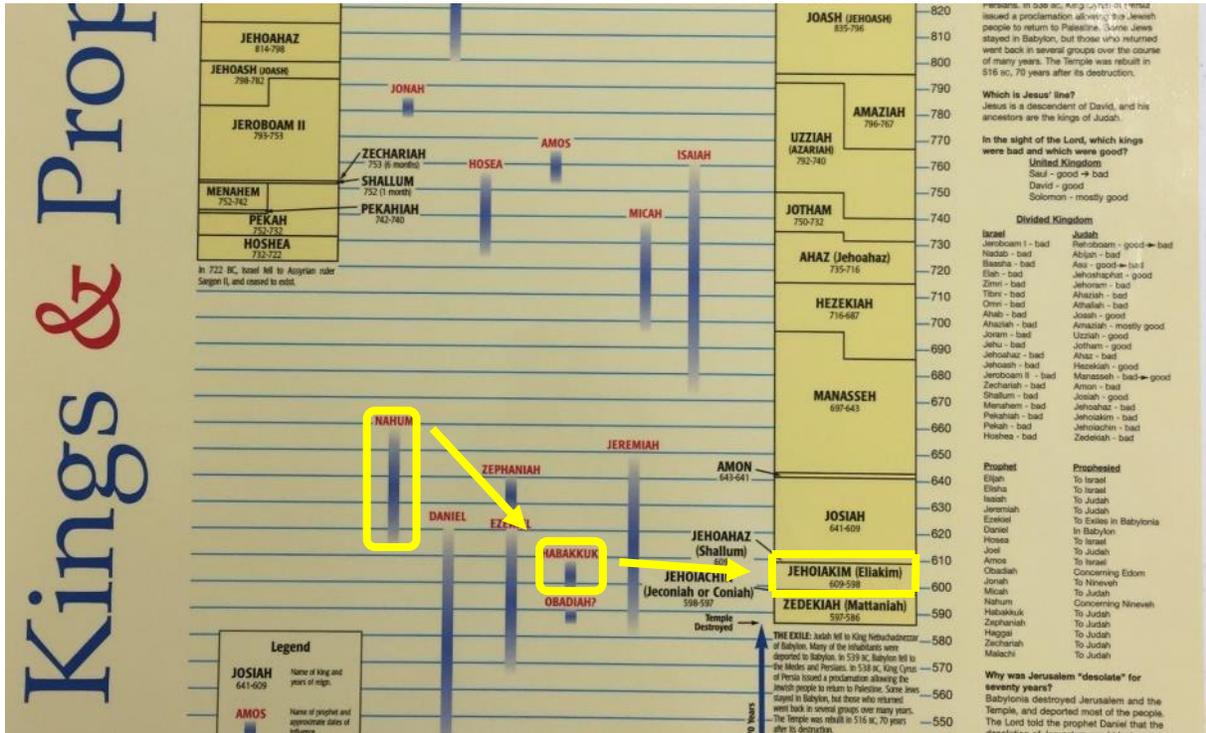


Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 1:1 – 2:1

Chapter 1:1 – 17

¹ The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

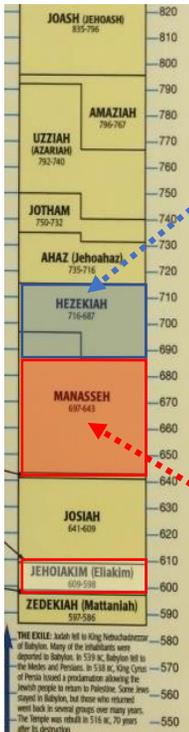


Chuck Swindoll > Determining the date of the book of Habakkuk is quite a bit easier than dating most books. He spoke often of an imminent Babylonian invasion, an event that occurred on a smaller scale in 605 BC before the total destruction of Judah's capital city, Jerusalem, in 586 BC. The way Habakkuk described Judah indicates a low time in its history. If the dating is to remain close to the Babylonian invasion, Habakkuk likely prophesied in the first five years of Jehoiakim's reign (609–598 BC) to a king who led his people into evil.

Habakkuk 1:6 > For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

Habakkuk 3:16 > I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.

We need to look at some passages found in II Kings and II Chronicles to get a better understanding of the environment in which Habakkuk was prophesying. We will use our timeline to help us remember the players leading up to the prophecy of Habakkuk.



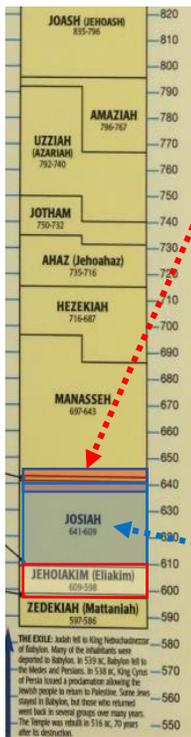
Hezekiah > Remember the revival that occurred during his reign? Tremendous! ... EXCEPT ... he showed the folks from Babylon his treasures!! The prophet Isaiah took him to task in ***II Kings 20:16-18*** and told him > *“Hear the word of the LORD. ¹⁷ ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD. ¹⁸ ‘Some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away; and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”*

Manasseh > The opening verses of ***II Kings 21 (vss 2-9)*** are horrible! Manasseh completely reversed all the reforms established by his father. He ...

- *Rebuilt the high places*
- *Erected altars for Baal*
- *Made an Asherah*
- *Worshipped all the host of heaven and served them*
- *Made his son pass through the fire*
- *Practiced witchcraft and used divination and dealt with mediums and spiritists.*
- *Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel.*

There is a very interesting conclusion to the story of Manasseh found in ***II Chronicles 33:10-13*** > ¹⁰ *The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon. ¹² When he was in distress, he entreated the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.*

The above was the beginning of the conclusion > Manasseh changed!
The end of his life was the so much better than the beginning.



Anon > Never learned from his father's mistakes. ***II Kings 21: 19-23*** >
19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. 21 For he walked in all the way that his father had walked and served the idols that his father had served and worshiped them. 22 So he forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. 23 The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house.

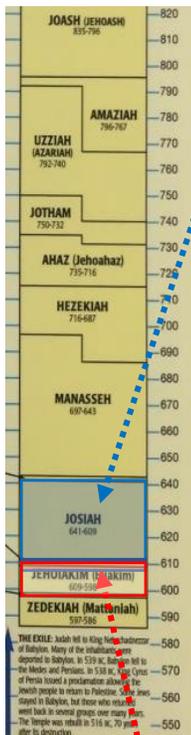
Josiah > Eight (8!) years old when he became king. And the scriptures says of him (***II Kings 22:2***) > *2 He did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.*

When Josiah was 18 he commissioned a cleansing and repair of the house of the Lord. That is when a copy of the scriptures was found. As he was read the contents of the scrolls he realized the danger his people were in as they continually sinned against the Lord. The Lord responded to Josiah's inquiry as to what he was reading with two statements

1. Evil is determined upon the Southern Kingdom
2. That evil will come after Josiah has passed

Josiah response was wonderful > he instituted a massive reform across not only the Southern Kingdom ... but even up into the former Northern Kingdom.

There is a very important message from the Lord to Josiah after his reforms > the scriptures say (***II Kings 23:26, 27***) > *26 However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"*



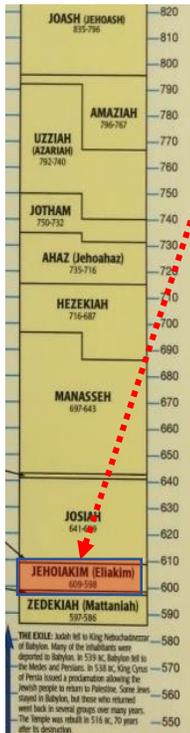
Josiah (cont.) > In world history there is an extremely important verse found in ***II Kings 23:28-29*** > ²⁸ *Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?* ²⁹ *In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when Pharaoh Neco saw him he killed him at Megiddo.*

Climatic story. Pharaoh Neco II was traveling to Carchemish to join the Assyrians in a fight against the Babylonians. For some reason Josiah got involved as Neco went through.

II Chronicles 35:20, 21 relays a dramatic conversation prior to Josiah's death in the battle > ²⁰ *After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.* ²¹ *But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you."*

So ... why was this a world history story?? Because THIS was the battle that was the final end of the Assyrians. And the name of the Babylonian King who defeated the Assyrians? Nebuchadnezzar

Jehoahaz > *II Kings 23: 31-33* > ³¹ *Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.* ³² *He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.* ³³ *Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.*



Jehoiakim > We come at last to the king who was in power at the time of Habakkuk. We need to look at three passages ... one from ***II Kings 23:34-37*** ... and then ***II Kings 24:1*** ... and then ***II Chronicles 36:5, 6***

II Kings 23:34-37 > ³⁴ Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there. ³⁵ So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco. ³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiiah of Rumah. ³⁷ He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

II Kings 24:1 > In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him.

II Chronicles 36:5, 6 > ⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God. ⁶ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him and bound him with bronze chains to take him to Babylon.

The above is NOT the captivity ... that doesn't happen until 586 BC. But this is the time four (and possibly five) famous individuals were taken to Babylon ... Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (*Shadrach, Meshack, and Abed-nego*). Ezekiel may also have been taken at this time

Let me replay Chuck Swindoll's comments from the first page as we get into the study:

“Determining the date of the book of Habakkuk is quite a bit easier than dating most books. He spoke often of an ***imminent Babylonian invasion***, an event that occurred on a smaller scale in 605 BC before the total destruction of Judah's capital city, Jerusalem, in 586 BC. The way Habakkuk described Judah indicates a low time in its history. If the dating is to remain close to the Babylonian invasion, Habakkuk likely prophesied in the first five years of Jehoiakim's reign (609–598 BC) to a king who led his people into evil.”

Habakkuk's Complaint

² **How long**, O LORD, will I **call** for help, and You will not hear? I **cry out** to You, "Violence!" Yet You do not save.

How long > (Preceptaustin) Literally "how long have I cried so intensely?" The idea is "Why isn't God answering?"

Call > (Strong's) to be free; but used only causatively and reflexively, to halloo (for help, i.e. freedom from some trouble)

Barnes > Literally, "how long have I cried so intensely to Thee?"

Cry out > (Strong's) to shriek (from anguish or danger); by analogy, (as a herald) to announce or convene publicly

³ *Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to **look on** wickedness? Yes, destruction and **violence** are before me; strife exists and contention arises.* ⁴ *Therefore the law is **ignored** and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.*

Look on > (Strong's) to scan, i.e. look intently at

Violence > (Constable) "Violence" (Heb. *hamas*) occurs six times in Habakkuk (1:2, 3, 9; 2:8, 17 [twice]), an unusually large number of times for such a short book. The Hebrew word means more than just physical brutality. It refers to flagrant violation of moral law by which someone injures his fellow man (e.g., Gen. 6:11). It is any ethical wrong, and physical violence is only one manifestation of it. By piling up synonyms for injustice, Habakkuk stressed the severity of the oppression.

Ignored > (Strong's) to be sluggish

Ron Blue concludes verses 3 and 4 with these observations. Habakkuk had two major questions for the Lord

1. *Why do you make me look at injustice?*
2. *Why do you tolerate wrong?*

We need to compare these verses to a similar complaint in **Psalm 73** ... at least verses **1-17**. BUT ... be aware that the complaints come from two different sets of attitudes. Take a look and you'll understand.

The Lord's Answer

⁵ *“Look among the nations! **Observe!** Be **astonished!** **Wonder!** Because I am doing something in your days - **you** would not believe if you were told.*

Observe > (Strong's) to scan, i.e. look intently at

(This is the same Hebrew word found in Habakkuk complaint in verse 3 above)

Astonished ... Wonder > (Strong's) to be in consternation - be amazed, be astonished, marvel

You > (Constable) The Lord told Habakkuk and his people (plural "you" in Hebrew) to direct their attention away from what was happening in Judah, to what was happening in the larger arena of ancient Near Eastern activity.

The **Septuagint** translates this verse as > ⁵*Behold, ye despisers, and look, and wonder marvelously, and vanish: for I work a work in your days, which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you.*

⁶ *“For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that **fierce** and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. ⁷“They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves.*

Fierce > (Strong's) bitter (literally or figuratively)

Constable > The Neo-Babylonian Empire began its rise to world domination with the accession of Nabopolassar (the father of Nebuchadnezzar) to the throne of Babylon in 626 B.C. This aggressive king stimulated the Babylonians into becoming a ruthless and impetuous nation that—by this time—had already "marched throughout" the ancient Near East and conquered several neighboring nations (cf. Ezek. 28:7; 30:11; 31:12; 32:12). Thus, Babylonia would be the rod of God's punishment of Judah, as Assyria had been His instrument of judgment of Israel.

Eric Redman > Though Habakkuk is astonished by God's revelation of coming judgment from Babylon, it must be noted that this is not a new thing for God and His people. During the eighth century, the prophet Isaiah dealt with this issue in Isaiah 10:5-6: *Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger—the staff in their hands is My wrath. I will send him against a godless nation; I will command him to go against a people destined for My rage, to take spoils, to plunder, and to trample them down like clay in the streets.*

⁸ *"Their horses are **swifter** than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.*

Swifter > (Strong's) to be (causatively, make) light, literally (swift, small, sharp, etc.) or figuratively (easy, trifling, vile, etc.)

Barnes > literally, lighter, as we say "light of foot"

Clarke > The Chaldean cavalry are proverbial for swiftness, courage, etc. In Jeremiah 4:13 it is said, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, "*His chariots are as a whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles.*"

⁹ *"All of them come for **violence**. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.*

Violence > Again, this is the same Hebrew word found in Habakkuk complaint in verse 3 Above.

¹⁰ *"**They** mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress and **heap up rubble to capture it**. ¹¹ *"Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. **But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.**"**

They > (Barnes) literally, "he," the word stands emphatically, he, alone against all the kings of the earth

Heap up rubble to capture it > (Preceptaustin) This describes a common technique used to besiege ancient walled cities which were made vulnerable by piling up dirt, etc, to produce mounds which would serve as long "earthen" ramps to the city's wall, enabling the enemy to easily scale the wall and capture the city

But they will be held guilty ... > (Constable ... quoting Patterson) "Had Habakkuk listened as carefully to the last line of God's answer as he did to the extended description of Judah's chastiser, he might have avoided the second perplexity that gripped his soul, the report of which is contained in the verses that follow (1:12—2:1)."

Wiersbe - God had warned His people time and time again, but they wouldn't listen. Prophet after *prophet* had declared the Word, only to be rejected, and He had sent natural calamities like droughts and plagues, and various military defeats, but the people wouldn't listen. Instead of repenting, the people hardened their hearts even more and turned for help to the gods of the nations around them. They had tried God's long-suffering long enough and it was time for God to act.

Habakkuk's Second Complaint

(Can you imagine what went through Habakkuk's mind as he heard the above?

"WHAT?!?")

¹² ***Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct.***

Are you not from everlasting > (Barnes) Art Thou not - (the word has always an emphasis) "Thou" and not whatsoever or whosoever it be that is opposed to Thee

Wiersbe > First note that he is not questioning God but is asking a rhetorical question which expects an affirmative reply

My God, my Holy One > (Barnes) one word, denoting that God is his God, sufficeth him not, but he adds (what does not elsewhere occur) "mine Holy One" in every way, as hallowing him and hallowed by him.

We shall not die > (Barnes) is the lightning thought of faith

The **Septuagint** is very clear in its translation of this verse > ¹²*Art not thou from the beginning, O Lord God, my Holy One? and surely we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast established it for judgment, and he has formed me to chasten with his correction.*

¹³ ***Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?***

Why do you ... > (Preceptaustin) "Why do you put up with such treacherous people?" (NET Bible) The ESV renders it "Why do you idly look at traitors?" This and the following question are not rhetorical. Habakkuk is looking for an answer. The idea is why do you look without taking action against them?

Remember Patterson's comment regarding verse 11 above. The Lord had already stated > *But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god."*

Wiersbe > God had used other tools to chasten His people—war, natural calamities, the preaching of the prophets—and the people wouldn't listen ... the greater the light, the greater the responsibility. Yes, the Babylonians were wicked sinners, but they were idolaters who didn't know the true and living God. This didn't excuse their sins, but it did explain their conduct. The Jews claimed to know the Lord and yet they were sinning against the very law they claimed to believe!

14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them?

Why have You made ... > (Constable) In another Babylonian relief, the Chaldeans pictured their major gods dragging a net in which their captured enemies squirmed.

Like creeping things ... > Take a look at the non-leadership present in Jerusalem as Habakkuk was writing

II Kings 23:34-37 > ³⁴ Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there. ³⁵ So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh.

15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net, and gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net and burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful.

Bring all of them up with a hook > (Constable) Babylonian monuments depict the Chaldeans as having driven a hook through the lower lip of their captives and stringing them single file, like fish on a string.

They offer a sacrifice to their net > (Ron Blue) Idolatry is not limited to those who bring sacrifices or burn incense to inanimate objects. People of position, power, and prosperity often pay homage to the business or agency that provided them their coveted status. It becomes their constant obsession, even their 'god.'

17 Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?

Chapter 2:1

I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.

Reproved > (Strong's) chastisement; figuratively (by words) correction, refutation, proof (even in defense)

The **Septuagint** translates this verse > ¹*I will stand upon my watch, and mount upon the rock, and watch to see what he will say by me, and what I shall answer when I am reprovved.*

Achtemeier introduces **Habakkuk's** willingness to wait for God to answer... As has been his habit, Habakkuk now waits on God for the answer to his perplexity. There is no wisdom in the world that can find out the ways of God..