

2/25/76 chapel

HABAKKUK

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This morning I want to call your attention to one of the finest books in the OT, but not one of the best known. It is one of the finest prophecies. It is too bad that we have simply taken over the Latin word - Major prophets and Minor prophets! In Latin they just mean longer or shorter. But many people might get the impression that a minor prophet is something inferior. This book is inferior to no book of the Bible, and proportionate to its size it is probably quoted as much in the NT = in proportion to its size = as any book of the OT. It is the book of Habakkuk.

This book of Habakkuk is very important for what it teaches. It is also important for the illustration it gives us of the way God spoke to and with the prophet and the way He used the prophet. There is one difference between reading the prophetic books and reading for instance the words of Shakespeare. In Shakespeare you find at the beginning of every talk the name is given of the person talking. We do not have these insertions in the Bible. Consequently there are times when we are sure who is speaking. God inspired it all. It is all kept from error. But much of the prophetic books consist of the words the prophets spoke, and some even consists of statements === of quotations from those whom the prophet is answering.

In this book of Habakkuk we have a conversation between the prophet and the Lord, and we learn much from this conversation.

The prophecy begins: "The burden which Habakkuk, the prophet, did see." This word "burden" is used in the OT of something that was lifted up or carried, but it is often used of the message the prophet had. In this case both meanings would apply. Because this is not merely giving a message God gave Habakkuk but it is showing us the burden Habakkuk had upon his heart and upon his shoulders.

So the next three verses (after the first verse) give us the word of the prophet and show us his soul as he was greatly disturbed by the conditions he saw round about him.

He said, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance: For spoiling and violence are before me; and there are those who raise up strife and contention. Therefore, the law is slacked, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore, justice goeth forth perverted."

Habakkuk saw the evil and wickedness round about him in the land of Judah and his soul was burdened, and he cried unto the Lord for an answer to the situation. Certainly here Habakkuk expresses a feeling that must be in the heart of every Christian today as he looks upon our country.