

Habakkuk

We do not know a lot about the author of this book. We do know that he loved God and has a relationship with Him. In this book, the author asks God two questions, and chapter 3 is a hymn of praise. His name means “embrace” in Hebrew.

This book was highly esteemed by the Jewish people.

When Habakkuk wrote his book the Assyrians were off the scene. The Babylonians were the new superpower. Habakkuk wrote his book during the reigns of Josiah (640-609 BC) and Jehoiakim (609-598 BC). Habakkuk writes about the coming invasion of the Babylonians. The Babylonians had defeated the Egyptians along with her allies at a place called Carchemish in 609 BC (Jeremiah 46:2), and now were heading toward Jerusalem. They would arrive in 605 BC.

Unlike the other prophets who bring God’s message to the people, Habakkuk brings the questions to God.

Chapter 1 Verse 1

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

This was a time of an international crisis for the Jewish folks. They had a great king by the name of King Josiah who loved the Lord and led a bunch of reforms in Judah. But he was killed in battle in 609 BC with the Egyptians and the Egyptians made one of his sons, Jehoiakim, king.

It was a time of national corruption also- Jehoiakim was a very wicked king and the cry of the day was do what is right in your eyes.

Habakkuk then makes his four-point complaint to God.

Verse 2

*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not hear?
Or cry to you “Violence!”
and you will not save?*

1. My prayers go unanswered- “how long shall I cry for help,” The word cry means “a bone-chilling scream”, very desperate words in the Hebrew language. In other words- it seems you are a million miles away, how long do I need to pray before you answer me.
2. My counsel goes unheeded- the word violence is the word “hamas” in Hebrew. Habakkuk has given God some pretty good advice on what he needs to do but God is not listening.

Verse 3

*Why do you make me see iniquity,
and why do you idly look at wrong?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.*

3. My circumstances are unbearable- the prophet is saying “how can I **live** for you when I’m surrounded by impurity”.

Verse 4

*So the law is paralyzed,
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
so justice goes forth perverted.*

4. My faith is unraveling- I cry out to you but nothing is being done, no one cares about your law, they **twist** your Word. In fact, having a tough time with my faith when I see us circling the drain and nothing is being done to correct the perversion of your word and justice. In other words, how can I **believe** in a loving and personal God when he allows bad things to happen to me.

Verses 5-6

*“Look among the nations, and see;
wonder and be astounded.
For I am doing a work in your days
that you would not believe if told.
6For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,
that bitter and hasty nation,
who march through the breadth of the earth,
to seize dwellings not their own.*

What God was doing was amazing. Twenty years before this the Chaldeans were nobodies. They had probably risen up from the area of modern-day Kuwait and now they were **tearing** people up. They destroyed the capital city of the Assyrian empire in 612 BC. They finished off the Assyrians about seven years later and that same year they **beat down** the Egyptians and now they were headed to Judea to destroy them.

Verses 7-11

God tells how **bad** the Chaldeans were.

Verses 13-17

Habakkuk makes his **case** against God and asks God to answer.

Chapter 2 Verse 1

*I will take my stand at my watchpost
and station myself on the tower,
and look out to see what he will say to me,
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*

Habakkuk takes his question to God and will **wait** on him.

Verses 2-3

*And the Lord answered me:
“Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.
3For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.*

God answers and tells Habakkuk it is coming but He tells him it will be on **time** and it will leave on **time** (like trials in our lives- God controls the time of it).

Verse 4

*“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

This verse is one of the **greatest** verses in the Bible. Paul uses it in the book of Romans and Galatians and the author of **Hebrews** also uses it. We think sometimes this is where we start; we place our faith in Christ and now we live by works- that is not true. Yes, it starts with **faith** and **continues** all the way to the end.

In the rest of chapter 2 God talks about the Babylonians and their destruction. **Verse 5** sums up what type of lives they lived.

- **Proud**, arrogant- all sin comes from pride and the Babylonians were all about this.
- **Addicted**- the Babylonians gave themselves over to drunkenness. In fact, the Babylonians were only in power for 67 years, and when the Persians conquered them the leaders were in a **drunken state**.
- **Greed**- this is a characteristic of someone who will not trust God.
- **Idolatry**- is removing God from his rightful place.
- Never **satisfied**- when you live the lifestyle that the Babylonians did they would never be satisfied.

Chapter 3 is about the tough times which are going to come for Judea. It will be tough, but I love verses **17-19**.

*Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,*

*the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,*

*the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,*

*18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

*19 God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.*

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

Zephaniah

We do not know a lot about Zephaniah other than what he says in chapter 1 verse 1.

- He traces his ancestry back four generations to King Hezekiah (715-686 BC)
- He was living during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC)
- History: Hezekiah's son was Manasseh and he was a very evil king, he ruled from (687-641 BC) when he died his son Amon followed and lasted two years and then was killed by his servants. Josiah then took the throne. He was the son of Amon.
- He probably preached in the early days of Josiah's reign before Josiah started his reforms.

There are two themes in this book: Judgment against all the earth 1:1-3. But the main point is judgment against Judah. He gives the reasons for the judgment against Judah 1:4-6.

The charges in these verses against Judah are:

1. Religious error
2. Disloyalty
3. Apostasy
4. Practical atheism

Haggai

Background: The first group of Jews (50,000) returned from the Babylonian exile in 538 BC. These folks started to rebuild the temple in 536 BC. After about a year they stopped because of the oppression they received. About 15 years later in 520 BC, God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to fire up the people to rebuild the temple and to live for God.

Date: Haggai's ministry started in the second year of King Darius' reign (520 BC). Darius was king of Persia (522-486 BC). He was the father of King Xerxes from the book of Esther. This is not the same Darius mentioned in the book of Daniel.

Chapter 1 Verse 1

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

Gives us the timeframe of Haggai's ministry.

Verse 2

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord."

Haggai's message is short and right to the point. In this verse the Jewish folks would know right away what God was saying.

Lord of hosts- This term for the Lord is found numerous times in the prophetic books but is used and is very common in the book of Haggai, Malachi, and Zechariah. This designation for God reminds the Jewish people that all the resources of Heaven and earth are at God's command. It also reminds them that He is their commander and chief. They are responsible to Him and there should be no cause to hesitate when backed by God's promises.

These people- is used rather than "my people" which shows God's displeasure with His people's spiritual apathy when they say "the time has not yet come". The evidence against this mindset is overwhelming- God moved King Cyrus to free exiles and commission them to rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Isaiah wrote about King Cyrus and what he will do (Isaiah 44:28, 45:13).

When the Jews stopped working on the temple they were showing they did not trust God's Word and did not believe God could make it happen. They became comfortable with leaving God's work undone and taking care of themselves.

Verse 4

"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"

Paneled houses- refers to a practice of laying wood paneling over the basic stone walls- showing that the people had gone way past providing for their needs and were more concerned with personal luxury while neglecting what God wanted them to do, "rebuild the temple".

Verses 7-11

God tells his people to consider their sin of neglecting the temple and the consequences of their actions.

Verses 12-15

The people respond to Haggai's message and get right with God.

Chapter 2

A problem with what is going on is seen in **verses 1-3**. The older people who had seen the glory of the temple of Solomon were weeping because the effort of the younger generation could not come close in comparison to Solomon's temple. So this discouragement brought on by the older generation was causing the younger ones to lose heart.

Verses 4-9

God used these words elsewhere to encourage his people. God tells his people to "*be strong*"- Joshua was encouraged by these words when he was going to step into Moses' shoes (Deuteronomy 31:23; Joshua 1:6-9). David uses these words when he encourages Solomon about building the temple (1 Chronicles 22:13, 28:20).

What God was telling his people was to not be discouraged, Solomon's temple was not the standard. The standard was the future temple, God wanted this temple built to establish His presence on earth for the people of Israel and the people of the world.

Here is a lesson for us as long as we are doing what God wants us to do no matter how small our part might seem to others we are valued participants in His plan.

Verses 10-19

The Jews had been brought back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and Haggai was reminding them that they could not depart holiness to the temple but they could defile it by their sins and Haggai is calling them to repentance and when they come back God will bless them.

Verses 20-23

Haggai then encourages the governor, Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin took the throne of Judah at the age of eighteen and ruled only 100 days until taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Zerubbabel was a direct heir to the Jewish crown. Zerubbabel was not a king but a

humble governor trying to get this temple built. God tells Zerubbabel that he will **protect** his people from other nations.

There is a promise that God will take care of his people through the last days and establish her in her kingdom.

Verse 23

On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”

God first calls Zerubbabel “*my servant*”. This title was used for **very special** people to the Lord. Then he tells Zerubbabel he was a signet ring. A signet ring was used by a king to put their official signature on documents. It was a **promise** that the king would keep his word. When Zerubbabel’s grandfather was on the throne, God told him that he rejected him and said that if Jehoiachin were his signet ring He would **tear it off** (Jeremiah 22:24). God **reversed** the judgment and **renewed** the promise that the Davidic line would not die out but one day the Savior would come through that line. That is why Zerubbabel is in genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27).

Malachi

Introduction: We do not know much about the author. His name means “messenger” and that’s pretty much all we know about him.

Date: the date of this book is not given but the things the author writes about were common practices during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. This book was probably written around 430 BC.

Why: This book confronts religiosity or formal empty religious activity. This book confronts that way of life back in the Old Testament times but also in our time. One commentary says the book of Malachi confronts the American church like no other.

Verse 1

The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

Malachi tells us that God has laid something on his heart and he needed to tell the people. There was a gap between how God wanted his people to live and the way they were living, and Malachi was moved to say something about the gap.

This message is addressed to Israel after the captivity and they were brought back into the land to rebuild the temple and the walls and live for the Lord.

Verses 2-3

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob 3but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.”

God makes a statement- “*I have loved you*”, and the people say “*how have you loved us*”- in other words, what have you done for us lately.

God then gives the example from the past. The story of Esau and Jacob- God chose Jacob over Esau- God’s election.

Verse 4

If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.’”

God tells them he loves them in the present.

Edomites, the descendants of Jacob's brother, always did everything they could to harm the Israelites and rebel against God. God says to Israel -you are rebuilding but they won't and if they do I will tear them down, in other words, I'm taking care of you.

Verses 6-13: They dishonor God's name

Verses 7-8

By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. 8When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts.

What they were doing was offering animals to God that were diseased and ready to die. This was not a sacrifice. God then said try that on your human governor and see if that works.

Verse 13

But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord.

When someone would mention serving the Lord the reaction would be a heavy sigh instead of saying let's go.

Verses 9-11: The results of this

1. Unanswered prayer
2. Just close the place down
3. I'm going to the other nations

Chapter 2:10-16: Being faithless

Verse 10

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Faithless- This word is used five times in this section. This Hebrew word means "disloyal, to deceive, to act unfaithfully with respect to a prior agreement".

The problem we see in **verse 14**, these men who said they were believers were divorcing their wives who they had married in their youth for younger women, who were not believers and worshipped idols.

Verse 16

“For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”

NIV- God hates divorce. Why?

- It is harmful
 - Spiritually (verse 13; 1 Peter 3:7)
 - To the spouse (verse 16)
 - To the children (verse 15)
 - To society

Verse 17

You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, “How have we wearied him?” By saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them.” Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

The keyword in this verse is wearied. The idea of this word is that God is tired and needs a rest- no, what God is saying is I’m tired of your lack of faith in me.

What the people were doing was looking at other groups of people and saying why don’t we have the stuff they have.

Where is the Messiah you promised us?

Chapter 3 Verse 1: God answers

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

God was working

- In about 100 years God will raise up the Greeks who will defeat the Persians and bring the Greek language to the whole area.
- God would then raise up the Romans who would bring peace to the area, roads, and the decree for taxes and that would bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.
- God would send a forerunner who would prepare people- John the Baptist.
- When the Messiah would come he would show us the very heart of God.

Verses 6-18

Remember that the Jewish folks were back in their land and they were just going through the motions concerning their faith and God has a few things to tell them.

Verse 6

"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

God does not change- this is called the Immutability of God. This is good because it means his love never changes, his faithfulness toward us never changes.

Verse 7

From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

1. Come back to me
2. The people say "we have not done anything wrong"

God will tell them what they are doing wrong.

Verses 8-9

Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. 9You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

1. Robbing God

Verse 10

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

God says trust me.

Verses 13-14

"Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' 14You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?'

2. Not servicing God
3. Not living for God

God then tells his people three things they can count on:

1. I will **remember** you (**verse 16**)
 - a. *Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.*
2. You are **mine** (**verse 17**)
 - a. *"They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.*
3. Trust me, there will be a **distinction** (**verse 18**)
 - a. *Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.*