

Course Outline

The Background and Introduction to the Book of Habakkuk

Introduction:

- a. Greetings and introductory material
- b. Why study the Prophecy of Habakkuk?
 - i. Because Habakkuk is “a man of our time.”
 - ii. As a man of faith, he encountered doubt and uncertainty, but ultimately experienced real victory over doubt. Contrast 1:1-4 with 3:17-19.
- c. The causes of Habakkuk’s doubt were both immediate and secondary. In this first lecture we consider the secondary factors which produced Habakkuk’s uncertainty. They are seen in the historical circumstances of the day in which he lived.

I. The Captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel

- a. The division of the Kingdom took place under Rehoboam about 950 B.C.
- b. The Northern Kingdom was taken captive by the Assyrians about 722 B.C., fulfilling the predictions of Leviticus 26.
- c. Even though this event took place approximately one hundred years prior to Habakkuk’s prophecy, it surely had an effect upon his outlook. Though the two kingdoms were frequently at odds, they never lost their sense of national kinship, and what happened to one always affected the other.

II. The Shift in World Powers Structure

- a. For five hundred years prior to Habakkuk’s time, the Assyrian Empire wielded the sword of world power.
- b. Now a change was about to take place, marked by several important historical developments.

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- i. Destruction of Nineveh, 612 B.C.
 - ii. Defeat of Pharaoh Necho by Nebuchadnezzar, 606 B.C.
 - iii. Nebuchadnezzar's first attack against Judah, 605 B.C.
- c. We believe Habakkuk prophesied before these events actually took place, but since "coming events cast their shadow before them," it is reasonable to suppose that Habakkuk was able to discern the revolutionary shape of future history, and be affected by it.

III. The Ineffective Revival Under Josiah

- a. Historical background. Second Kings 22, 23 and 2 Chronicles 34, 35.
- b. This event, so often used as a basis for revival sermons, was ineffective in reaching the grassroots of national life.
 - i. Josiah reigned as King from about 650-620 B.C.
 - ii. We place the dates of Habakkuk's prophecy somewhere between 630 and 610 B.C.
 - iii. Habakkuk should therefore have given some indication in his writing of the effects of Josiah's revival upon national life if such effects actually resulted. No such evidence is seen.
- c. How distressing this must have been to a sensitive spiritual soul such as Habakkuk.

Close of the Lecture and Review

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