

Habakkuk

The Twelve Minor Prophets · Biblical Prophets

Habakkuk's prophecy uniquely presents a dialogue between the prophet and God, wrestling with the problem of evil and divine justice.

Note: Habakkuk 2:4—'the just shall live by his faith'—is quoted three times in the New Testament with different emphases: Romans 1:17 stresses 'the just' (justification), Galatians 3:11 emphasizes 'by faith' (means), and Hebrews 10:38 highlights 'shall live' (perseverance). The prophet's watchtower imagery (2:1) reflects ancient Near Eastern practice where watchmen stood guard to announce approaching messengers. Habakkuk's chapter 3, marked 'to the chief singer on my stringed instruments,' is a psalm with musical notations including 'Shigionoth' (possibly indicating an intense, passionate style) and three 'Selah' pauses.

Writing around 609-605 BC as Babylon rose to power, Habakkuk first complained that God tolerated violence and injustice in Judah without acting. God's startling response—He would use the even more wicked Babylonians as His instrument of judgment—provoked Habakkuk's deeper theological crisis: How could a holy God use such an unrighteous nation to punish His people? The prophet stationed himself on his watchtower to await God's answer. The divine response established a principle central to both Judaism and Christianity: 'The just shall live by his faith.' Though Babylon would indeed conquer, it too would face judgment. Habakkuk's concluding prayer-psalm expresses faith triumphant: though fig trees fail and fields yield no food, 'Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to establish justification by faith (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11).

Key Verses

Habakkuk 1:13

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:
wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue
when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

Habakkuk 2:4

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by
his faith.

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the
waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the
labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be
cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in
the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

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