

Habakkuk -- Theodicy on a National Scale

Summary - When the wicked seem to go unpunished, the righteous will survive as they maintain confidence in the fact that God is just and will have the last word.

What can we infer from 1.5-6 concerning Habakkuk's historical setting?
What does the content and tone of 1.2-3 reveal concerning the moral situation?
What can we infer from 1.5-6 concerning Habakkuk's historical setting?

Content: Unanswered, Rampant Violence **Tone:** Elevated Impatience with God

Invasion by Babylonians

-This invasion is "presently" an unthinkable prospect.
-Thus: Pre-612 BC, and even pre-626 (Nabopolassar regains Bab. from Assyria)

Audience: Southern Israel

Outline -

First Exchange, 1.1-11
Habakkuk's Complaint: Unpunished Wicked, 1.1-4
God's Reply: Judgment by Babylon, 1.5-11
Second Exchange, 1.12-20
Habakkuk's Complaint: Unethical Executioners, 1.12-2.1
God's Reply: Eventual Justice, 2.2-20
Habakkuk's Prayer: Faithful Joy, 3.1-19
Meaning of "Faith" in 2.4 (1)

Habakkuk's Dialogue with God, centering on 2.4:

Q-1: "Can I trust you to punish the wicked and rescue the righteous?"

A-1: "Yes: The Babylonians are coming."
Meaning of "Faith" in 2.4 (2)

Q-2: "Can I trust you to spare the righteous when you judge the wicked?"

A-2: "Yes: Through their trust in / faithfulness toward me, the righteous will survive the coming judgment."

Character of Prophet

Communication
Prayer
Relationship With God
Honest Questioning
Sincere Listening
Courageous, Joy-Producing Trust

Attributes of God

Pure and Just, 1.13
Overwhelmingly Powerful, 3.3-15
Dependable, 2.4, 3.16, 18

Contribution to Biblical Theology

Theodicy: This book teaches the importance long-term confidence in God despite temporary victory of wicked.

-God's Use of Gentile Nation to Punish Israel

Application - Persevere with joy.

By his overwhelming power God eventually will punish the wicked and rescue his faithful ones. Can You Hear Habakkuk in This Prison Letter?

4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!** 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. **The Lord is near.** 6 Do not be **anxious** about anything, but in everything, by **prayer and petition**, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the **peace of God**, which transcends all understanding, will **guard your hearts and your minds** in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4.4-7)

Jeremiah -- Promised Land...Lost

Summary - 'God-swapping and 'rabbit's foot theology' imperil Judah.

With sin exposed, judgment trumpeted, the Babylonians descend as God's invited 'guests'.

"Weeping Prophet" -- 9.1, 4.19, 8.21

Historical Context

Jeremiah's Ministry: 627 - 585 BC

God at work?

Babylon Overthrows Assyria (612)

Egypt Defeated by Babylonia (Carchemish, 605)

Israel Seeks Egyptian Support

Jerusalem Falls to Babylon (586)

Moral Conditions

Prophets - prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way, 5.31.

•In fact, in their private lives the people carried on a boldly pagan lifestyle:

Children gather wood, the fathers light the fire and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven [Ishtar, fertility goddess of Mesop.], 7.18.

•Rabbit's Foot Theology: Notice, however, the confused thinking that shows up in this statement:

They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces. Yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' 2.27.

Moral Conditions

Strong Abuse Weak
 Poor receive no justice (5.26-29)
Children are sacrificed (7.31)
Living Room Idolatry (7.18)
Rabbit's Foot Theology (2.27)

Personal Life of Jeremiah

Call (1.10, Anathoth)
Candor (15.18, 20.7)
Family (1.1, 16.1-4, 12.6)
Colleagues (Nahum, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah [?])
Opposition (12.6, 11.21, ch. 20, 28.15ff, chs. 36-38)
Support (chs. 26, 37-38)
-Modes of Communication (Message)

Sermons
Drama and Illustrations (13.1, 19.1 potter, chs. 28-29)
Writing (29, 30)
Unusual Behavior (16.5-9)
Visions (1, 24)

Highlights of Message: Sins

Forsaking God (2.13, 18.15) and Adopting False Gods (2.27, 3.3, 11.13)
Presumptuous Confidence (3.10b, 3.3-4, 7.4)
Child Sacrifice (7.31)
Straying Leaders (5.4-5, 6.14, 23.16+18)
Alliances with Egypt (2.36)
Social Evils (7.5-7)
Ignoring Sabbath (17.19-27)

Highlights of Message: Ramifications

Punishment Has Been Ineffective (6.29)
Judgment Will Come (7.20, 5.19, 8.1-2)
Surrender to Babylonians (27.12-13, 21.8-10)
Mercy (12.15, 30.10, 33.5b-9)

Attributes of God

Creator (10.11-16)
Judge (11.17, 34.2)
Merciful Restorer (33.5b-9)

Contribution to Biblical Theology

'Supremacy of God' Means Rejection is Height of Folly (2.11, 13, 32, 18.13, 15)

New Covenant Is Being Planned (31.31ff).

Messianic Connection
 7.11 ~ Matt. 21.13
 23.5-6, 33.15-16
 31.15 ~ Matt. 2.17-18

Modern Audience

-No God-Swap.
-No 'Rabbit's Feet'
-Care for Defenseless.

Questions for reflection

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1) What are some questions that I ask God about my security, community, workplace and nation?

2) How can I be prepared to receive answers to prayer that I may not feel comfortable with?

Jeremiah's view of society

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Sins

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Adopting False Gods(2.27, 3.3, 11.13)

Presumptuous Confidence (3.10b, 3.3-4, 7.4)

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Ignoring Sabbath (17.19-27)

1) What specific sins in my home, community, workplace and nation has God highlighted here for me? How upset am I concerning these sins?

2) What kinds of actions could I take each day to be live differently in the family of God?