

Life for the righteous, doom for the wicked: Reading Habakkuk from a wisdom perspective

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G.T.M. Prinsloo

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Abstract

In many ways, the book of Habakkuk is unique in the Book of the Twelve Prophets. One of the reasons is that the Gattungen normally associated with prophetic literature are either absent or occur in unique forms. On the other hand, it has long since been recognised that wisdom motifs had a definite influence upon the book. This can be seen in the vocabulary, in many of the themes, in the dialogic character of the book, and even in the overall structure of the book. The purpose of this article is to illuminate the intertextual relations between Habakkuk and wisdom texts in the Old Testament, especially the so called sceptical wisdom. The importance of these motifs in determining the theological thrust of the book is discussed. It is shown that the recognition of these motifs has implications for the date of the book in its final form as well.

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The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted." He is told that the Babylonians are an instrument that Yahweh is using to punish the evildoers in Judah, but to Habakkuk, the Babylonians are no better than the ones who are punished. Habakkuk asks Yahweh, "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? The problem of injustice that troubled Habakkuk became even more acute during the centuries that followed his life. The earlier prophets' teaching that the calamities that befall a nation should be regarded as punishments for its sins was questioned more and more in light of observed experiences. The strong, powerful nations were not more righteous than the ones that were subservient to them. The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous — The wicked shall be brought into those troubles which were designed by wicked men against the righteous, and by that means, as by a ransom, the righteous shall be delivered; thus Haman was a ransom for Mordecai. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary. 21:9. It is best to shun bitter contention by pouring out the heart before God. For by prudence and patience, with constant prayer, the cross may be removed. 10. The evil desires of a wicked man's heart, lead to baseness in his conduct. 11. The simple may be made wise by punishments on the wi... The situation which Habakkuk faces is the imminent invasion of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Chaldeans (who are the same as the Babylonians). This invasion eventually happened at the end of the sixth century BC, and Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. And he promises that the only way to preserve your life through the judgment is by faith. So even though destruction is decreed for the nation, there is hope for

individuals who hold fast their confidence in God. The full-blown doctrine of justification by faith, as Paul taught it in Romans and Galatians, is not yet here. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted.” Amos had warned the northern kingdom that injustice would bring judgment, and in 722 BC Assyria swept the northern kingdom away.