

It seems most probable that Habakkuk prophesied in the latter years of Josiah. Of the prophet himself nothing is known. To him the character of Jehovah was revealed in terms of the highest spirituality. He alone of the prophets was more concerned that the holiness of Jehovah should be vindicated than that Israel should escape chastisement. Written just upon the eve of the captivity, Habakkuk was God's testimony to Himself as against both idolatry and pantheism.

The book is in five parts: I. Habakkuk's perplexity in view of the sins of Israel and the silence of God, 1. 1-4. Historically this was the time of Jehovah's forbearance because of Josiah's repentance (2 Ki. 22. 18-20). II. The answer of Jehovah to the prophet's perplexity, 1. 5-11. III. The prophet, thus answered, utters the testimony to Jehovah, 1. 12-17; but he will watch for further answers, 2. 1. IV. To the watching prophet comes the response of the "vision," 2. 2-20. V. All ends in Habakkuk's sublime Psalm of the Kingdom.

As a whole the Book of Habakkuk raises and answers the question of God's consistency with Himself in view of permitted evil. The prophet thought that the holiness of God forbade him to go on with evil Israel. The answer of Jehovah announces a Chaldean invasion (2. 6), and a world-wide dispersion (2. 5). But Jehovah is not mere wrath; "He delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7. 18), and introduces into His answers to the perplexed prophet the great promises, 1. 5; 2. 3, 4, 14, 20.

## CHAPTER 1.

*Part I. Prayer of Habakkuk: evil in dispersed Israel.* (Cf. Deut. 28. 64-67.)

**T**HE <sup>a</sup>burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save!

3 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.

4 Therefore the law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

*Part II. Voice of Jehovah to Israel "among the nations."*

5 Behold ye among the <sup>b</sup>heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: <sup>1</sup>for *I* will <sup>c</sup>work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.

6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans,

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*that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places *that are* not their's.

7 They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

8 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.

9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

10 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.

11 Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.

*Part III. Habakkuk's testimony to Jehovah* (extends to Hab. 2. 1).

12 *Art* thou not from everlasting,

<sup>a</sup> Isa. 13.1,  
*note.*

<sup>b</sup> i.e. *nations.*

<sup>c</sup> Acts 13.41.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 5 anticipates the dispersion "among the nations" (cf. Deut. 28. 64-67). While Israel as a nation is thus dispersed, Jehovah will "work a work" which Israel "will not believe." Acts 13. 37-41 interprets this prediction of the redemptive work of Christ. It is significant that Paul quotes this to Jews of the dispersion in the synagogue at Antioch.

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.

13 *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously. *and* holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth *the man that is* more righteous than he?

14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, *that have* no ruler over them?

15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion *is* fat, and their meat plentiful.

17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

## CHAPTER 2.

**I** WILL stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say

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*a* Inspiration. Zech. 7. 7. (Ex. 4. 15; Rev. 22. 19.)

*b* vs. 3, 4. Heb. 10. 37, 38.

*c* Righteousness. Mal. 3. 18. (Gen. 6. 9; Lk. 2. 25.)

*d* Rom. 1. 17; Gal. 3. 11; Heb. 10. 38.

*e* Faith. Mt. 8. 10. (Gen. 3. 20; Heb. 11. 39.)

*f* Mic. 2. 4.

unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.

### Part IV. Jehovah's response to Habakkuk's testimony: the "vision."

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, <sup>a</sup>Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may <sup>1</sup>run that readeth it.

3 For the vision *is* yet for an <sup>2</sup>appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it <sup>b</sup>tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up *is* not <sup>c</sup>upright in him: but the <sup>d</sup>just shall live by his <sup>e</sup>faith.

5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he* *is* a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as <sup>3</sup>hell, and *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

6 Shall not all these <sup>f</sup>take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth *that which is* not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that

<sup>1</sup> Not, as usually quoted, "that he that runneth may read," but, "that he may run that readeth"; i.e. as a messenger of the "vision." Cf. Zech. 2. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> To the watching prophet comes the response of the "vision" (vs. 2-20). Three elements are to be distinguished: (1) The moral judgment of Jehovah upon the evils practised by dispersed Israel (vs. 5-13, 15-19). (2) The future purpose of God that, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (v. 14). That this revelation awaits the return of the Lord in glory is shown (a) by the parallel passage in Isa. 11. 9-12; and (b) by the quotation of verse 3 in Heb. 10. 37, 38, where the "it" of the "vision" becomes "he" and refers to the return of the Lord. It is *then*, after the "vision" is fulfilled, that "the knowledge of the glory," etc., shall fill the earth. But (3) meantime, "the just shall live by his faith." This great evangelic word is applied to Jew and Gentile in Rom. 1. 17; to the Gentiles in Gal. 3. 11-14; and to Hebrews (especially) in Heb. 10. 38. This opening of life to faith alone, makes possible not only the salvation of the Gentiles during the dispersion of Israel "among the nations" (Hab. 1. 5; Gal. 3. 11-14), but also makes possible a believing remnant in Israel while the nation, as such, is in blindness and unbelief (Rom. 11. 1-5, *note*), with neither priesthood nor temple, and consequently unable to keep the ordinances of the law. Such is Jehovah! In disciplinary government His ancient Israel is cast out of the land and judicially blinded (2 Cor. 3. 12-15), but in covenanted mercy the individual Jew may resort to the simple faith of Abraham (Gen. 15. 6; Rom. 4. 1-5) and be saved. But this does not set aside the Palestinian (Deut. 30. 1-9, *refs.*) and Davidic (2 Sam. 7. 8-16, *refs.*) Covenants, for "the earth shall be filled," etc. (v. 14), and Jehovah will again be in His temple (v. 20). Cf. Rom. 11. 25-27.

<sup>3</sup> *Sheol* is, in the O.T., the place to which the dead go. (1) Often, therefore, it is spoken of as the equivalent of the grave, merely, where all human activities cease; the *terminus* toward which all human life moves (e.g. Gen. 42. 38, *grave*; Job 14. 13, *grave*; Psa. 88. 3, *grave*). (2) To the man "under the sun," the natural man, who of necessity judges from appearances, *sheol* seems no *more* than the grave—the end and total cessation, not only of the activities of life, but of life itself (Eccl.

shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

8 <sup>a</sup>Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and <sup>for</sup> the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may <sup>b</sup>set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned <sup>against</sup> thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town <sup>c</sup>with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, <sup>d</sup>is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

14 <sup>1</sup>For the earth shall be filled with the <sup>e</sup>knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to <sup>him</sup>, and maketh <sup>him</sup> drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing <sup>shall be</sup> on thy glory.

17 For the violence of Lebanon

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<sup>a</sup> Isa.33.1.

<sup>b</sup> Jer.49.16;  
Oba.4.

<sup>c</sup> Jer.22.13;  
Ezk.24.9;  
Mic.3.10;  
Nah.3.1.

<sup>d</sup> Or, it is not of the LORD, etc., i.e. though permitted in His providence, not His plan. Cf. Mic.4. 2-4.

<sup>e</sup> Isa.11.9.

<sup>f</sup> Jer.10.8,14;  
Zech.10.2.

<sup>g</sup> Psa.2.12,  
note.

<sup>h</sup> Zeph.1.7;  
Zech.2.13.

<sup>i</sup> Bible prayers (O.T.). Gen.15.2.

<sup>j</sup> Deut.33.2;  
Jud.5.4;  
Psa.68.7.

shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, <sup>which</sup> made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a <sup>7</sup>teacher of lies, that the maker of his work <sup>8</sup>trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and <sup>there is</sup> no breath at all in the midst of it.

20 <sup>1</sup>But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Part V. Habakkuk's answer of faith.

**A** <sup>2</sup>PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

3 God came from Teman, and the <sup>7</sup>Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

4 And <sup>his</sup> brightness was as the light; he had horns <sup>coming</sup> out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

9. 5, 10). (3) But Scripture reveals *sheol* as a place of sorrow (2 Sam. 22. 6; Psa. 18. 5; 116. 3), into which the wicked are turned (Psa. 9. 17), and where they are fully conscious (Isa. 14. 9-17; Ezk. 32. 21; see, especially, Jon. 2. 2; what the belly of the great fish was to Jonah that *sheol* is to those who are therein). The *sheol* of the O.T. and *hades* of the N.T. (Lk. 16. 23, note) are identical.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. 11. 9, which fixes the *time* when "the earth," etc. It is when David's righteous Branch has set up the kingdom. (See "Kingdom (O.T.)," 2 Sam. 7. 9; Zech. 12. 8; also, "Kingdom (N.T.)," Lk. 1. 31-33; 1 Cor. 15. 28.) Habakkuk's phrase marks an advance on that of Isaiah. In the latter it is "the knowledge of the LORD." That, in a certain sense, is being diffused now; but in Habakkuk it is "the knowledge of the *glory* of the LORD," and that cannot be till He is manifested in glory (Mt. 24. 30; 25. 31; Lk. 9. 26; 2 Thes. 1. 7; 2. 8; Jude 14). The transfiguration was a foreview of this (Lk. 9. 26-29).

<sup>2</sup> Prayer in the O.T. is in contrast with prayer in the N.T. in two respects: (1) In the former the basis of prayer is a covenant of God, or an appeal to his revealed character as merciful, gracious, etc. In the latter the basis is relationship: "When ye pray, say, Our Father" (Mt. 6. 9). (2) A comparison, e.g. of the prayers of Moses and Paul, will show that one was praying for an earthly people whose dangers and blessings were earthly; the other for a heavenly people whose dangers and blessings were spiritual.

6 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.

7 I saw the tents of <sup>a</sup>Cushan in affliction: *and* the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? *was* thine anger against the rivers? *was* thy wrath against the sea, <sup>b</sup>that thou didst ride upon thine horses *and* thy chariots of salvation?

9 Thy bow was made quite naked, *according* to the oaths of the tribes, *even* thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

10 <sup>c</sup>The mountains saw thee, *and* they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, <sup>d</sup>*and* lifted up his hands on high.

11 <sup>e</sup>The sun *and* moon stood still in their habitation: <sup>f</sup>at the light of thine arrows they went, *and* at the shining of thy glittering spear.

12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the <sup>g</sup>heathen in anger.

13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, *even* for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the

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<sup>a</sup> Or, *Ethiopia.*

<sup>b</sup> v.15; Deut.33.26, 27; Psa.68.4; 104.3.

<sup>c</sup> Ex.19.16,18; Jud.5.4,5; Psa.68.8; 77.18; 114.4.

<sup>d</sup> Ex.14.22; Josh.3.16.

<sup>e</sup> Josh.10.12, 13.

<sup>f</sup> Or, *thine arrows walked in the light,* etc.

<sup>g</sup> i.e. *nations.*

<sup>h</sup> v.8; Psa.77.19.

<sup>i</sup> i.e. despite the afflictions of Israel in dispersion, the prophet will rejoice because of the Lord, as yet to return to His temple.

<sup>j</sup> Isa.41.16; 61.10.

<sup>k</sup> Psa.27.1.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Sam.22.34; Psa.18.33.

<sup>m</sup> Deut.32.13; 33.29.

house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

15 <sup>h</sup>Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, *through* the heap of great waters.

16 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.

17 <sup>i</sup>Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour 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:

18 Yet I will <sup>j</sup>rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 The LORD God *is* <sup>k</sup>my strength, and he will make my feet like <sup>l</sup>hinds' feet, and he will make me to <sup>m</sup>walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.