

Habakkuk

By Dr. Alan Cobb

Author

Little is known about the author. His name may have originated from the Hebrew word קבַח (chavaq), meaning “to fold the hands” or “to embrace.” He is identified as a prophet but without any further description to tell us anything about him. Even the New Testament writers say nothing about him. The last verse of the book has a musical notation similar to some of the Psalms and this has led some scholars to suspect he may have been a musician and thus a member of the tribe of Levi. The Septuagint has an addition to the book of Daniel which is called *Bel and the Dragon*. This addition mentions Habakkuk and indicates that he was the son of Jeshua of the tribe of Levi. There is a Levite mentioned in 2 Chronicles 31:15 which was during the reign of Hezekiah and would have been around 726 BC. *Bel and the Dragon* also gives a legend about him which seems to be entirely fantasy. The legends says that an angel commanded Habakkuk to take a meal to Daniel in the lion’s den. But since Habakkuk doesn’t know where the lion’s den is located, the angel picks Habakkuk up by the hair and transports him to the den. (*Bel and the Dragon* 33 – 39) Also, according to rabbinic writings, Habakkuk was the son of the Shunammite woman whom Elisha said would embrace a son within a year because of the kindness she had shown to him. So the rabbinic writing says she must have named her son “Habakkuk – embrace.”

Date

References to the Lord raising up the Chaldeans who were a fierce people already moving through the land and would expand their territory even further (1:6) points to a date before 605 BC when the Babylonians, under the kingship of Nabopolassar, defeated the combined forces of Egypt and Assyria at the battle of Carchemish. Other references describing the declining conditions in Judah (1:7-11 for example) would point to a date after the death of King Josiah in 609 BC. That would put this writing during the time that King Jehoiakim ruled from 609 to 598 BC. (See 2 Kings 23:36 – 24:7 and 2 Chron 36:5-8) So I believe Habakkuk wrote before the siege of Jerusalem in 597 BC.

Audience and Purpose

After the death of Solomon, his kingdom was split into ten northern tribes who were then called Israel, and two southern tribes who were called Judah. The tribes called Israel were captured in 722 BC by the Assyrians and resettled throughout the Assyrian kingdom to intermarry with the people and thus cease to be a people called Israel. Therefore, Habakkuk had to be writing and prophesying to the people known as Judah. The people of Judah had to be living in increasing fear of being defeated as a nation and dispersed into other areas of the world by an invading army. The people were also living in increasing disobedience of God’s commands and were warned by Nahum’s prophecy that their lifestyle could result in God’s judgment just as it had with the northern tribes.

Jeremiah also wrote during these times about the wickedness in God’s people leading to judgment upon them. Habakkuk saw the wickedness of his people and was disturbed that God’s didn’t seem to be doing anything about it. But when God revealed that he was raising up the Babylonians to punish (discipline) the evil of the people, Habakkuk was perplexed about how God could use a nation that was more evil to discipline the people of Judah for the evil of their unfaithfulness. God went on to explain that he would eventually punish the Babylonians for their evil wickedness. He just didn’t give Habakkuk a time line for when that would happen.

While Habakkuk’s purpose was warning the people of impending discipline for their disobedience, his last chapter praises YHWH for his wise ways of dealing with people. Habakkuk’s main subject is much like that of Asaph in Psalm 73, namely the afflictions of the righteous amid the prosperity of the wicked. While warning

the people, he also reminded them of the goodness of God so the righteous among the people could have hope and encouragement.

Historical Setting (See foot note at end of the study for the source of this information)

- A. Josiah brought about the final spiritual revival for Judah when he came to the throne in 622 B.C.
- B. The Assyrian Empire Fell
 - 1. The Assyrian power rose with Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 B.C.) and Shalmaneser II (859-824 B.C.)
 - 2. Tiglath-pileser III (Pul in the Scriptures) began a group of conquerors who took Syria and Palestine including Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C. who began the deportation of Samaria), Sargon II (722-705 B.C. who completed the deportation of Samaria), Sennacherib (704-581 B.C. who attacked king of Judah, Hezekiah [Josiah's father]), and Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C. who led campaigns against Egypt)
 - 3. Esarhaddon's son, Ashurbanipal (669-631) ruled much of the upper Egyptian city of Thebes, but his decline and that of Assyria's soon followed
 - 4. Nineveh, the capital, was destroyed in 612 B.C.
 - 5. Assyria's army was defeated in 609 B.C. at Haran
 - 6. What was left of Assyria's army went to Carchemish (just west of the Euphrates River and north of Aram)
- C. The Neo-Babylonian Empire Arose
 - 1. Merodach Baladan was a Chaldean and father of Nabopolassar and grandfather of Nebuchadnezzar. Merodach Baladan sent ambassadors to Hezekiah (Isa 39; 2 Ki 20:12-19)
 - 2. In October 626 B.C. Nabopolassar defeated the Assyrians outside of Babylon
 - 3. In 616 B.C. Nabopolassar expanded his kingdom, and in 612 B.C. he joined with the Medes and destroyed Nineveh
- D. A Realignment of Power in 609 B.C. and later
 - 1. Judah: When Assyria fell and Babylon arose Judah, under Josiah, removed itself from Assyria's control and existed as an autonomous state until 609 B.C. when it lost a battle with Egypt on the plain of Megiddo
 - 2. Egypt:
 - a. Attempted to expand its presence into Palestine with Assyria's troubles
 - b. Egypt joined with Assyria to fight the Babylonians at Haran
 - 1) Judah tried to stop Egypt's (Pharaoh Neco II) alliance but was defeated on the plain of Megiddo with the loss of their king, Josiah (cf. 2 Chron 35:20-24)
 - 2) The Assyrians lost their battle with Babylon (even with the help of Egypt) and disappeared as a power in the world, and Egypt retreated to Carchemish as the dividing line between Egypt and Babylonian
 - 3) Egypt ruled Judah:
 - a) Egypt (Necho) replaced Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, after three months with Jehoiakim (who was another son of Josiah) as a vassal king (2 Ki 23:34-35)
 - b) Egypt (Necho) plundered Judah's treasuries
 - c) Egypt (Necho) took Jehoahaz into captivity in Egypt
- E. In 605 B.C. other changes of power occurred:
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish
 - 2. Judah's king, Jehoiakim, changed his loyalty to the Babylonians rather than the Egyptians and became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal king (2 Ki. 24:1)
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar had to return to Babylon with the death of his father, Nebopolassar

4. Nebuchadnezzar solidified his rule by appointing vassal kings and taking hostages; Daniel was taken as a part of this deportation (Dan 1:1-6)

Chapter 1

1:1 Translates as “The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.”

This indicates that what Habakkuk is writing is a prophecy (oracle) that he was given in a vision (dream.)

1:2-4 translate as “Until when, O YHWH, shall I call for help and you shall not hear? I cry out to you, Violence! Yet you do not save. Why do you make me see iniquity and you look upon toil? Yes, destruction and violence are before me. There is strife and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored and justice does not go forth continually for the wicked surround the righteous. Therefore justice comes out perverted.”

Habakkuk begins with a complaint he had for which he wanted an answer from God. He is seeing violence all around him and the people and has cried out to God to be saved from it but he has not yet seen God respond to his cries. This has happened to followers of God down through the ages. They see the wickedness of people around them and cry out to God for help, but they don't see any help that he is providing. Not only is he seeing violence from the outside toward his people, but he is seeing strife and contention among the people and that the law of God is ignored so that the wicked are not punished and therefore justice is perverted for the righteous. So he cries out to God, How long will this last?

1:5-11 translate as “Look among the nations. Observe. Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am working a work in your days you would not believe if you were told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, the bitter and impetuous nation who is going into the broad spaces of the earth to possess tents not his own. He is terrible and fearful. His judgment and his glory comes from himself. His horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen spread themselves, their horsemen come from afar, they shall fly like an eagle, swooping down to devour. All of them come for violence. The troop of their faces are eastward. They collect captives like sand. He mocks at kings and rulers are a scorn to him. He laughs at every fortress and he heaps up dirt and captures it. Then he sweeps on like the wind and he trespasses and is guilty, imputing his power this is to his deity.”

God's answer is for Habakkuk and the people to look outward among the nations and be astonished because he is doing something that they haven't seen and wouldn't believe if someone told them. Then God begins to explain what he is doing by describing the Chaldean people as bitter and impetuous as a nation and going out into lands not their own to possess it. God says the Chaldeans are terrible and fearful, with horses and horsemen who are so swift that they seem to be swooping down upon their enemies as they come to do violence. God says the Chaldeans are looking toward the east to overcome all the lands and take the peoples captive back to Babylon. The Chaldean king mocks and scorns the rulers of other lands. He laughs at their fortresses as he heaps up dirt as a ramp to overcome and capture the cities. God says the Chaldean king says his power to possess other nations comes from the deity he worships.

According to Dr. Thomas Constable in his commentary on Habakkuk, the name “Chaldean” comes from the people who lived in the southern part of Mesopotamia and captured the leadership of the nation as the last and greatest dynasty to rule the land. (See item C 1 in the Historical Setting above.) He also notes that the Chaldean people were Semites, descendants of Kesed, the son of Abraham's brother, Nahor (Gen 22:22). He goes on to say that some modern people of Iraq, especially those in the south, still identify themselves as Chaldeans. So these vicious people were distant cousins of the people of Judah, but unlike Abraham had not come to worship the God who created the universe and preserved their ancestor, Noah, and his wife and his sons and their wives

through the flood he had sent to cleanse the land of the wicked people that surrounded Noah and his family. So, although they were distantly related, the Chaldeans practiced evil ways and worshipped a false god (who would have been one of Satan's fallen angels.)

1:12-17 translate as "Are you not from everlasting, O YHWH, my El, my Holy One? We shall not die, O YHWH. You have appointed him for judgment, and O Rock, you have established him for correction. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil and to look on vexation are not able. Why do you look on those who deal deceitfully? Should you be silent when the wicked swallow up one more righteous than he? For have you made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over him. He takes up all of him with a hook, drags him away with his net and gathers him together in his fishing net. Therefore he rejoices and exults. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his fishing net because through these things his portion is fat, and his food is rich. Shall he therefore empty his net and spare not to slay nations continually?"

Habakkuk recognizes that YHWH is in control and that the people of Judah shall not cease to exist as other nations did to invading armies and specifically as the northern ten tribes had to the Assyrians. God had promised to preserve his people forever but Habakkuk understood that God had appointed the Chaldeans to "judge" or "discipline" his people for their disobedience. Habakkuk understood that God was too pure to approve of evil but he wonders why God would be silent while a wicked nation (the Chaldeans) would deal treacherously with a nation more righteous than them (Judea.) Habakkuk wonders questioningly to God if he made people like fish where bigger fish eat smaller fish. He sees the Chaldeans as being like fishermen, catching nations in their net and using them (and their wealth) without regard that they are also humans and continuing to do that. And so the Chaldeans worship their nets because they have provided plenty for them. For God to use an evil nation like Chaldea to discipline his people seemed unjust to Habakkuk.

Chapter 2

2:1-3 translate as "I shall stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart. And I shall keep watch to see what he shall speak to me and how I may reply when I am reproved. Then YHWH answered me and said, Write the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time. It hastens toward the goal and it shall not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it for it shall certainly come, it shall not delay."

Habakkuk says he waited like a guard at his post to hear from the Lord and possibly receive a reproof from YHWH for questioning his use of a more wicked nation to discipline the Jews for their disobedience of his commands. When YHWH did respond, Habakkuk was told to write down the vision on tablets so that whoever reads it may run to tell it to other people. YHWH says the vision is for an appointed time, but not immediate, so even though it might seem like the events of the vision aren't happening, Habakkuk and the people should wait because everything will continue toward its fulfillment. The author of the book of Hebrews (probably Paul) quoted 2:3 when encouraging believers to continue in their commitment to following Jesus' teachings as they wait for his return because that return will happen at God's appointed time.

2:4-5 translate as "Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him. But the righteous shall live by his faith. And, also indeed, wine betrays the haughty man and he is not content; who enlarges his soul as Sheol and he is like death and is not satisfied. But he gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples."

Now Habakkuk begins to give us what YHWH has revealed to him. The phrase "proud one" must surely refer to the Babylonian nation (Chaldeans), while the "righteous" would be all of the Jews who continued to put their trust (faith) in God. Paul quoted this two times: Romans 1:17 where he was emphasizing that faith in God results in righteous living and in Galatians 3:11 where he was stressing that the new life of living in rightness

with God comes by faith (trust and following Jesus' teaching) rather than by trying to keep all the nuances of the commands of the Law. In Hebrews 10:38, the writer emphasizes it is faith that God looks upon and rewards as righteousness. All three of the New Testament quotes are referring to "live" in the sense of eternal life, but for the Jews reading or hearing the message of Habakkuk "live" would be understood as physical life and that faith in YHWH would live through whatever the Chaldeans came and did to the nation. Thus, everyone who faithfully waits with trust in YHWH, will continue to live. YHWH's vision to Habakkuk continues to expound upon the statement that "for the proud one, his soul is not right within him." When a "haughty" (proud) individual drinks too much wine (gets drunk) then the fact that his soul is not satisfied with his situation and possessions and seeks to get more from other people. YHWH says this is like Sheol which is never satisfied with all the people who have gone there, but is always ready to get more souls.

2:6-8 translate as "Shall not these, all of them, lift up a parable against him, and a mocking riddle to him and say, Woe to him who increases what is not his! How long, then, shall he load on himself heavy pledges? Shall not those who strike you rise up suddenly and those who shake you awake? Indeed, you shall become plunder to them. Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples shall loot you from the blood of man, and the violence of the land and the city and all who live in it."

Now we are told that "these" who are all of the nations and peoples whom have been on the receiving end of the Babylonian nation's evil actions, will tell a mocking parable against the Babylonians to say "Woe" to them for taking (stealing) from others and wonder if those oppressed people won't someday rise up against the Babylonian nation and shake them awake by plundering them because of what they have done. In fact, the Medes, who had joined with the Chaldeans to defeat the Assyrians and destroy Nineveh because of the evil that they had done, will in a few decades join with the Persians to defeat the Babylonians in 539 BC. The Babylonians would then become plunder for their conquerors.

2:9-11 translate as "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand to calamity! You have devised shame for your house to make an end of many peoples, and you are sinning in your soul. For the stone shall cry out from the wall and the rafter shall answer it from the wood."

This "woe" is about the Babylonians building a city that they thought would protect them from being captured like they had captured so many other cities. Babylon had a wall around it so thick that two chariots could race side by side on top of it. They had food growing within the walls and a river running through the city to provide water. The gate through which that water flowed was below the level of the river so no invading army could drive their chariots through the gates into the city. Their river was not dammed up like the river flowing into Nineveh, so they wouldn't worry about someone doing what they did to Nineveh, breaking the dam so the rushing water would break the gates and walls so an invader could have access into the city. But in 539 BC, the General of the combined Mede – Persian army would do the opposite of what was done to Nineveh. They would dam up the river so the level of the water dropped low enough that the army could walk under the water gate and right into the city where the people were drunk from their partying.

2:12-14 translate as "Woe to him who builds a city with blood and establishes a town with violence. Behold, is it not from YHWH of hosts that peoples labor only for fire, and nations grow weary only for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of YHWH as the water cover over the sea."

Here the "woe" is about building a city upon the violence and bloodshed of other people because YHWH would judge their work (labor) as fuel for the fire (being burned up) and all their labor would be "vanity" (worthless, amounting to nothing). And it would be seen that way because eventually the whole world will be filled with the glory of YHWH just like water covers the sea.

The tower of babel was probably not in a city called Babylon, but at that time, God judged the self-reliant

attitude of those people who believed they could glorify themselves by what they could achieve. That collection of people were forced to scatter in smaller groups because God confused their language so that everyone didn't have the same language and they couldn't understand each other. Thus the glory they expected to have by their achievement was destroyed and the city of the tower was abandoned. What those people were trying to do, achieve glory by what they could build, was the sin of the Chaldean people. It is still prevalent today and will continue until Jesus returns to establish his Millennial reign upon the earth.

2:15-17 translate as “Woe to him who causes your friend to drink, pouring out your wineskin and making him drink, in order to look on their nakedness! You are filled with shame instead of glory. You drink also, and be seen as uncircumcised. The cup in the right hand of YHWH shall be on you and shame shall be on your glory. For the violence of Lebanon shall overwhelm you and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them because of man's blood and the violence of the land, to the town and all who live in it.”

Here the “woe” recognizes that the Chaldeans had deceived other nations, making them drunk on their promises of aid and protection, and then exposing the nation's nakedness (seen because it revealed that they were uncircumcised) and bringing shame upon that nation. So the cup that YHWH will make the Chaldeans drink will cause them to be shamefully disgraced.

2:18-20 translate as “What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts his work on it, to fashion speechless idols. Woe to him who says to the wood, Awake! To a mute stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, but any breath is not in its midst. But YHWH is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him.”

This is the conclusion of the vision YHWH gave to Habakkuk. It proclaims the worthlessness of all idols because they are created by a human and thus do not have any life in them. A “woe” is proclaimed for all those who try to say an idol is awake (alive) and that it can teach. Only God who created the universe can teach what is true, or can proclaim future events before they happen. Only God can give life because he is the originator of life. The end of verse 2:20 recognizes that “YHWH is in his holy temple.” Therefore the whole earth should be silent before him.

Chapter 3

Having received the vision from YHWH that he was going to use the Babylonian empire to discipline Judah for disobedience but would subsequently judge that empire for its evil ways, Habakkuk responds with a hymn (Psalm) of praise to YHWH. Chapter 3 may have originally been separate from Habakkuk's recounting of his questions and YHWH's response in a vision. Then the hymn was joined to become part of Habakkuk's writing of the vision because it was his response to it.

3:1 translates as “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet according to shigionoth.”

The Hebrew word “shigionoth” is only used once in the Old Testament. It is the plural form of the Hebrew word “shiggaion” which is also only used once in the Old Testament as the introduction to Psalm 7 – “A shiggaion of David which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.” The exact meaning of the word is unknown but it seems to convey the idea of strong emotion and therefore may have indicated a particular style of music or singing which would show that.

3:2 translates as “YHWH, I have heard your report and I fear, O YHWH. Revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known. In wrath remember mercy.”

The beginning of the hymn is Habakkuk's prayer that YHWH would “revive” (which carries the idea of

stirring up or bringing to life) the judgement he has decreed for Babylon and make that judgment known between the time of the beginning of the discipline of Judah and the execution of the decree of destruction upon Babylon. And Habakkuk pleads with YHWH to remember his mercy while both the discipline and judgement are being done.

3:3-7 translate as “Eloha comes from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens and the earth is full of his praise. His radiance is like the light, rays from his hand are to Him. And there is the hiding of his power. A plague goes before him and lightning went forth at his feet. He stood and surveyed the earth. He looked and startled the nations. And the ancient mountains were shattered, the eternal hills bowed down. The goings of eternity are his. I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, the curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.”

Eloha is the singular form of Elohim and stresses the unity and eternity of God. Teman was a grandson of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel). It is used to refer to a place in southern Idumea which was separated from the hills of Paran by a low plain called the Arabah. Thus Teman is used to refer to the southern direction. The Hebrew translated as “Holy One” is *qadosh* which means sacred, holy, and separated. It is being translated as Holy One because it refers to the action of coming from someplace which would be seen as the action of a person. Paran is a desert in the Sinai Peninsula and is generally accepted as being in the area of Kadesh Barnea where the Israelites were during their 40 year stay in the wilderness because of their lack of faith in YHWH. Habakkuk and the Jews would understand this description as referring to the One and Only God who exists as a unity from eternity. As believers and followers of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God and at the same time the Son of Man, who is the One revealed to Moses as YHWH at the burning bush and who, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit are the Triune God, we could easily see this as YHWH and the Holy Spirit as coming from the South.

Selah is a musical notation that means “to lift up” so it can be understood as a pause to allow a modulation in the music or a pause to reflect upon what has been said. As the hymn progresses from this pause, the splendor and majesty of YHWH is seen as spreading over the earth as he comes from the South, from Teman and Mount Paran. His radiance is like light, showing his majestic power and yet hiding the full extent of his power. Plague going before him and lightning coming from his feet would indicate his judgment. As he stands and surveys the earth, the nations are startled at his presence. And at his presence, the mountains and ancient hills are shattered and bowed down in recognition of his authority over everything. So Habakkuk sees the residents of Cushan and Midian as being distressed and trembling because of his presence in their area which is in the South from the territory of Judah. All of this is a description of the manifestation of God’s majesty and power and the reaction of the inanimate (non-life) and animate (life) parts of the world to him.

3:8-15 translate as” Did YHWH rage against the rivers or was your anger against the rivers or was your wrath against the sea that you rode on your horses, on your chariots of salvation? You bare your bow naked. According to the oaths of the rods of your word. Selah. You cleaved the earth with rivers, the mountains saw you and quaked. The storm of waters passed over. The deep uttered forth its voice. It lifted high its hands. Sun and moon stood in their places. They went away at the light of your arrows, at the radiance of your gleaming spear. In fury you marched through the earth. In anger you trampled the nations. You went forth for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil to bare the foundation to the neck. Selah. You pierced with his own spears the head of his warriors. They rush to scatter me. Their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret. You trampled on the sea with your horses, the foaming of many waters.”

Now Habakkuk moves to a description of God’s interactions with the world asks if YHWH was angry with the rivers or seas as he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation. The immediate answer of the hearers of this hymn would be “No.” YHWH is not angry but only using the rivers and seas to display the power he has to

provide salvation (freedom from captivity) for his people. Habakkuk's hearers would see this as referring to YHWH using his power over the river, sea, and things of this world to set their forefathers free from their captivity by the Egyptians. It is hard to translate and difficult to understand exactly what Habakkuk meant by "You (YHWH) bare your bow naked" and "according to the oaths of the rods of his word." It is difficult because we have no other references to actions of YHWH like this. Somehow it must refer to YHWH's power and willingness to use his power to accomplish what he desires. That would fit with what the rest of Scripture depicts. YHWH cleaving (or dividing) the earth with rivers, mountains quaking, seas roaring and lifting up its waves into the air, and the sun and moon standing in their places and not moving while all of it goes away when his majestic power is displayed ("went away at the light of your arrows, at the radiance of your gleaming spear.") The Jews would see this description as YHWH using his powerful presence to bring salvation to his people, but how that would all work together with the judgment and destruction of the Babylonians for their evil would seem to be difficult for them to understand.

For believers and followers of Jesus, who have read his revelation to John of the way God will deal with the ultimate source of man's captivity to following the way of Satan rather than acknowledging and letting God be in control. The description of YHWH striking "the head of the house of the evil to bare the foundation to the neck" and "You pierced with his own spears the head of his warriors" would be difficult for the Jews to understand other than that YHWH would put down their oppressors by his power. After the time of this vision to Habakkuk, God will give further revelations to Ezekiel during the captivity of the Jews about how he will treat their oppressors. Those revelations, and the revelation Jesus gives to John about 650 years later give further understanding of the descriptions given to Habakkuk and describe Jesus striking the head of the house of the evil (Satan) and using their own spears against them (Ezekiel 38 and 39). All of these descriptions join with those given in the revelation Jesus gave to John about the last days to show God's final dealing with man's lack of faithful obedience using all the elements of the world and finally his commanding authority to have the heavens and earth roll up like a scroll and present the souls of mankind at his throne for judgment.

3:16-19 translate as "I heard and my inward parts trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Rottenness entered into my bones and I tremble within myself that I might rest for the day of distress; to come up against the people he invade him. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the field and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I shall exult in YHWH. I shall rejoice in the El of my salvation. YHWH is my strength and he has made my feet like hinds feet and makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments."

Even though Habakkuk could write a hymn of praise to YHWH after receiving the vision of the discipline of Judah by an invasion from the Babylonians and the subsequent judgment of the Babylonians, he still trembled because there was nothing he could do but wait for the "distress" of the Babylonian invasion and then still wait for the judgment to come upon the Babylonians. And he has no timetable for when it will happen or how long it will last so he doesn't even know if he will still be alive to see the end of his vision. But his outlook for his future is that even though everything around him should fail, he will still exult (rejoice, be elated) by his relationship with YHWH. That means he will continue to have faith in and trust YHWH for his present and the future even though everything may look bad and he might not live through it all. That is the kind of faith that the author of Hebrews says will be honored by God and be credited as righteousness just as it was to Abraham.

Habakkuk ends with a note to the choir director about how this hymn should be played. This is why most scholars believe Habakkuk was a member of the tribe of Levi (remember the Levites were scattered among the other tribes and had to specific portion of the Promised Land in which they would all live) and a descendant of the musicians appointed by David to play for the worship services in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.

This study of Habakkuk gives us a clearer picture of how God has revealed to mankind the love he has for us and especially those who trust him and let him be in control of their lives by obediently following what he has

said to do. And it also gives us a clearer picture of what God will do to discipline those who disobey and how he will judge and completely destroy those who reject and oppose him. The Jews of Habakkuk's time would not fully understand all that was described to them in the vision, but we have no excuse because God has given us further revelations that clearly show what we need to do to have a right relationship with him and the consequences for those who reject him and continue to do it until their death. May we understand, apply that understanding to our lives and share it with those who do not have the understanding at this time.

Footnote for source of Historical Setting: This information was presented by David Malick in his paper "An Introduction to the Book of Habakkuk" and he wrote that it was adapted from Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty: Old Testament*, 1125-27, and Homer Heater, Jr., "Notes on the Book of Jeremiah," unpublished class notes in seminar in the pre-exilic Old Testament prophets (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall 1990), 101-105.