

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

“Are God’s Judgments Just?”

Habakkuk 1:5-11

Review

1. Habakkuk was contemporary with other pre-exilic (pre Babylonian exile) prophets. Chief among these was Jeremiah (cf. Nahum, Zephaniah).
2. The politics in Judah were horrendous after the death of Josiah. Internationally, the power of Assyria and Egypt waned as the Babylonians ascended. It was the era of the beginning of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).
3. What “burdened” the prophet was the dreadful sin in Judah. There was unresponsiveness to God (v. 2), unrelenting sin (v. 3), and an uncontrollable society (v. 4). It was a dark day in the history of God’s chosen people.
4. Thus, the prophet Habakkuk complained about what he saw and experienced with Judah. In response to this view of things, the God of Israel (Jehovah or LORD) responds to the prophet’s perplexity. These are the words of the LORD:

1. BE ALERT v. 5

a. Imperatively

Look at the series of verbs: “behold” is the verb “to see,” hence the prophet is told to open his eyes and view the nations (Goyim). “Regard” means to fix the gaze upon or look narrowly, hence weigh what you see. The third verb is duplicated and indicates the highest degree of amazement at the terrors of dread. The duplicated verbs are rendered “wonder marvelously” (KJV). There is no question but what God invites, yea, commands attention to the facts.

b. Expectantly

While the prophet thinks God is insensitive to the situation, God promises action. “Work . . . work” is the use of two cognate roots. Just be patient, I will do something, says the LORD. Moreover, it will be “in your days” i.e. the sin of Judah would not be permitted to go on without a check.

c. Unquestionably

Some might consider all of this a fable or unbelievable. The fact is, it will take place!

Note #1 Parallel situations: the flood, Sodom, Ahab. Never, therefore, dispute the promise (word) of God!

Note #2 This verse is applied by Paul to the Jews of his day (Acts 13:41). The context shows that the work of Christ (His death/resurrection) would provide justification. The Jews were warned not to reject it lest they face eternal judgment.

2. BE INFORMED vv. 6-11

This entire paragraph is about the Chaldeans. With incredible details, the prophet is inspired to reveal facts about this nation and its action against Judah. Consider the following:

a. About God’s work v. 6

Clearly it is stated God “is in the process (present tense) of raising up” the Chaldeans for the judgment of His own people. This is something to “behold.” The Hebrew word for the Chaldeans is Kasidim (cf. Isa. 43:44, Jer. 21:9; Ezek. 23:23). They existed before Abraham (Gen. 11:28, 31). Assyrian inscriptions called them Kaldu which resulted in Greek Chaldaioi and English Chaldeans.

b. About Chaldean character

Their description is given:

1) Nationally. They are called bitter (fierce disposition) and hasty (impetuous or vehement) v. 6 . Further, they are terrible (exciting terror) and dreadful (creating alarm). They arbitrarily, on their own judgment, decide what is right and normal. Thus their eminence and majesty proceeds from themselves v. 7 (cf. Jer. 4:13, 5:6).

2). Militarily, vv. 8-10. Their horses have light rapid movement like leopards or panthers. The way these animals prance upon their prey is proverbially with remarkable speed. Moreover, the horses are more sharp (keener) than wolves who are bent upon their prey in the evening when they are hungry. The velocity of the assault upon Judah by the Chaldeans is likened to an eagle rushing upon its prey (cf. Deut. 28:49, 50). Jeremiah uses the same comparison (4:13; 48:40; 49:22).

The attack upon Judah is irresistible. The Chaldeans will come for violence. They all (totally) come as a multitude. Their endeavor is so directed forward that they can only think of rushing ahead. In doing this, they gather prisoners as the sand of the sea.

Finally, the Chaldeans are so strong that they “scoff” at kings, “laugh” at princes and “laugh” at strongholds (any sort of resistance). The “heaping of dust” (sand) denotes they speed on their conquest with slight effort. It’s all child play for the Chaldeans!

Postview

The two verbs “change the mind” and “pass over” are parallel. They indicate that the Chaldeans sweep along and pass over. Resistance is nil and victory is completed. Not only does this powerful military machine roll over others, but it stands guilty before God. Why? Because the Chaldean claims his strength is his god. Instead of giving God the glory, he admires and idolizes his own strength. Such intoxicating pride, God deals with and He did (cf. Dan. 5:23, 30).