

Lesson 6 – Habakkuk

The book of Habakkuk is somewhat unique in that it records the prophet's conversation with God rather than a message directly to Judah. Habakkuk prayed concerning the sin he saw in Judah. He wondered why God had let it go on unpunished. These conditions suggest that Habakkuk followed the death of Josiah (609 BC). All four of Josiah's successors were evil. God responded to Habakkuk's prayer by revealing his plan to use the Chaldeans, that is, Babylon, to punish Judah. God said, "I am raising up the Chaldeans," which suggests that Babylon may not have yet finished its conquest of Assyria. The final battles which ended Assyrian dominance occurred in 609 and 605 BC, so that's the most likely window for Habakkuk's book. Babylon invaded Judah three times in 605, 587, and 586 BC, the last of which resulted in the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the mass exile of the Jews. The Assyrians had been known for their excessive cruelty. The world would soon know that Babylon wasn't much better. Habakkuk responded with concern that Babylon was even more wicked than Judah. God then revealed his plans to punish Babylon after using it to punish Judah. The fall of Babylon occurred in 539 BC, about 70 years after Habakkuk. The most well-known verse in Habakkuk is 2:4 - "the righteous shall live by his faith." It is quoted three times in the New Testament. In its context, and in its use as a quotation, the word "live" refers to survival in divine judgment. As a nation, Judah would fall, but faithful individuals could be saved by heeding the warnings and escaping or by divine preservation through the invasion, as occurred with Jeremiah and others (Jer. 39:11-18), and in exile, as with Ezekiel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Habakkuk closes with the prophet's prayer. He accepted God's plan. Though the impending judgment was terrifying, Habakkuk would remain faithful and trust in God's power. Aside from quotes and allusions, Habakkuk is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

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1. What do you know about the prophet Habakkuk and the date of his book?
2. Who were the Chaldeans, and what was their reputation?
3. What is Habakkuk's initial prayer?
4. What would God do to judge Judah?
5. What was Habakkuk's concern about God's answer? (Hab. 1:13, 17)
6. Explain the meaning of 2:4 – "but the righteous shall live by his faith" – in the context of God's revelation about Judah.
7. Locate the three places Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in the New Testament.
8. How did God respond to Habakkuk's concern that Babylon was even more evil than Judah? (Hab. 2:6-8)

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9. God sent the Israelites to conquer Canaan, and God sent the Babylonians to conquer. Both were divine punishment for sins. How was the Babylonians' attitude different than Israel's regarding their similar God-given missions? (Hab. 1:7, 11; 2:18-19; Dan. 2:28-30; Josh. 2:24; 6:16; 23:14)

10. What had Habakkuk heard about God's work? (Hab. 3:2)

11. What was Habakkuk's natural reaction to God's message about Judah's fall? What was his spiritual response? (Hab. 3:16-19)

12. In what year did the Babylonian Empire rise and invade Judah? (Dan. 1:1-4)

13. In what year did Babylon destroy Jerusalem and exile the Jews? (2 Kings 25)

14. In what year did Persia conquer Babylon? (Dan. 5)