

OUTLINE OF HABAKKUK

Introduction . . . 1:1

- I. (1:2-11) Habakkuk questions God . . .
"How long can God allow lawlessness to go unchecked?"
- II. (1:12-2:20) A second question . . .
"How can God use cruel power to punish people less wicked than the punisher?"
(Answer is five woes)
- III. Poetic prayer . . . Chapter 3
 - A. v. 1-16 . . . vision of God in judgement
 - B. v. 17-19 . . . hymn of faith

CHAPTER XV

PREFACE TO HABAKKUK

HABAKKUK THE PROPHET

We know nothing of Habakkuk, the man. He prophesied just before the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. The complaints he makes in the early part of his message seem to date him as contemporary with Jehoiachem (608-597 B.C.) although this is by no means conclusive. (cp. *Jeremiah* 22:13-19) He may have been a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. If so, he prophesied shortly after Nahum.

This last seems most likely, since both Nahum and Habakkuk speak of the Neo-Babylonian power as in the imminent future.

Habakkuk is mentioned nowhere in the Scriptures outside the book which bears his name. The Rabbis taught that he was the son of the Shunamite woman mentioned in *II Kings* 4:16-f. This is supported only by tradition, not by historic evidence.

Jewish tradition further says of Habakkuk that he fled to Egypt at the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., which seem plausible. The same tradition says he was carried from Egypt to Babylon to wait upon Daniel in the lions' den. This seems highly fictitious.

HABAKKUK'S QUESTION

Brief as Habakkuk's writing is, it contains some valuable insights regarding two questions very much alive in our day. How can God allow, or rather how long will God allow social evil and violence to go unchecked? And how can a just God use the warfare of wicked men to punish those apparently less wicked than the punisher?

HOW CAN GOD ALLOW INJUSTICE TO GO UNPUNISHED? 1:1

These questions are being asked repeatedly today, and the church's failure to answer them has turned many, especially many of the young, to practical atheism.

As we approach the text, perhaps we should ask ourselves these questions in today's language;

1. How, if there is a Christian God, can He allow economic iniquity and social injustice. Why doesn't He put a stop to such things?
2. How, if there is a Christian God, can He allow war to punish and cripple and deprive "innocent" people?

God gave Habakkuk the answers for which men have long sought. Job discusses the first of these questions as it pertains to the individual. The Psalmist raised it again and again (cf. *Psalm 37, 49, 73*). Jeremiah also addresses it briefly. (*Jeremiah 12:1*)

The apocraphal book of *IV Ezra 3:29-36* concludes there is no answer to the problem posed by these questions. *II Baruch 11:1-7* (also apocraphal) prefers death over God's answer to Israel's dilemma.

How does one explain the seeming inactivity of God in the presence of the cruel historical fact of social injustices and war? Habakkuk received our answer from God. Do we have the faith and the courage to accept God's answer?

Chapter XV—Questions

Preface to Habakkuk

1. Habakkuk is contemporary with what king of Judah?
2. This dates Habakkuk about when?
3. Babylon captured Jerusalem in _____ B.C.
4. Habakkuk demands from God the answer to two questions:
_____ and

5. Restate these questions in your own words.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW CAN GOD ALLOW INJUSTICE TO GO UNPUNISHED?

INTRODUCTION . . . Habakkuk 1:1