

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE PROPHECY OF

HABAKKUK

The subject of this prophecy is the destruction of Judea and Jerusalem for the sins of the people, and the consolation of the faithful under national calamities.

CHAPTER 1

The wickedness of the land. The fearful vengeance to be executed.

(1-11) These judgments to be inflicted by a nation more wicked than themselves. (12-17)

Habakkuk 1:1

Vs. 1-11: The servants of the Lord are deeply afflicted by seeing ungodliness and violence prevail; especially among those who profess the truth. No man scrupled doing wrong to his neighbor. We should long to remove to the world where holiness and love reign for ever, and no violence shall be before us. God has good reasons for his long-suffering towards bad men, and the rebukes of good men. The day will come when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer wrong. They were to notice what was going forward among the heathen by the Chaldeans, and to consider themselves a nation to be scourged by them. But most men presume on continued prosperity, or that calamities will not come in their days. They are a bitter and hasty nation, fierce, cruel, and bearing down all before them. They shall overcome all that oppose them. But it is a great offense, and the common offense of proud people, to take glory to themselves. The closing words give a glimpse of comfort.

Habakkuk 1:12

Vs. 12-17: However matters may be, yet God is the Lord our God, our Holy One. We are an offending people, he is an offended God, yet we will not entertain hard thoughts of him, or of his service. It is great comfort that, whatever mischief men design, the Lord designs good, and we are sure that his counsel shall stand. Though wickedness may prosper a while, yet God is holy, and does not approve the wickedness. As he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with any approval. By this principle we must abide, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, in some cases, seem to us not to agree with it. The prophet complains that God's patience was abused; and because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil. Some they take up as with the unequaled, one by one; others they catch in shoals, as in their net, and gather them in their drag, their unequaled net. They admire their own cleverness and contrivance: there is great proneness in us to take the glory of outward prosperity to ourselves. This is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net because it is our own. God will soon end successful and splendid robberies. Death and judgment shall make men cease to prey on others, and they shall be preyed on themselves. Let us remember, whatever advantages we possess, we must give all the glory to God.

CHAPTER 2

Habakkuk must wait in faith. (1-4) Judgments upon the Chaldeans. (5-14) Also upon drunkenness and idolatry. (15-20)

Habakkuk 2:1

Vs. 1-4: When tossed and perplexed with doubts about the methods of Providence, we must watch against temptations to be impatient. When we have poured out complaints and requests before God, we must observe the answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and providences; what the Lord will say to our case. God will not disappoint the believing expectations of those who wait to hear what he will say unto them. All are concerned in the truths of God's word. Though the promised favor be deferred long, it will come at last, and abundantly recompense us for waiting. The humble, broken-hearted, repenting sinner, alone seeks to obtain an interest in this salvation. He will rest his soul on the promise, and on Christ, in and through whom it is given. Thus he walks and works, as well as lives by faith, perseveres to the end, and is exalted to glory; while those who distrust or despise God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him. The just shall live by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. Only those made just by faith, shall live, shall be happy here and for ever.

Habakkuk 2:5

Vs. 5-14: The prophet reads the doom of all proud and oppressive powers that bear hard upon God's people. The lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the entangling snares of men; and we find him that led Israel captive, himself led captive by each of these. No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours, than what we come honestly by. Riches are but clay, thick clay; what are gold and silver but white and yellow earth? Those who travel through thick clay, are hindered and dirtied in their journey; so are those who go through the world in the midst of abundance of wealth. And what fools are those that burden themselves with continual care about it; with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving, and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give another day! They overload themselves with this thick clay, and so sink themselves

down into destruction and perdition. See what will be the end hereof; what is gotten by violence from others, others shall take away by violence. Covetousness brings disquiet and uneasiness into a family; he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; what is worse, it brings the curse of God upon all the affairs of it. There is a lawful gain, which, by the blessing of God, may be a comfort to a house; but what is got by fraud and injustice, will bring poverty and ruin upon a family. Yet that is not the worst; Thou hast sinned against thine own soul, hast endangered it. Those who wrong their neighbors, do much greater wrong to their own souls. If the sinner thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with art and contrivance, the riches and possessions he heaped together will witness against him. There are not greater drudges in the world than those who are slaves to mere worldly pursuits. And what comes of it? They find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it; they will own it is worse than vanity, it is vexation of spirit. By staining and sinking earthly glory, God manifests and magnifies his own glory, and fills the earth with the knowledge of it, as plentifully as waters cover the sea, which are deep, and spread far and wide.

 **Habakkuk 2:15**

Vs. 15-20: A severe woe is pronounced against drunkenness; it is very fearful against all who are guilty of drunkenness at any time, and in any place, from the stately palace to the paltry ale-house. To give one drink who is in want, who is thirsty and poor, or a weary traveler, or ready to perish, is charity; but to give a neighbor drink, that he may expose himself, may disclose secret concerns, or be drawn into a bad bargain, or for any such purpose, this is wickedness. To be guilty of this sin, to take pleasure in it, is to do what we can towards the murder both of soul and body. There is woe to him, and punishment answering to the sin. The folly of worshipping idols is exposed. The Lord is in his holy temple in heaven, where we have access to him in the way he has appointed. May we welcome his salvation, and worship him in his earthly temples, through Christ Jesus, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

The prophet beseeches God for his people. (1, 2) He calls to mind former deliverances. (3-15) His firm trust in the Divine mercy. (16-19)

Habakkuk 3:1

Vs. 1, 2: The word prayer seems used here for an act of devotion. The Lord would revive his work among the people in the midst of the years of adversity. This may be applied to every season when the church, or believers, suffer under afflictions and trials. Mercy is what we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only plea. We must not say, Remember our merit, but, Lord, remember thy own mercy.

Habakkuk 3:3

Vs. 3-15: God's people, when in distress, and ready to despair, seek help by considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and by pleading them with God in prayer. The resemblance between the Babylonish and Egyptian captivities, naturally presents itself to the mind, as well as the possibility of a like deliverance through the power of Jehovah. God appeared in his glory. All the powers of nature are shaken, and the course of nature changed, but all is for the salvation of God's own people. Even what seems least likely, shall be made to work for their salvation. Hereby is given a type and figure of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thine anointed. Joshua who led the armies of Israel, was a figure of Him whose name he bare, even Jesus, our Joshua. In all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon Christ the Anointed, and brought deliverances to pass by him. All the wonders done for Israel of old, were nothing to that which was done when the Son of God suffered on the cross for the sins of his people. How glorious his resurrection and ascension! And how much more glorious will be his second coming, to put an end to all that opposes him, and all that causes suffering to his people!

Habakkuk 3:16

Vs. 16-19: When we see a day of trouble approach, it concerns us to prepare. A good hope through grace is founded in holy fear. The prophet looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and observed what great things God had done for them, and so was not only recovered, but filled with holy joy. He resolved to delight and triumph in the Lord; for when all is gone, his God is not gone. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease. But those who, when full, enjoyed God in all, when emptied and poor, can enjoy all in God. They can sit down upon the heap of the ruins of their creature-comforts, and even then praise the Lord, as the God of their salvation, the salvation of the soul, and rejoice in him as such, in their greatest distresses. Joy in the Lord is especially seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world. Even when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may be supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit. Then we shall be strong for spiritual warfare and work, and with enlargement of heart may run the way of his commandments, and outrun our troubles. And we shall be successful in spiritual undertakings. Thus the prophet, who began his prayer with fear and trembling, ends it with joy and triumph. And thus faith in Christ prepares for every event. The name of Jesus, when we can speak of Him as ours, is balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. It is as ointment poured forth, shedding fragrance through the whole soul. In the hope of a heavenly crown, let us sit loose to earthly possessions and comforts, and cheerfully bear up under crosses. Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and where he is, we shall be also.