



HABAKKUK, PROPHET TO JUDAH

Habakkuk

The Bible gives little personal information about the man Habakkuk, or at what time in history he prophesied. Habakkuk's name means "to embrace" and it is likely he may have served as a musical leader in the temple at Jerusalem. Chapter 3 of his book is formatted as a song, giving evidence that Habakkuk had at least some musical training. Textual evidence suggests that Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah and possibly prophesied near the end of King Josiah's reign—a time of political and religious reform—and the early years of the reign of Jehoiakim, Josiah's evil son.

Unique among the prophets, Habakkuk questioned God's working in the national life of Judah. Other prophets in the Bible recorded God's words and delivered them to the people, but Habakkuk questioned why God was working the way He was. Habakkuk's approach gives us insight into the prophet's distinctive role and the prophetic relationship he had with God. Habakkuk's approach also helps believers know that it is permissible for us to ask questions of God. God was not upset that Habakkuk was asking questions. Instead, God took time to answer those questions by telling Habakkuk that God had plans beyond Habakkuk's understanding. God actually said that Habakkuk would be so surprised when he saw what God was doing that Habakkuk wouldn't even believe it. When life doesn't make sense, we can still trust God.

Habakkuk shares a series of woes, or indictments, against the wicked whom he identified in chapter 1. These woes solidified the knowledge that even though the successes of the evil people seemed like God was favoring them, in the end the Lord would be justified when evil was defeated. Habakkuk didn't understand the mind of God, and neither can we. While Habakkuk didn't understand God's ways, Habakkuk knew God was trustworthy. The Book of Habakkuk helps us to see that God is great and can be trusted. God calls us to have faith in Him even when we do not understand His plans.