

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK
“God’s Answer to Man’s Problems”
Habakkuk 2:1-4

Review

1. The Assyrian political ascendancy over Babylon and Egypt had taken place. The times of the Gentiles were about to begin (Luke 21:24).
2. As a nation, Israel was: a. unresponsive to God (1:2), b. unrelenting in sin (1:3), and c. uncontrollable in society (1:4). Consequently, God allowed the Assyrians (Chaldeans) to overpower Israel. The Chaldeans attributed their successes to their gods (1:11).
3. Habakkuk found these circumstances hard to believe in view of his understanding of Israel as God’s people, character of God Himself, and the character of the Chaldeans (1:5 - 11). Nonetheless, he did come to an evaluation of who God is (1:12), how God sees (1:13) and what God does (1:14, 15).
4. The prophet’s conclusion to the complex situation was that the Chaldeans had a false worship (1:16) and their apparent total victory was questionable (1:17). He flatly affirmed that Israel would not die (1:12).
5. But Habakkuk still needed clarification of the matter. Regretfully, the chapter division between 1 and 2 is unfortunate. The flow of the subject matter continues right on. It includes God’s answer to the prophet’s continued perplexity. Look at the aspects of the revelation (vision) given Habakkuk (2:1-4).

1. The PREPARATION for the vision v. 1

a. The place of the prophet. Two are specifically indicated: 1) a place of waiting and 2) a place of watching. While many would interpret these non-literally, there really is no reason to do so. Habakkuk went to a specific place to wait for God’s answer to his query of chapter one. Such an exercise is not to be decried for any believer today!

b. The hope of the prophet. The twice repeated “what” indicates Habakkuk’s expectation from the Lord: 1) what God would say to him (better “in him,” thus indicating direct revelation as expiration from God and inspiration to the prophet), 2) what the prophet would return (so Hebrew) about his complaint/correction/punishment. The point is clear: Habakkuk would wait for an answer from God (“watch to see”).

2. The INSTRUCTION for the vision v. 2

The answer of the Lord is direct. Note the three instructions:

a. “Write” The vision was not to be kept “in the prophet,” but transcribed. It is true that God has spoken “in” Habakkuk, but that revelation was to be put in written form.

b. “Engrave.” This is the significance of the phrase “make plain.” The “tables” are

actually clay tablets. In this manner the vision would be made plain, public, and preserved. The original prophetic word would be conserved (cf. Deut. 27:8). The plural “tables” may refer to the five woes of the vision (vv. 6-20).

c. “Run.” It is patent that the one who would “read” the prophecy (vision) is to run with it. Hence, the prophet reserved the message, provided it for the people, and they then became the guardians of the message to make others know. Here then is a stimulus to spread the Truth (missionary!!!).

3. The EXPECTATION for the vision V. 3

a. It is appointed. The vision relates to a period of time fixed by God for its ultimate realization. In Habakkuk’s time it was “yet,” but the direction of it was clear.

b. It is specified. Literally the text states the vision “pans for the end.” It actually strives to reach the end for which it is designed. It just will not lie or deceive.

c. It is assured. While the vision may not in fact take place immediately, the prophet is instructed to “wait for it.” Reason? The vision will surely come. The use of the infinitive with the indicative of the verb “come” gives absolute assurance. The text adds “it will not stay behind and fail to come.”

N.B. This verse is quoted in Heb. 10:37 and given a Messianic interpretation. Following the Greek translation (LXX i.e. Septuagint) and combining it with Isa. 26:20, the reference is made to the 2nd coming of Messiah to earth. At that time He will put down all unrighteousness and provide victory for the nation Israel. The mystery of God’s toleration of end shall then be finished.

4. The EXPLANATION for the vision v. 4

a. About Chaldeans. The selfwill of the Assyrians is here described as the soul that is lifted up! He is swollen up, puffed up, proud. Such an one is just not straight. He is open to trickery and turning. That is the way his innermost soul is described.

b. About Faithful. The latter part of the verse refers to those who live through their faith. While the Chaldeans ends in destruction, the righteous live by faith. The reference here is to the relationship of a person with the Lord.

N.B. This text is repeated three times in the N.T.: 1. Rom. 1:16, 17 in connection with the righteousness of God. 2. Gal. 3:11 in connection with the law of Moses. 3. Heb. 10:28 in connection with steadfastness.

Conclusion

Admittedly there are perplexing paradoxes in life. Habakkuk had his in relation to the Assyrian onslaught upon Israel. We have ours. What is the answer: wait on the Lord. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will resolve our paradoxes. The best is yet to come. Hallelujah!