

9. Habakkuk

I. Background and Context

- A. Little is known about Habakkuk, who was probably a contemporary of Zephaniah during the reign of Josiah, and perhaps even Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. He is not mentioned by any other prophet.¹
- B. His prediction of the Babylonian invasion of Judah (1.6) tells us that this book was most likely written at the end of the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.).
- C. Habakkuk is like Jonah in that both question God's justice. The fact that God would use Babylon to punish Judah puzzles Habakkuk, as he wonders how God could allow "the wicked [to swallow] up the man more righteous than he" (1.13, perhaps better read "a more wicked nation to punish a less wicked one"). However, "in the end both realize that God is sovereign and his justice is far beyond their comprehension."²

II. Outline

- A. Superscription (1.1)
- B. First Cycle (1.2-11)
 1. Habakkuk's complaint (1.2-4)
 2. God's response (1.5-11)
- C. Second Cycle (1.12-2.20)
 1. Habakkuk's complaint (1.12-2.1)
 2. God's response (2.2-20)
- D. Habakkuk's Prayer (3.1-19)

III. Observations

- A. Habakkuk's Complaint
 1. God's people cry out to him, and yet God does not hear or save (1.2-3).
 2. The wicked prey on the righteous, and yet God's justice does not go forth (1.4)
 3. God is using a more wicked nation (Babylon) to judge Israel for her sins. How can a just God see this happen and do nothing (1.13)?
- B. God's Response
 1. The Chaldeans will nonetheless be raised as an instrument of God's justice (1.7).
 2. The righteous shall live by faith, but sin must be punished (2.4).
 3. The Chaldeans will be punished for their injustice, but it is not unjust of God to use them (2.8-17).
 4. It is vain to turn to idols for salvation, for how can creation save the creator (2.18-19)?
 5. God will be glorified in this (2.20).
- C. Habakkuk's Prayer
 1. God's wrath is righteous, but it is also merciful (3.2).
 2. God's wrath reveals his glory (3.3).
 3. God acts for the salvation of his people (3.13).
 4. Habakkuk still may not understand the full extent of God's wisdom, yet he will praise God for it (3.17-19).
 5. Henry, "Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and

¹ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1719.

² *ESV Study Bible*, 1719.

impoverished can enjoy all in God, and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul; and, if he be so, we may rejoice in him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear that our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them.”³

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2014, www.biblestudytools.com.