

Habakkuk: From Protest to Praise (Intro)

Habakkuk 1:1

INTRODUCTION

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of **Habakkuk**. Yes, you heard me right – the book of Habakkuk! We won't actually begin studying the book of Habakkuk until next week. Today, I just want to give us a general overview of the prophetic books in the Bible, as well as a general introduction to the specific book of Habakkuk.

To understand Habakkuk, we need to understand the prophetic books in the Bible. Here's my first main point...

I. Understanding the _____ books in the Bible

Before we jump into Habakkuk, I want to start today by addressing two questions concerning the prophetic books of the Old Testament:

A. Why are we so _____ with the prophetic books?

The prophets are perhaps the least read and understood of all the books in the Bible, and yet they comprise twenty-two percent of the Bible's message, over one-fifth of the Bible as a whole. Why are we so unfamiliar with the prophetic books?

Let me offer several reasons:

1. _____: at the end of the Old Testament

They are in the Old Testament, and let's face it, more people are familiar with the New Testament than with the Old. Not only are the prophetic books in the Old Testament, but they are also at the end of the Old Testament. So, if a person does start reading the Old Testament, they usually start at the beginning, which means they will get to the prophetic books last if they get there at all.

2. _____: poetry rather than prose

The prophetic books include large sections written in poetry. Most of us do not read poetry today. **We are far more familiar with prose.** And not only are the prophets written in poetry, they are written in Hebrew poetry, which even when translated is different from the English poetry we are used to. So, we may find the language and the imagery of the prophets difficult to understand.

3. _____: requires an understanding of historical events

Reading the prophets requires an understanding of the historical events that took place at the time of their writing.

The prophetic books take place largely during the time of the kings of Israel, the exile, and Israel's return from exile. When we don't know the historical context behind the book, it is very difficult to understand what the prophet is saying.

4. _____: many messages of judgment and doom

The prophets present many messages of doom and judgment. That was one of their functions. **We don't like to think about God as a God of judgment.** We like to think of God as a nice God who forgives everybody. And so people often have trouble relating to God's judgments in the prophets.

Let me say something about that for a moment. God does not change from book to book in the Bible, or even from testament to testament. **He is the same everywhere.** You do not find a different God in the Old Testament than you do in the New Testament. You find passages relating to God's judgment in all the various parts of the Bible, both Old Testament and New. And you find passages relating to God's love, mercy and forgiveness in all parts of the Bible, both Old Testament and New. In fact, some of the most beautiful and profound passages describing God's love and mercy you will ever find are found in the Old Testament prophets. It is not a matter of different pictures of God being presented, but different emphases.

The prophets were sent for a very specific purpose. They were sent to warn Israel and the surrounding nations of God's coming judgment for sin and idolatry in hopes that they would turn from their sins and thus avoid judgment. Sadly, they did not, and so God's judgment fell in full force upon them.

This leads us directly into our second question about the prophets. Why are they important for us to study and learn?

B. Why are the prophetic books _____?

1. They help _____ out our unbiblical views of God.
2. They _____ with the weighty issues of life
3. They point us to _____ as the Messiah
4. The prophets help us _____ God's plan for the ages

Here's my second main point...

II. Understanding the book of _____

The book of Habakkuk was written by the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a unique prophet because he did not speak for God to the people but rather spoke to God about His people. Most Old Testament prophets proclaimed divine judgment. Habakkuk pleaded for divine judgment.

A. The _____: who was Habakkuk?

Habakkuk's name may be related to the Hebrew word for "embrace." While Habakkuk's identity is in doubt, his character is clear. A sincere, devoted follower of Yahweh, he not only submitted himself to his Lord's will, but also confronted that same Lord when he felt God was ignoring his own promises. Like Job, Habakkuk does not hesitate to question God.

Habakkuk's questioning does not lessen his faith in God, with whom he enjoys a personal bond (1:12). He is aware of the awesome power of the King and Creator of the universe (3:16), but he also knows this one's care for him (3:17-18).

B. The _____: when did he write this book?

The one big clue we get from the book of Habakkuk is that he writes about the rising power of the Babylonians and their coming invasion of Judah. That would place these writings somewhere between 612 and 587 B.C. This would be over a hundred years after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and soon before the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the exile of the people of Judah to Babylon in 586 B.C.

C. The _____: why did Habakkuk write this book?

Why did Habakkuk write this book? What is the book of Habakkuk all about? **It is a prophecy (includes foretelling and forthtelling), of course.** In particular, it is a prophecy about the coming invasion of Babylon, and how God will judge Judah for her sins. It is also a prophecy of hope, that God will treat his people justly, and that there is indeed a future hope for them despite the coming judgment.

The book of Habakkuk examines injustice from the experience of a righteous person crying out to God for a remedy. God responds to the prophet: Be patient, observant, and steady in your faith, for my judgment will happen at the appointed time. **God's response allows Habakkuk to rejoice in God's saving power—even while struggling with a question that every generation asks: Why is evil allowed to thrive?** Habakkuk's problem was the difference between the world as he found it and what he believed about God.

But the book of Habakkuk is also a journey. It is very different from the other prophetic books in that the prophecy here is not given directly from prophet to people, but rather the prophecy is given as we overhear a conversation between Habakkuk and God. And in that conversation we witness Habakkuk's own journey from questioning and doubt and confusion at the beginning of the book, to one of the strongest statements of faith and hope and confidence you will find in all of Scripture by the end of the book.

Habakkuk's three misconceptions about God - Basically, the book of Habakkuk deals with three misconceptions that Habakkuk had about God. And, if we are honest, we will admit that we sometimes have these same misconceptions about God ourselves.

Those three misconceptions are as follows:

- **God does not** _____
- **God is not** _____
- **God is not** _____

Do you ever feel that way about God? Habakkuk did. That's the way things looked to him before he went to God with his doubts and his confusion.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps you struggle with some of the same misconceptions as Habakkuk. Perhaps you feel that way right now. Let me encourage you to do what Habakkuk did. Take your complaints to God in prayer, be honest and respectful before him, and allow God to take you on the same journey as he did Habakkuk. If you are struggling with doubt, despair or confusion this morning, I pray that through this study of Habakkuk, God will bring you also to a place of faith and confidence and joy. That's what the book of Habakkuk is all about – the journey from doubt to trust. The contrast between **1:2 & 3:19** is startling. **It is a contrast between a wail of despair and a shout of confidence.** What Habakkuk experienced we can experience if we turn and trust in the Lord.