

# **The Prophecy of Habakkuk**

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*To the chief Singer, Christ, on my stringed instruments.*

## PREFACE

### REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names, such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest:** Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

**Note:** *Definitions of references pulled from WikipediA, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

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## THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK

*"The burden which Habakkuk, the prophet, did see." [Hab.1:1]*

Habakkuk was contemporary with Jeremiah. He prophesied a few years previous to the Babylonish invasion of Judah. **Habakkuk's** name means "*an embracer*," "*one who presses another to his heart*." This is truly most characteristic of the prophet; for as we read these 3 short chapters describing his deep exercise of soul, he truly appears as one who embraces the Lord, as well as the Lord's people.

He stands here as the type of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days who will thus struggle in faith and hope and love in the days of apostasy and impending judgments. They will actually see fulfilled before their eyes what the dear faithful prophet Habakkuk only saw in vision—the coming of Jehovah in power and great glory.

At the same time, there is much to be learned from this prophet by all who love the Lord's appearing, though we will not be here at the time of the fulfillment of this vision, for when it comes to pass we will be with the Lord. In fact we, The Church, the Body of Christ, will be a part of the Holy One that Habakkuk views as coming from Mount Paran, whose "*glory covered the heavens*" [Hab.3:3].

## DIVISIONS IN THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

The book may be readily divided into 3 parts, as follows:

Habakkuk's Questions; Jehovah's Answer	Hab.1:1-11
Habakkuk's Testimony; Jehovah's Answer	Hab.1:12-2:20
Habakkuk's Vision	Hab.3

The prophecy begins in distress and ends in triumph. This is always the case when we come to Jehovah with our perplexities and troubles and question Him concerning the matter. We will find that there is always a cause for the trouble, and a way out of it.

## PART 1, HABAKKUK 1:1-11

### HABAKKUK'S QUESTIONS

*"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention."*  
[Hab.1:1-3]

Habakkuk has a burden on account of the condition of the Lord's people. Habakkuk 1:1-4 are his questions, his earnest expostulation to Jehovah. The "How long?" and "Why?" of the prophet call for an answer. He must hear from God. He cannot understand Jehovah's silence in view of the sins of Israel; for he lived in the midst of their great wickedness. The first 3 verses unfold the sad picture of the condition of the house of Judah, the professing people of God. Violence and iniquity abound on every side; contention and strife and oppression among the people; the law slacked, the wicked compassing the righteous, and justice perverted. Habakkuk beholds all this, and his soul is stirred within him. But as the man of faith that he is, he takes his refuge in the Lord. He prays, but his prayer is more in the form of a complaint: "*O Lord, how long shall I cry?*" He has his questions of "How" and "Why" as well as his complaint that Jehovah does not save. All this is the foreshadowing of the coming time when violence will be ruling in the earth and the faithful of that day will cry, as the prophet did, to Jehovah for deliverance. Then too, the complaint will arise, "*How long, Jehovah?*" *How long? Why dost thou not save?* That is, they will call for an earthly deliverance. The Psalms depict these same exercises of the remnant, as well as the outshining of Jehovah to their help as we read in Habakkuk 3 of this prophecy.

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### JEHOVAH'S ANSWER

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The complaint of the prophet is answered by the Lord.

*"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god." [Hab.1:5-11]*

Verse 5 is very suggestive. It anticipates the scattering of the nation. "*Behold ye among the heathen and regard and wonder marvelously; for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe though it be told you*" [Act.13:41]; Paul gives a striking application of this to the redemptive work of Christ. He quotes it to Jews of the dispersion in the synagogue at Antioch; but it has a larger reference to the fuller dispersion at the end.

At that appointed time, the Lord tells the prophet, punishment will come upon his people for their disobedience. The Chaldean army and invasion is described. They enter the land of Palestine and possess the dwelling places of Judah. The mighty army is presented as the coming of a tempest, "*they shall sup up as the east wind*" [Hab.1:9]. Their arrogance cannot be checked. There is no stopping of their advance. They do as they please, as Habakkuk 1:11 indicates, "*Then shall his mind change and he shall pass over and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.*"

That is, it appears as though the Chaldeans were not intending to invade Palestine; but their mind changes and they pass into the glorious land of Jehovah. They impute this marvelous victory to their god...they are assured such power is supernatural. So it is; for that last invasion of Israel's land by the Gentile world powers, will be truly devilish. Their god will be their strength; for Satan will energize and empower their emperor, the man of sin, the Antichrist. We find a description of this man of sin, not now of the army, and the woes pronounced against him, in Habakkuk 2, beginning with Verse 4 and the first clause, "*Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith*" (the latter clause thrown in here, as it were, to comfort the believing ones of those days who will have no apparent might, nor power); and continuing down and including Verse 12, "*Woe to him that buildeth a town by blood and establisheth a city by iniquity.*"

## PART 2, HABAKKUK 1:12-2:20

This division of the book contains the prophet's testimony to Jehovah; his waiting attitude; and Jehovah's answer to him. This would make 3 sections, as it were, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the prophecy.

### THE PROPHET'S TESTIMONY TO JEHOVAH

*"Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction." [Hab.1:12]*

The Lord has answered Habakkuk's perplexity as to his apparent laxity towards Israel's sin and the prophet utters his wonderful panegyric of Jehovah. Although the Lord has only told him of judgment, the prophet is comforted; His words are full of faith. In full assurance, in view of the impending invasion of his land, he could say, "*We shall not die.*" He knew that Jehovah, the Holy One, the Rock, is with His people in every time of trial; therefore they cannot perish. His faith rested upon the promises of God; yet he knew that judgment and chastening were to be theirs for a time. Yet he justifies God's attitude toward Israel and His chastening hand for their rebellion toward Him.

In the pleadings which follow, his faith beholds the wicked invaders, the Chaldeans, who are after all more wicked than Judah, checked and punished. Their conquest of the nation is described as "*catching them, like fish, in a net and then sacrificing them to their net* (their false god)" [Hab.1:15-16 Transliteration]. The prophet ends this section with a question:

*"Shall they therefore empty their net and not spare continually to slay the nation?" [Hab.1:17]*

That is, will the enemy never be satisfied? Will there never be an end? But faith sees the answer even as the next portion discloses.

## THE PROPHET'S WAITING ATTITUDE

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In the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, we see the prophet in a waiting attitude. In answer to his 1<sup>st</sup> question, Jehovah has informed him of coming trouble upon his people. Now he waits for a further unfolding of the Divine Purposes in answer to his further question. He knows the Lord will not turn him away. He says,

*"I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower and will watch to see what he will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved" [Hab.2:1]*

With all the burden upon him (the troubles of his spirit, the difficulties and coming judgments) the prophet decides to wait calmly for the answer Jehovah will give to him. He even infers that he may be reproved for his apparent bold attitude toward the Lord. But never, never, does the Lord reprove Habakkuk for his faith that challenges the Lord to answer. From the prophet's attitude here, we may learn precious lessons of confidence in the Lord in the midst of trouble, and earnestness in addressing Him, and patience in waiting for Him.

## JEHOVAH'S ANSWER TO HABAKKUK

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The 3<sup>rd</sup> section gives us God's response.

*"And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." [Hab. 2:2]*

And, as it appears, Habakkuk did not have to wait long for the answer. He is told by Jehovah to write the vision and make it plain upon tablets, *"that he may run that readeth it."* This is most suggestive. Jehovah commands that the vision, or prophetic word which He is now about to speak, should be made plain upon tablets. That is, it should be displayed prominently that it might be seen at a distance. He desires that it be clearly understood. The prophetic word is not at all mysterious. Man has made it so; but God sent the Spirit of Truth that we might be guided into all the truth. The Holy Spirit shows us things to come. When we compare Scripture, it is then found to be simple and harmonious. The practical result is that he does run that reads it. The more we look into the prophetic Word, the plain and simple vision for an appointed time, the more earnestly we run in the Lord's way.

The deplorable condition of Christendom, and even of the Lord's true people in these false systems, is partially the result of having turned away from the sure word of prophecy. Not having divided the Word of Truth rightly, all is therefore confusion. The professing people of God are like a ship upon the sea, without a chart or compass, drifting to certain wreck and destruction. But, for the individual believer, there is still hope. He may still read and run. We are living in the very day spoken of when in consequence of the knowledge of the prophetic Word, *"many run to and fro and knowledge is increased"* [Dan.12:4]. Believers run to and fro in the Word searching and seeking for the treasures of wisdom and knowledge concealed therein and therefore become wise as to the purposes of God.

So the Lord instructs Habakkuk to wait for the vision,

*"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." [Hab.2:3]*

*"It will surely come, it will not tarry"* are most precious words. The appointed time to which the vision refers is the end of this age and misrule of man, and the manifestation of Jehovah for the judgment of His enemies and deliverance for His people. The description of the Chaldean emperor and the woes upon him, follow as we noted previously. The description perfectly fits the ending of the Times of the Gentiles. The sins of the ungodly world power are enumerated—covetousness, greed for expansion, moral corruption, and finally idolatry. Against these sins, 5 solemn woes are pronounced.

Habakkuk 2:12 shows the nations struggling for supremacy in the earth, building a town with blood and establishing a city by iniquity. But they labor for the very fire which is coming and weary themselves for vanity. Are not these present day events perfectly expressed in this verse?

Habakkuk 2:14 refers to Jehovah's visible glory in the earth. This has no reference to a spiritual conquest of the world by Christendom that is so widely discussed today; but, instead to the actual physical coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory to judge the nations as was prophesied [Mat.24:30]. It is after this event that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth. The world must have judgment before the glory.

Habakkuk 2:18-19 clearly refer to the image of the Antichrist, the man of sin, which will be set up in the temple. This antedates the revelation of the Lord and is the special iniquitous act which calls for the immediate vengeance of Jehovah at His outshining; for the beast and the false prophet will both be cast alive into the lake of fire at His appearing [Rev.19:20]. The image will be a counterfeit of the presence of God dwelling in the Holy Place in the temple. It will no doubt be a marvelous exhibition of satanic power; for it will have life and will speak forth the doom of all who refuse to bow and worship at its feet [Rev.13:14-16]. The *"teacher of lies"* refers to the false prophet; while the image itself is that of the anti-king who will usurp to himself Christ's authority. He will declare himself the sovereign of the world. Yea more, he will show himself that he is God and all men must worship or suffer death. All this is hinted at in these verses. But the Lord shall *"consume that wicked one with the spirit of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming"* [2Th.2:8].

*"But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."*  
[Hab.2:20]

Habakkuk gets the answer he wants. He could not understand God's attitude toward the situation. It did not appear consistent with His holiness; but the Lord reveals His purposes to the prophet. He gives him a revelation of coming events. These purposes must mature before the Lord can interfere and show His anger and judgment against the wickedness which was great in Habakkuk's day; but, how much more will it be in evidence in the day of Jehovah's vengeance. He will arise to terribly shake the earth, clean up its politics as well as His own temple and city; after which He will dwell among His people forever. Habakkuk will see his vision actually fulfilled. The earth will be in awe at the presence of the Lord. He will dwell in His holy temple.

The Shekinah Glory will again be manifested in the holy place, Habakkuk assures us.

*"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." [Hag.2:9]*

### PART 3, HABAKKUK 3

The prophet ends his book in a sublime psalm of the coming of the Lord (it is one of the mountain peaks of prophecy). The Lord answered his deep heart longings with a marvelous vision of His return. He takes him over the whole ground of His coming and emphasizes many of the events connected therewith. It is like a song upon the stringed instruments of David—even Shiggaion.

It commences with a prayer. Habakkuk is overwhelmed with a sense of the impending wrath, shut up in the heaven, which is about to burst forth. He cries out,

*"O, Lord, in wrath remember mercy." [Hab.3:2]*

Then he is caught away in spirit, even as John on the isle of Patmos [Rev.1:10], into the Day of the Lord and he beholds wondrous things. As we read, the glory and majesty of the vision envelop us.

*"God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power." [Hab.3:3-4]*

We can almost see the radiance of the *"Holy One from Mount Paran; for His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise."* The whole world is lightened with His brightness. His power is made visible at last. The Lamb has indeed become the Lion. But there is *"the hiding of His power"*; for even yet the world cannot bear the full effulgence of His glory. Mark the result of the Light of His presence.

*"Before Him went the pestilence and burning coals went forth at His feet." [Hab.3:5]*

No disease can abide His presence. Sin and sickness depart when He steps upon the scene. *"For our God is a consuming fire"* [Heb.12:29]. Nothing can live in His presence that is out of harmony with His nature.

*"He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting." [Hab.3:6]*

*"He stood and measured the earth,"* the prophet tells us. He is the "Big Man" the world needs and for whom they are even now looking; though they do not know it. He drives asunder the nations. That is He takes His place as the Sovereign of the world.



*"The everlasting mountains were scattered and the perpetual hills did bow. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble."  
[Hab.3:6-7]*

All dominion and power is given into His hand...He is the Master and Ruler. The mountains, or kingdoms, are scattered; for the King is coming whose right it is to reign. The hills are bowing and acknowledging His right to the throne of empires. The tents of Cushan are in affliction and the land of Midian is trembling. The consternation and fear of the nations are vividly described. The Conqueror is coming for the deliverance of His earthly people. All nature appears demoralized and at a standstill in awe of the scene.

The sun and the moon are eclipsed with the brightness emanating from the matchless Monarch who is riding upon the wings of the wind. He is on the war-path, as we say; marching through the land in indignation. The heathen are as the threshing in the day of harvest. The day of vengeance of our God is vividly described. He wounds the head out of the house of the wicked (Antichrist). The language is so forcible and inspiring that we can almost hear the majestic steppings of Jehovah as He marches on with His triumphant procession as **KING OF KINGS**. Far different is Habakkuk's vision from the character of His 1<sup>st</sup> Coming as king [Mat.21:5-11] when He marched into the city of Jerusalem; but He was not acknowledged. They saw Him as the poor, despised Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth. Here His power and authority are seen as unquestioned. Habakkuk's vision tells us only of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of the Lord.

*"When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops." [Hab.3:16]*

The prophet trembled as the scene unfolded. The awfulness of the day is too much for him. As he looked upon the picture, he was faint with fear. His belly trembled; his lips quivered at the majesty of the Voice he heard, and rottenness entered into his bones. In the midst of these scenes of wrath, and in full view of the famine and resulting evils, his faith mounts up on eagles' wings and soars above all the distress, trouble, and darkness of the great and notable Day of the Lord. In one of the greatest bursts of confidence and declared faith in Jehovah; he ends his sublime panegyric with...

*"Although the fig tree shall not blossom neither fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hind's feet and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." [Hab.3:17-19]*

The fig tree, that Habakkuk intimates may not blossom, refers to the Jewish nation as the professed people of God, not necessarily a new creation, but all the Jews. The Vine represents the whole house of Israel, the 12 tribes, undivided, one people, as they came up out of Egypt, and as they will be manifested again nationally.

The olive tree is the beautiful figure of the true believers out from the whole nation of Israel, whether before Christ's death or later. They were the light of

the world (the oil of the olive being the only oil used in the sanctuary), and they will be the true light bringers again, when Christ has grafted them, as individuals, into their own root again and filled them with the Spirit.

Life is real , Life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal  
Dust thou art, to dust returneth,  
Was not spoken of the soul .

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