

(S) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. We will study the Minor Prophets in chronological order. Today we will study the three Minor Prophets: Habakkuk, Obadiah and Haggai. They prophesied during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

Habakkuk is the eighth of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name “Habakkuk” means “*the one embraced*” or “*the special beloved*”. More than this, we do not know about the prophet Habakkuk. He probably worked in Judah and what he proclaimed and wrote was intended for the people of Judah. Nevertheless, in this short prophecy he addressed the Lord. In chapter 1:5-6 the Lord says that in the prophet’s time he was going to raise up the Chaldeans, that is, the Babylonians and they would conquer and devastate many nations. When the Assyrian Empire began to crumble, the Chaldeans under the leadership of Nabopolassar, who reigned from 625-605 B.C., fought the Assyrians. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. Nabopolassar’s son, Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned from 605-562 B.C., became the ruler of the Babylonian Empire and inherited Western Asia. From that time onwards, the Chaldeans were called Babylonians. In chapter 3:16b, the prophet was still waiting for the invasion of the Babylonians to take place. This is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion into Judah, which took place in 605 B.C. According to 2 Kings 22:18-20, the Lord promised king Josiah, who reigned from 639-608 B.C, that the Babylonian invasion would not take place during his lifetime. Therefore, with a view to chapter 1:5-6, the prophet Habakkuk probably prophesied during the reign of Jehoiakim before Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion into Judah, that is, he prophesied between 608-605 B.C.

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

The rich and powerful in Judah were still exploiting and oppressing the poor. And the prophet complains that it seems as if they are getting away with it. It seems as if the Lord is tolerating the exploitation and oppression of the needy people. It seems as if the Lord is doing nothing about injustice (1:2-4)!

While in the other prophetic books, the Lord addresses the prophet, in Habakkuk, the prophet first addresses the Lord. Habakkuk complains to the Lord, asks questions, advances objections and waits for the Lord’s answer.

Habakkuk’s first question is, “Why does the Lord allow the wicked in Judah to oppress the righteous?” (1:2-4). The Lord answers, “The Chaldeans, that is, the Babylonians, will come as a punishment for the wicked in Judea” (1:5-11).

Then Habakkuk advances an objection, “Why does the Lord allow the people of Judah to be punished by the Chaldeans, who are more wicked than the Judeans?” (1:12-17). The prophet stations himself on his watchtower and waits for the Lord’s answer (2:1). And the Lord answers, “The Chaldeans will also be punished. As a matter of fact, all the wicked will be punished (2:4-20). But the righteous will live by his faith (2:4).” It is the duty and glory of the righteous to trust, even when he is not able to figure out the justice of the Lord’s actions. In this humble trust and quiet confidence the righteous will live (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11).

The Lord does more than answer Habakkuk’s questions and objections. He not only tells him to exercise faith, but strengthens his faith by means of a vision of the Lord’s coming in glory to destroy the Chaldeans and to deliver his own people (3:1-15). The appearance of the Lord has a great effect on the prophet. He trembles in every part of his body (3:16). Nevertheless, he no longer questions the ways of the Lord’s providence, but waits patiently for God to act. Finally, Habakkuk expresses his gratitude for God’s unmerited grace in a psalm of trust and rejoicing (3:17-19).

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

The book of Habakkuk may be given the title, “The righteous will live by his faith.”

It has two parts:

Part 1: chapter 1 and 2. Faith tested.

The prophet’s questions and the Lord’s answers.

The first question. “Why does the Lord allow the wicked in Judah to oppress the righteous?” (1:2-4).” The Lord’s answer. “The Chaldeans, that is, Babylonians, will come as a punishment for the wicked in Judea” (1:5-11). The second question. “Why does the Lord allow the people of Judah to be punished by the Chaldeans, who are more wicked than the Judeans? (1:12 to 2:1).” The Lord’s answer. “The Chaldeans also will be punished. As a matter of fact, all the wicked will be punished. But the righteous will live by his faith” (2:2-20).

Part 2: chapter 3:1-19. Faith strengthened.

The Lord appears in answer to the prophet's prayer and the prophet responds in a psalm of trust and rejoicing. The prophet's prayer (3:1-2). The Lord's appearance (3:3-16). The prophet's response (3:17-19).

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

Obadiah is the fourth of the twelve Minor Prophets. "Obadiah" means "*servant of the Lord*". We know nothing more about this prophet. Obadiah belongs to the prophets who prophesied in Judah. He directs his prophecy against Edom, that is, the nation that descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob. Some people believe that he prophesied long before the exile during the time of Jehoshaphat or Jehoram. However, Obadiah verse 10-14 describes how the Edomites first stood aloof when Judah was plundered by foreigners and afterwards went into Judah to plunder it themselves. They even helped the enemy to capture the fugitives of Judah. Before the exile, there is no evidence that the Edomites did these things nor rejoiced at the calamity of Jerusalem and Judah. But after the exile of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., several passages in the Bible give vivid accounts of the rejoicing by the Edomites, for example Ezekiel 35 (Lam 4:21; Ezek 25:12-14; 36:5; Ps 137:7). The Edomites took revenge on Judah, delivered them over to the sword, rejoiced with glee and malice in their calamity and plundered Judah. Therefore, Obadiah most likely prophesied just after the events of 586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and Judah and took the rest of the people of Judah in exile to Babylon.

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

First. God will humble the pride and arrogance of people.

The main message of Obadiah is that people should not look down on other people in the day of their misfortune, nor rejoice over their calamity in the day of their disaster. People should never plunder the possessions of others especially not in times of disasters and never hand over fugitives into the hands of their oppressors.

Second. God will judge the proud nation of Edom, but save his own people Israel.

On the future Mount Zion there will be deliverance. This is a reference to the end-time revelation (apocalyptic).

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

The book of Obadiah may be given the title, "**God will humble the pride of Edom.**"

It has two parts:

Part 1: verse 1-14. God's judgement of Edom.

Part 2: verse 15-21. God's deliverance of Judah.

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

Haggai is the tenth of the twelve Minor Prophets. We do not know more about the prophet. The prophet Haggai was a contemporary of the prophet Zechariah and both prophets are mentioned in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. They prophesied during the days of the governor Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua (Ez 3:1 and 4:6). Zerubbabel was a descendant of king David (1 Chron 3:17-19) and he was appointed governor of the Jews who had returned from Babel. Joshua was a descendant of the high priestly family through Jehozadak, who was deported to Babylon, and he was the first high priest after the exile (1 Chron 6:15). The emperor Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. According to Ezra 1:1, in the year 538 B.C, king Cyrus gave an order that the Jews might return from exile back to Judea and also that they might rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. In 537 B.C, the first group of Jews returned to Judea under the leadership of the governor Zerubbabel, also called Shesbassar, and the priest Joshua and they took the temple articles with them. Cyrus was succeeded by Cambyses (529-522 B.C.) and Darius Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.). There were internal rebellions to quench and only in about 520 B.C. peace returned to the Medo-Persian Empire. The prophet Haggai prophesied all four his prophesies in the second year of king Darius, that is in 520 B.C. (1:1; 2:1,10,20).

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

First. An exhortation to the leaders and people to continue rebuilding the temple.

The Jews built the first temple during the time of king Solomon, from 968- 961 B.C. (1 Ki 6:1,38). It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The Jews were taken into exile until the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. and returned from exile in 537 B.C. After the return from exile, the Jews began to rebuild the temple on the same place. In about 536 B.C., they set up the altar of burnt offering, restored the daily sacrifices and laid the foundation of the temple (Ez 3:1-6,10).

However, the work came to a standstill due to the opposition of the Samaritans (Ez 4:5) and possibly due to the fact that Cyrus discontinued to finance the project. After a recess of about 15 years, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhorted the governor Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua as well as the people to continue to rebuild the temple. He challenged them to consider their present situation. They planted much, but harvested little. They ate, but never had enough. They earned wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it. They expected much, but it turned out to be little. What they brought home, God blew away. Why? God said, because “while each of you is busy with his own house, my house remains a ruin” (1:5-9). Their present poverty and crop failures were the result of their sinful neglect to rebuild the temple. The people listened and resumed the rebuilding of the temple (1:15). Ezra 6:15 says that the rebuilding of the temple was completed in 516 B.C.

Second. A prophecy concerning the future shaking of the heavens and the earth and the glory of the second temple.

There were people who deplored the insignificance of the second temple in comparison with the first temple of king Solomon (2:3). The prophet speaks of two shakings of the earth. The first shaking of nations occurred during the fall of the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus. This event caused a great movement of nations including the return of the Jewish nation from exile. But this first shaking of the nations did not issue into the expected Messianic Age!

Therefore, the prophet prophesied that once more there would be a shaking of both the heavens and the earth and the precious things (“desire or object of delight”) of the nations would fill the second temple. This is saying that the external glory of the second temple would be greater than the external glory of the first temple. While all the earthly powers and their greatness collapsed, Jerusalem’s temple would receive glory.

At this time the future period of salvation or the Messianic Age would begin. And in that temple God would give “peace” to the people, that is, his complete wholeness, well-being and salvation in the fullest meaning of the word (Mic 4:1-2).

Also the prophet Isaiah prophesied of this shaking in Isaiah 24:19-23 and the prophet Joel in Joel 2:10-11 and 3:16. But the prophet Haggai did not speak directly of the coming Messiah, but of the glory of the second temple.

Concerning the fulfilment of this prophecy:

One. The shaking of the earth and its nations.

The preliminary fulfilment began when the nations of the Medo-Persian Empire had to make place for the Greek Empire and the Greek Empire had to make place for the Roman Empire, and all these shakings of the nations refer to the future rise and fall of other earthly empires.

Two. The treasures of all nations.

The preliminary fulfilment was when the emperor Darius decreed that the expenses for rebuilding the temple as well as for its sacrifices be paid out of the royal treasury (Ez 6:8-10), when the emperor Artaxerxes and his advisors gave gifts of silver and gold for the temple in Jerusalem (Ez 7:13-20) and when king Herod renewed the temple (Jn 2:20; Mk 13:1). But in final analysis this prophecy views the glory of the temple, not in terms of its external beauty, but in terms of its revealing the kingdom of God. That is why the external glory of the temple pointed to a new chapter in the history of God’s kingdom in which especially the spiritual significance and glory of the temple would be greater than that of the first temple. This began to happen when greater numbers of Gentiles joined the faith of God’s Old Testament people as proselytes (cf. Isa 56:1-8).

Three. The greatest glory of the second temple.

The greatest glory of the second temple was that during its existence, the first coming of Jesus Christ took place! And Jesus Christ revealed himself and preached his messages in this temple. And according to John 2:19-21, by breaking down *the real temple of God*, which is *the body of Christ*, the Jews also condemned their earthly second temple to destruction. When Jesus Christ was crucified, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom as a sign of the end of the second temple’s function (Mt 27:51)! And by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, also a new spiritual temple came into existence, namely the Church or Body of Christ. Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-10 clearly teach that the spiritual temple consists of all the Christians from all the nations in the world, including the nation of Israel.

Four. The shaking of the heavens and the earth.

Haggai 2:6 says, “In a little while, once more” God will shake the heavens and the earth. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament spoke of the divine patience and delay of the Final Judgement Day. Habakkuk 2:3 says, “The revelation *awaits an appointed time*; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and not wait.” And 2 Peter 3:8-9 says, “Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in

keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

According to Hebrews 12:26-28, the final great shaking of the heavens and the earth will take place at the Second Coming of Christ! The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, all the created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain. And Christians are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken! According to Haggai 2:21-22, in that shaking of the heavens and the earth, God will overturn all other thrones of kings on earth and he will shatter the power of all the kingdoms in the world (Ezek 38-39; Zech 1:21). And according to Daniel 2:44, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people” than the people of God. “The kingdom of God will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it self will endure forever.” Thus the shaking of the heavens and the earth indicate that a new period of the world will come, namely, the new heavens and the new earth.

Third. A special promise to Zerubbabel.

Haggai 2:23 says that God would make his servant Zerubbabel like his signet ring, because he had chosen him. To be called a servant of God means that Zerubbabel stood in a special relationship to God and was entrusted with a special task, namely, to rebuild the temple (Isa 41:8). To be chosen by God and to be like a signet ring on God’s finger means that Zerubbabel, and the house of Judah with him, stood in a special relationship of love and intimacy with God. Zerubbabel was highly appreciated by God and stood under the direct protection of God in the fulfilment of his task (Jer 22:24). However, these designations did not make Zerubbabel a type of the Coming Messiah and the shaking of the heavens and the earth did not find their fulfilment in him. It only showed that Zerubbabel had a share in carrying the promise of future salvation further.

In a time when the nations were shaken, Zerubbabel was appointed governor over the returning Jews in the Persian Empire. He was the leader who led the Jews out of exile back to the land of Israel. At a later time when the nations would be shaken, the most important descendant of Zerubbabel, namely Jesus Christ, would come. Zerubbabel himself was a descendant of king David and according to Matthew 1:12-13 and Luke 3:27 he was the direct ancestor of both Joseph and Mary, who became the legal father and mother of Jesus Christ as to his human nature.

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

The book of Haggai may be given the title, “**Exhortation to rebuild the Lord’s house.**”

It has four parts:

Part 1: chapter 1:1-15. Condemnation and repentant action.

God’s condemnation of Israel’s sinful neglect to rebuild the temple (1:2-11). Israel’s faithful remnant began to rebuild the second temple (1:12-15).

Part 2: chapter 2:1-9. Prophecy concerning the shaking of the heavens and the earth and the greater glory of the second temple.

Part 3: chapter 2:10-19. Exhortation to consider how things were before and the blessing from this day on.

Part 4. chapter 2:20-23. Prophecy concerning the overthrow of all earthly kingdoms and a special promise to Zerubbabel.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read the books of Zechariah, Joel and Malachi. Next week we will introduce them.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.