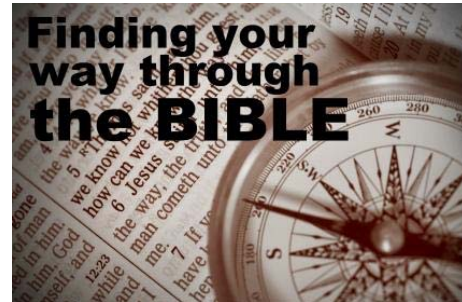


# Habakkuk

## Author

Little is known about Habakkuk except that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah and a man of vigorous faith rooted deeply in the religious traditions of Israel.



## Date

The prediction of the coming Babylonian invasion ([1:6](#)) indicates that Habakkuk lived in Judah toward the end of Josiah's reign (640–609 b.c.) or at the beginning of Jehoiakim's (609–598). The prophecy is generally dated a little before or after the battle of Carchemish (605) when Egyptian forces, which had earlier gone to the aid of the last Assyrian king, were routed by the Babylonians under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar and were pursued as far as the Egyptian border ([Jer 46](#)). Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, probably lived to see the initial fulfillment of his prophecy when Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonians in 597.

## Theological Message

Among the prophetic writings, Habakkuk is somewhat unique in that it includes no oracle addressed to Israel. It contains, rather, a dialogue between the prophet and God (see Outline). (The book of Jonah, while narrative, presents an account of conflict between the Lord and one of his prophets.) In the first two chapters, Habakkuk argues with God over his ways that appear to him unfathomable, if not unjust. Having received replies, he responds with a beautiful confession of faith ([ch. 3](#)).

This account of wrestling with God is, however, not just a fragment from a private journal that has somehow entered the public domain. It was composed for Israel. No doubt it represented the voice of the godly in Judah, struggling to comprehend the ways of God. God's answers therefore spoke to all who shared Habakkuk's troubled doubts. And Habakkuk's confession became a public expression—as indicated by its liturgical notations (see note on [3:1](#)).

Habakkuk was perplexed that wickedness, strife and oppression were rampant in Judah but God seemingly did nothing. When told that the Lord was preparing to do something about it through the "ruthless" Babylonians ([1:6](#)), his perplexity only intensified: How could God, who is "too pure to look on evil" ([1:13](#)), appoint such a nation "to execute judgment" ([1:12](#)) on a people "more righteous than themselves" ([1:13](#))?

God makes it clear, however, that eventually the corrupt destroyer will itself be destroyed. In the end, Habakkuk learns to rest in God's sovereign appointments and await his working in a spirit of worship. He learns to wait patiently in faith ([2:3–4](#)) for God's kingdom to be expressed universally ([2:14](#)). See note on [3:18–19](#).

## Literary Features

The author wrote clearly and with great feeling, and he penned many memorable phrases ([2:2,4,14,20](#); [3:2,17-19](#)). The book was popular during the intertestamental period; a complete commentary on its first two chapters has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## Outline

1. Title ([1:1](#))
2. Habakkuk's First Complaint: Why does the evil in Judah go unpunished? ([1:2-4](#))
  - God's Answer: The Babylonians will punish Judah ([1:5-11](#))
3. Habakkuk's Second Complaint: How can a just God use wicked Babylonia to punish a people more righteous than themselves? ([1:12-2:1](#))
  - God's Answer: Babylonia will be punished, and faith will be rewarded ([2:2-20](#))
4. Habakkuk's Prayer: After asking for manifestations of God's wrath and mercy (as he has seen in the past), he closes with a confession of trust and joy in God ([ch. 3](#))