nation of Babylon as well.

D. Notable verse, **Habakkuk 2:4** "... but the just shall live by faith":

**i. Romans 1:17**

- a) "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."  
 • Taken in context, the focus of Paul in Romans is the Just. Justice, doing and living justly.

**ii. Galatians 3:11**

- a) "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."  
 • Here in context, the emphasis is on living, the lifestyle they engaged in.

**iii. Hebrews 10:38**

- a) "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."  
 • in Hebrews the focus turns to faith.  
 • The next chapter is called the faith chapter.  
 b) It is interesting how three different places in the New testament make reference to this verse, and each of them places emphasis on different aspects of it.

E. Hymns inspired by Habakkuk,

**i. The Lord is in His Holy Temple, William J. Kirkpatrick. 1900**

**ii. Sometimes a Light Surprises, William Cowper. 1779**