

The Prophets

Lesson #36

Habakkuk

Outline

I. *The Questions Of Habakkuk (1:1-2:20)*

- A. The first question: Why does God allow wickedness to continue in Judah (1-4)?
- B. The first reply (1:5-11).
 1. God will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment (1:5-6).
 2. Their character is described (1:7-11).
- C. The second question: Why will God use wicked people to punish Judah (1:12-2:1)?
- D. The second reply (2:2-20).
 1. The prophet is commanded to write (2:2-3).
 2. The righteous will live by faith while the wicked are drunk with power (2:4-5).
 3. Woes upon the Chaldeans (2:6-20).

II. *The Praise Of Habakkuk (3:1-19)*

- A. Habakkuk prays for God's mercy (3:1-2).
- B. Habakkuk remembers God's mercy (3:3-15).
 1. God's terrible approach (3:3-7).
 2. Question: Why did God appear (3:8-12)?
 3. Answer: For salvation of His people (3:13-15).
- C. Habakkuk trusts in God's salvation (3:16-19).
 1. Fear and trembling at the burden (3:16-17).
 2. Joy and confident trust (3:18-19).

Notes

Habakkuk 1:1-2:20

- The first question: Why does God allow wickedness to continue in Judah (1-4)?
 - In the opening cry, there is an implication that the prophet has been calling to God for a long period of time, but with no response. Habakkuk beholds "iniquity" and "grievance" in the character and conduct of his people.
 - To "save" means to deliver from what oppresses or restricts. Such salvation is to be found ultimately only in the Lord by those who are righteous toward Him.
 - The disintegration of a society into factions is bound up with its rejection of the forces that bring it unity -- "law" and "judgment." This is true in any age.

- The first reply (1:5-11).
 - God will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment (1:5-6).
 - In the dialogue between Habakkuk and God, one of the most practical lessons of prophecy may be learned: God's use of the nations.
 - God was working a work which they will find hard to believe even when He tells them what He is doing.
 - The Jew could see God at work in His own nation, but it was beyond belief that He would raise up a nation so bitter and fierce as the Chaldeans.
 - Their character is described (1:7-11).
 - Their character was rooted in a self-sufficiency that acknowledged no superior authority and no dependency, which was equivalent to self-deification.
 - The Babylonian "cavalry" is compared to three predators whose speed and power bring violent death to their prey: the leopard, wolf and eagle.
- The second question: Why will God use wicked people to punish Judah (1:12-2:1)?
 - "O mighty God" is an acknowledgment of God as the foundation of their hope and the fortress in whom alone refuge must be sought.
 - Can God's use of a tyrant so wicked be harmonized with such absolute holiness? This becomes Habakkuk's problem and the cause of his perplexity.
 - As a fisherman drops his net into the sea and takes everything before it, so the Chaldean has taken the peoples of the nations in his wild rampage of conquest.
- The second reply (2:2-20).
 - The prophet is commanded to write (2:2-3).
 - Tablets were plates or plaques such as those used in public places where the passing populace could read and be informed.
 - Because the vision is not to be fulfilled immediately it must be written; when fulfilled, men will know that God spoke it, foretelling what to expect.
 - The righteous will live by faith while the wicked are drunk with power (2:4-5).
 - In contrast to the character of the proud and arrogant, the righteous shall live by faith. "Faith" implies fairness, stability, certainty or permanence. Although this is the first time the principle is stated in these words, it is not new; it is as old as God's dealings with man.
 - For a person to be faithful in righteousness entails dependent, obedient trust in God; such an attitude is clearly demanded in the

present context of waiting for deliverance. This principle became the foundational argument of Paul's gospel against the Jewish contention of salvation by works of the law (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11).

- Woes upon the Chaldeans (2:6-20).
 - The first woe is pronounced against the lust of conquest and plunder. These will be plundered by the remnant of the conquered.
 - The second woe is pronounced upon the disposition to build an empire through cruelty and godless gain.
 - The third woe is a cry against men who build cities with slave labor, who consider life cheap and ignore the misery of those who are employed.
 - The fourth woe pronounces condemnation of those who through drunkenness on the wine of power and conquest mistreat and degrade conquered nations.
 - The fifth woe is upon the idolator; it is a condemnation of materialism in general and of its worship in particular.

Habakkuk 3:1-19

- Habakkuk prays for God's mercy (3:1-2).
 - The prophet concludes his book with what is considered by many writers to be one of the most beautiful psalms in the Bible.
 - The Lord has answered his complaints. He now understands that Judah and Jerusalem must be punished for their sins, that God is going to use the Chaldeans for His work of judgment and that God will punish the wicked Chaldean nation who deified its power, going beyond the bounds of all restraint.
 - The Lord's "work" envisaged here is His work at the Exodus -- a primary anchor-point of Israel's recollection, faith and hope.
- Habakkuk remembers God's mercy (3:3-15).
 - God's terrible approach (3:3-7).
 - God has been their hope of salvation from the beginning of Israel's existence. As God came in the past, so He comes now.
 - When God comes, His glory covers the heavens and His praise fills the earth. His splendor of absolute holiness covers the infinite power which He exercises.
 - From the expressions of terrifying power exerted among the inanimate creatures of nature, the prophet looks at the nations.
- Question: Why did God appear (3:8-12)?
 - The Lord's "anger" is directed against the "sea," evoking His display of power at the Red Sea.

- Vs. 10 is descriptive of nature's reaction to God's command and to the revelation of His great power. The language used is reminiscent of the great flood in the days of Noah.
- "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation" looks back to the valley of Ajalon and Joshua's battle of the long day when God responded to His cry for additional time (Joshua 10:12-13).
- Answer: For salvation of His people (3:13-15).
 - In all of God's actions there is purpose; never does He act out of whim. The purpose of His coming in the past is clearly expressed in vs. 13.
 - The Medes had combined forces with the Chaldeans to attack and destroy Nineveh. God would turn the Medes against the Chaldeans to destroy them (Jeremiah 51:11, 28).
- Habakkuk trusts in God's salvation (3:16-19).
 - Fear and trembling at the burden (3:16-17).
 - Although there was a sense of dread at what he knew must come, he was no longer afraid. Fear had been conquered by love and faith.
 - In this vision of a devastated economy, Habakkuk acknowledges his nation's apostasy and the inevitability of judgment. Though all fail, Habakkuk declares that he will trust in God.
- Joy and confident trust (3:18-19).
 - For Habakkuk it was "God" Himself and His intervention as "salvation" that motivated his longing and his joyful attaining.
 - The basis of Habakkuk's faith, and Paul's, was the revealed word of God (cf. Romans 10:17).
 - The covenant that promised the invasion and devastation also gave assurance of restoration to God's favor and presence (cf. Deuteronomy 30:1-10; 32:34-43).