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Dear Associates and Friends,

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This month's article for October 2013 is "[The Book of Habakkuk](#)" by Dr. Ernest Martin. In this article Dr. Martin explains this short, three-chapter Book of the Minor Prophets with information you will find nowhere else. I then add material from commentators whose work I admire and trust.

No one knows what the name "Habakkuk" means, although it seems to mean "embrace," even though that meaning has no apparent relevance to his prophecy or to his relationship with God. Does the meaning of his name indicate that Habakkuk or his people Israel will be "embraced" by God? Perhaps, but no one knows for sure.

Frederick Edelson in the article "Habakkuk" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* writes that most prophets in the Bible:

"... addressed themselves to their fellow-countrymen in an attempt to win them back to Yahweh and a righteous life. Not so Habakkuk. He addresses himself to Yahweh, questioning the justice or even the reality of the Divine Providence. He makes complaint to God and expostulates with Him."

Yes, Habakkuk was different from most prophets we read about in the Bible. There is almost a "modern" sense about him as one reads the three chapters. He challenges God. He wants to be given evidence and assurances. He is not afraid to confront God with questions, but he does so without rancor.

Surprisingly, God answered him, perhaps because Habakkuk questions God without bitterness. This is interesting to consider because it is very possible that Habakkuk was contemporary with the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah also questioned God about the coming doom at the hands of Babylon. The difference was that he did so with much severity, and a bad attitude, coming close to calling YHWH a liar. God called on Jeremiah to repent, which he did. God responded to Habakkuk by addressing his issues and his questions with visions of the future, so far as we have recorded in Habakkuk's small prophecy.

It is also interesting that although Jeremiah and Habakkuk are contemporaries, they do not often quote or refer to each other's writings. Habakkuk's description of the destruction of Babylon's armies has correspondence with similar material in Isaiah, but not with Jeremiah. Nor is there any hint in Habakkuk about Jeremiah's commission to overturn and rebuild the nations.¹

Interestingly, Habakkuk converted the information he received in chapter 3 into a psalm which was performed accompanied by musical instruments — as Dr. Martin thought, somewhat like a modern opera. This would have been performed at the Temple, just like other literary compositions set to music from the Book of Psalms, the Song of Moses, or the Song of Solomon. Because of this Temple connection, some scholars think that Habakkuk may have been a Levite. The verse before the beginning of the psalm is this, **"But YHWH is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him"** (Habakkuk 2:20).

In Habakkuk chapter 3 God is described as coming to earth in His glory. This will be Christ who has full authority to use God's personal name (Exodus 3:15), YHWH, as His plenipotentiary representative.

¹ See Dr. Martin's article, "[Prophetic Birth of Our Civilization](#)," as well as the two related articles, "[Origin and Goal of Western Civilization, Part 1](#)" and "[Origin and Goal of Western Civilization, Part 2](#)." Read these in order and you will more fully understand the extensive and great mission that God had for Jeremiah in his prophetic ministry.

Habakkuk's account must be compared with other prophetic descriptions of Christ's return in both the Old and New Testaments.

This is why the twelve Minor Prophets are so important. They are minor only in relative length, not content. Together they comprise a complete volume as large as Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Jeremiah. The compiled information in the Minor Prophets contain is just as important as these major prophecies. To leave out information from any one of the books of the Minor Prophets would seriously impair our understanding of several prophetic subjects. We need to have a comprehensive understanding of what these prophecies say.

Read the three chapters of the prophecy of Habakkuk before you read Dr. Martin's analysis. Take note of the wide range of emotions expressed in those chapters. The book begins with Habakkuk severely questioning God about when God's justice will come. God responds by revealing to the prophet about the vicious and future conquerors from Babylon headed toward Judah and Jerusalem, and the horrors they will bring. YHWH clearly identifies them as His agents, as He does in other Old Testament books.

Then Habakkuk questions God's justice again. God responds by saying He will punish the Babylonians. Furthermore, God will bring His own army to punish the earth and save His people. Finally Habakkuk composes a psalm of YHWH's arrival and its effects upon the earth. The prophet is content to wait upon God's salvation however long it takes (and it has not yet occurred). At the end, Habakkuk expresses joy about God's anticipated salvation. Such is a brief description of the Book of Habakkuk.

I want to emphasize that this small book of Habakkuk is deeply nuanced with meaning and it is difficult to understand several verses. Perhaps this is because we need to be closer to the times when the prophecies will occur (they are end-time prophecies after all). Perhaps additional textual discoveries from archaeology are needed to increase our understanding of ancient texts, vocabulary, idioms, and words that occur only once in the Hebrew texts we have today.

Furthermore, additional breakthroughs of chronology need to be made. Dr. Martin's understandings have been extremely useful in establishing three important historical and chronological benchmarks: **(1)** the birth of Jesus Christ on September 11, 3 BC; **(2)** the crucifixion of Christ in the Passover season of 30 AD; and **(3)** God's revelation of the Mystery to the apostle Paul, and later to Peter and John in 63 AD. While we can continue to discuss, and even argue about, these important dates of the past (which most scholars dismiss as a pointless endeavor), we need to work forward with other issues of New Testament chronology, and then work backward in Old Testament chronology. This will in turn allow us to better understand the unfulfilled prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments — the ultimate goal.

I envision the beginnings of a system to study prophecies of the Bible, by subject and then by projecting a sequence of events (and NOT trying to set dates) for both fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecies. Today, marvelous biblical research tools are available to analyze texts, even to viewing the manuscripts themselves, many of which are now publicly available either from computer programs or on the internet.

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Please understand I do not seek to start some vast new project. Such an effort will come as God sees fit. But — we (and I mean every student of the Bible) need to think of such things for the future. We may have several decades before biblically identifiable prophetic events can be recognized and “checked off” as they occur. We who are God's children know and understand that every human being who has ever lived, is alive now, and will live in the future, is already saved “in Christ.” Everyone will be saved, but people need to be told that “good news.” Then they need to be taught solid biblical truth. When God begins the **“times of refreshing”** (Acts 3:19) and mass conversions begin to occur, solid biblical teaching must be available.

Thank you for providing us the means to fill that need now. We continue to produce quality study material based primarily on the solid research of Dr. Ernest Martin. We have been faithful to our calling (and his) to produce outstanding study materials. Thank you and God bless you all.

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