



Overview for Habakkuk

Purpose: To record the discourse between the prophet and God concerning God's ways in the punishment of evil, and the prophet's ultimate affirmation of faith.

Author: Very little is known about Habakkuk, the author of the book. The Scriptures record nothing about his ancestry or place of birth, although the fact that Habakkuk 1:1 refers to him as "the prophet" implies he was recognized as a professional prophet. Based in part on the liturgical nature of the book, some scholars suggest that he was a member of the Temple choir; if so, he would have been part of the tribe of Levi charged with the responsibility of maintaining the Temple music.

To Whom Delivered: The Southern Kingdom of Judah

Key People: Habakkuk and the Chaldeans, also called the Babylonians

Date Written: The exact date of Habakkuk's prophecy is difficult to determine, as there are no indicators in the text such as names of contemporary kings or references to specific events. Based on the prophet's description of the Chaldeans, most Bible scholars agree that this prophecy was likely composed around 612 B.C., after the fall of Nineveh but before the Babylonians' siege and capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Setting: Whatever the exact date of authorship, Habakkuk wrote his prophecy during a turbulent era of ancient history, when the Southern Kingdom of Judah was deep in sin. Judah was also in a precarious position politically due to the impending invasion by Babylon, a nation that was becoming the major world power as Assyrian domination was declining.

Unique Features: Habakkuk is one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament, and one of two whose book deals extensively with the prophet's own personal relationship with God. The other book in this category is Jonah. However, the conclusions of the two books are very different: Jonah ends with the prophet angry at God, while Habakkuk ends with words of trust and rejoicing.

The prophecy of Habakkuk is presented in poetic form and is an example of high-quality Hebrew poetry. Along with Nahum and Malachi, this prophecy

is characterized as a "burden," indicating that the message is one of destruction.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient writings discovered in caves of Qumran in 1947, include the *Pesher Habakkuk* (Commentary on Habakkuk), identified as *1QpHab* and dated by scholars to the first century B.C. The scroll is roughly fifty-six inches in length, and is comprised of thirteen columns of Herodian script written on two pieces of leather sewn together with linen thread. Because of its relatively pristine condition, it is one of the most frequently researched and analyzed scrolls of the several hundred that have been found.

The *Pesher Habakkuk* interprets only the first two chapters of the Book of Habakkuk. This supports the supposition that chapter 3 was not originally part of the prophesy, although the prophet Habakkuk is still considered to be the author. Chapter 3 is a prayer, but it includes the musical term "selah" in verses 3, 9, and 13. Therefore, some scholars believe Habakkuk composed this final portion later as a liturgical psalm and added it to the original work.

Habakkuk 2:4 is one of the most quoted Old Testament statements found in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul referred to it in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. Its statement, "the just shall live by his faith" became a cornerstone belief of Martin Luther, who is credited with starting the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s.

Summary: Habakkuk's prophecy consists of just three chapters. In chapter 1, he complained about the pervasive injustice around him and questioned why God did not seem to care. God answered with a perplexing vision that revealed His coming judgment on Judah, using the Chaldeans as His tool. This led to further questions from the prophet, who could not understand how God, who is holy, could use such an evil nation to execute judgment on His own people for their sins.

In chapter 2, Habakkuk determined to wait on God for further illumination, and stationed himself like a watchman on the city wall until God's answer came. God responded by explaining that He would also judge the Chaldeans, and much more harshly. He instructed the prophet to write down the vision and make it known throughout the land. Although judgment was in the future, it would be fulfilled in God's

appointed time. The chapter concludes with a series of five “woes” pronounced upon the greedy, the covetous, the violent, the drunkard, and the idolator.

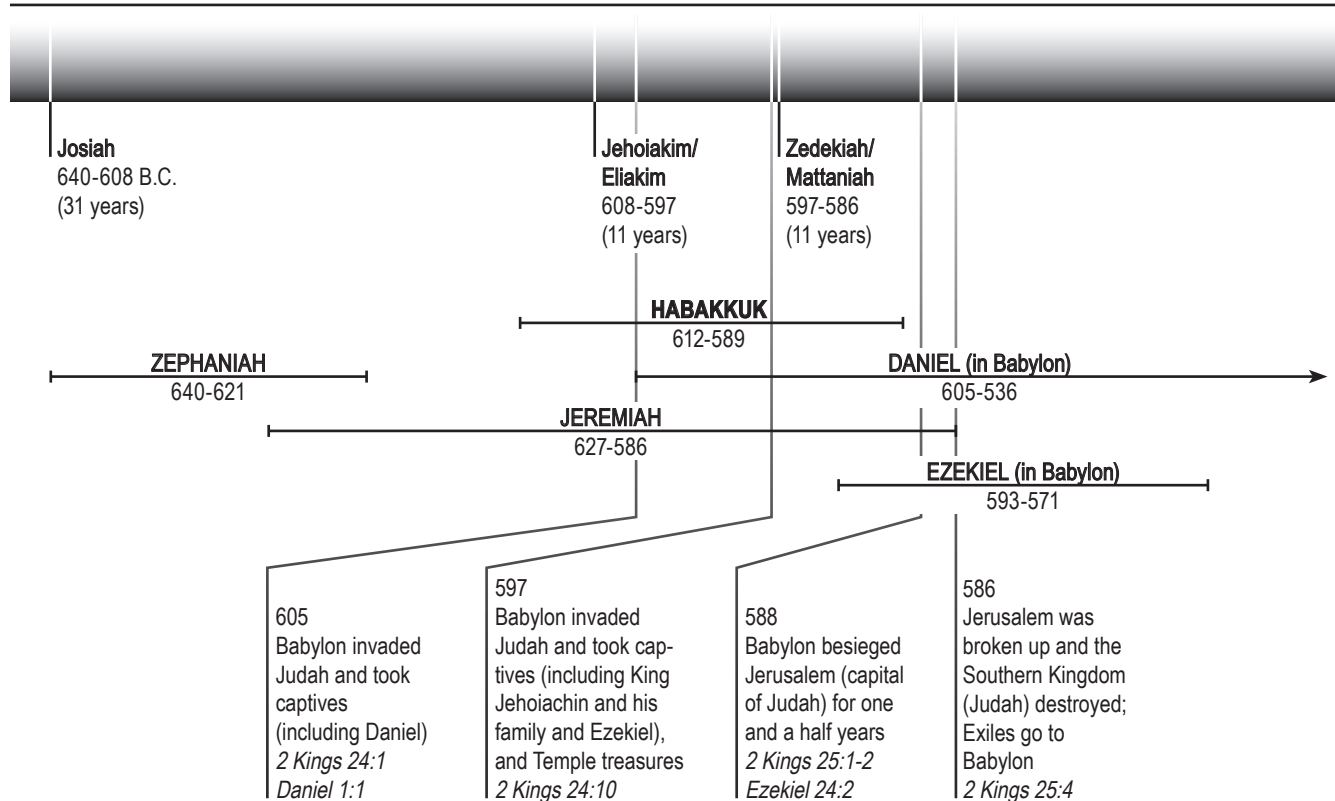
Chapter 3 is the prophet’s prayer expressed in the form of a psalm. In this conclusion, Habakkuk expressed his faith in God, even though he did not fully understand. The chapter is comprised of three parts: instruction regarding how the psalm was to be performed, a picturesque description of God’s presence

and the prophet’s confident assurance of God’s deliverance for His people, and a closing affirmation of faith.

Throughout the book, Babylon provides an example of any nation that exalts itself above God and practices injustice, violence, and idolatry. In the end, God reminded Habakkuk and every generation that God will deal with evil. Those who trust His timing and plan are encouraged to remain faithful to Him.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch. A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Prologue (1:1)
- II. The dialogues (1:2—2:20)
 - A. The first dialogue (1:2-11)
 1. Habakkuk’s complaint of God’s inactivity (1:2-4)
 2. Jehovah’s answer (1:5-11)
 - B. The second dialogue (1:12—2:20)
 1. Habakkuk’s complaint of God’s activity (1:12-17)
 2. Habakkuk’s action (2:1)
 3. Jehovah’s answer (2:2-19)
 4. Jehovah’s position (2:20)
- III. The prayer and praise (3:1-19)
 - A. Prayer for future intervention (3:1-2)
 - B. Praise for past intervention (3:3-15)
 1. God’s person (3:3-4)
 2. God’s power (3:5-15)
 - C. Peace in present inactivity (3:16-19)