

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk is one of the four prophets who are known to us only by name.

Of his parentage or his nativity nothing whatever is told us. There are traditions concerning him but they are entitled to little or no credit. One is found in the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon, and is to the effect that an angel caught up Habakkuk by the hair of his head and carried him to Daniel while in the lion's den, whom he fed with the food he was conveying to his laborers in the field. It has been inferred from the inscription in 3:19, that he was a Levite, but this also is very problematical.

As to the date of the book the authorities vary, as usual. But the discrepancy is not very great in this instance. Some place it in the reign of Josiah, B.C. 630; others in that of Jehoiakim, or the latter part of Josiah's rule, B. C. 612-598.

1. *The subject of the prophecy is two-fold:*

- First, the overthrow of Judah by the Chaldeans.
- Second, the overthrow, in turn, of the Chaldean monarchy—each power for its sins.

2. *Characteristics of the book.*

It is distinguished for its magnificent poetry. Habakkuk is unsurpassed for the splendors of his style. Bold as Isaiah, he is his equal in sublimity; for pathos he is even more remarkable than Jeremiah; for loyalty he resembles David; and for confidence in God, Paul. The grandeur of his description of Almighty God in chapter three is unparalleled even in the Bible itself. Nothing is more majestic, nothing more sublime and awful.

3. The contents may be divided into two parts:

1. A dialogue concerning judgment for iniquity. This is the "**burden.**"

(1) The prophet's complaint, 1:2-4.

(2) The Lord's reply, 1:5-11.

(3) The prophet's appeal that the Holy One should not suffer His people to perish, 1:12; 2:1.

(4) The Lord's answer, with direction that it should be plainly written down for the guidance and consolation of the godly, 2:2-20.

The Chaldeans are denounced:

(1) for rapacity, 2:6-8;

(2) for trust in unhallowed gain, 2:9-11;

(3) building cities and towns with the blood and treasure of strangers, 2:12-14;

(4) degrading and outraging the peoples whom they subdued, 2:15-17;

(5) confidence in idols, 2:18-20.

The prayer-song of Habakkuk, chap. 2.

It is called a prayer, like Psalm 89, 90. etc., not merely because it begins with prayer, but because the whole ode is an expansion of the opening petition. It is likewise a song. If the word *selah*, which occurs in it three times, is to be understood as a musical term, then it follows that it was intended to be rendered musically on some occasion or in some place of which we have no information. The inscription at the close, "**To the chief singer on my stringed instruments,**" appears to furnish some evidence in the same direction, (comp. Psalm 4, title).

The great sentence of the prophet, "**But the just shall live by his faith,**" 2:4, is quoted three times in the New Testament, Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38. Chap, 2:3, seems to be referred to in Hebrews 10:37.

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