

Habakkuk – Notes 1

Historical Setting

- 1:6 – mention of Babylonians/ Chaldeans (c 609-586 BC)
- Judah in its death throes
- 586 BC – exile of Judah to Babylon

The Structure of Chapters 1-2

- Superscription/ Title (1:1); complaint (1:2-4), response (1:5-11); complaint (1:12-2:1) and response (2:2-5) which flows into a dirge/ funeral song over Babylon (2:6-20)

[A] HABAKKUK'S FIRST COMPLAINT (1:2-4) – unique start among the prophets

1. Habakkuk's Prayer

- Prayer – a prophetic role (see Gen 20:7)
- God isn't hearing; God isn't doing anything!
- He has no doubts about the ability of God
- 'How long?' and 'Why?' – typical of lament
- Lament can be an appropriate way in which to engage with God.
- Not wrong to ask 'Why' – Jesus on the cross

2. The People's Situation

- broad, brush strokes
- violence, injustice, and strife/ conflict
- **violence** (vv 2, 3) [sm'x'/chamas] - shedding of innocent blood; despising (Gen 16:5); false/ malicious/ violent witness (Ex 23:1; Deut 19:16); etc
- Genesis 6:11, 13 – violence warrants judgement (Flood)
- The word describes 'Chaldeans/ Babylonians' (1:9; 2:8; 17): Judah like the nations

3 The Consequences of their Behaviour (v 4)

- Law/ Torah/ Word of God – 'paralysed' (for verb see Gen 45:26)
- Mark 7:13 – Pharisees 'nullify the law' by their traditions.

[B] THE LORD'S ANSWER (1:5-11)

1. The Lord has Heard Habakkuk's Cry

2. The Lord Enlarges Habakkuk's Vision (v 5)

- Contrast with v 3. 'Look at the nations ...'; the world stage
- For us Brexit and Trump?

3. The Lord Reveals to Habakkuk that He is at Work (vv 5-6)

- something amazing and 'unbelievable'
- (v 6) 'raising up the Babylonians/ Chaldeans'
- instrument of chastisement [compare Assyria in Isaiah 10:5]

4. The Description/ Character of the Instrument of Judgment (vv 6-11)

- 'ruthless', 'dreaded', powerful military force, (v 9) 'bent on violence', scornful, (v 11) 'whose own strength is their god' – glorying in themselves... which gives rise to

[C] HABAKKUK'S SECOND COMPLAINT (VV 12-17)

- God is 'everlasting' and 'Holy' God
- Habakkuk accepts that the Babylonians are the instrument of God's chastisement for Judah (v 12b)
- problem – how can the Holy God use an unholy people in this way (v 13)
- will it last forever? (v 17)
- for us – 'forces' of 'militant' secularism and atheism; (v 13) 'why then do you tolerate this?' or (v 17) 'will it keep on happening?'
- Habakkuk had no full answer to these questions – but he knew where the answers lay

1. On the Watchtower (2:1)

- ... awaiting God's response
- And us?