

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 40: Habakkuk – Malachi, *An Angry Prophet and an Expected Messiah*

Welcome to Week 40 of the Bible Reading Coach Podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

This week, we finish up the Old Testament. This week, we'll be reading five short books all that will also finish up the Minor Prophets as well. And last week, we had one recognizable book, Jonah, out of the books that we read this week, we're not going to have a single book that is readily known even by mature believers. But there's still a lot of really rich stuff in this. And what's most important, of course, is it gives us an idea of exactly what happens at the end of the Old Testament in anticipation of the Messiah to come Jesus who will see the following week as we begin the New Testament. So let's get right into these books that we'll be finishing up the Old Testament with.

First of all, we'll be reading the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk is different from the other prophets in that rather than being a judgment from God to the people, Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet and God, basically, its Habakkuk is angry at God. It feels more like the Psalms, and it feels like the other prophets, right? He's actually angry because he's heard the prophecies of the other prophets, namely Jeremiah, who's prophesying at the same time as him. And he's hearing that God is about to use the Babylonians to come and punish his people. But he looks around and he sees but the Babylonians are more evil than God's people. God, he basically says, God, how can you use a more evil group of people to punish your own people? Isn't this like, asking the wife beating husband next door to discipline your kids? Because they don't clean their room? I mean, it's, it's not an actual illustration he uses. That's my kind of version of how he feels about this. And he also asks, How can such an evil nation be allowed to succeed at all? Why is it that the evil nations tend to be the ones that dominate the world, and the ones who try to be good don't end up dominating the world and bottom line, even? He goes to one of the core maybe the most challenging question of all humanity, aside from the question of existence itself, is how can a loving God allow evil to exist at all?

So these are big questions. It's a prophet who loves God and was called by God arguing with God. So when you go into Habakkuk, realize that that's what's happening. Otherwise, it can be very confusing. So it begins right out the gate in the first few verses with Habakkuk complaining to God, God then answers or Well, answer isn't the right word. God then responds, but doesn't really answer hubback question directly, because God's ways are above our ways. And sometimes we don't even have the right questions. So this so here's what happens as it starts. Habakkuk complains, God responds, but doesn't really answer the question.

Habakkuk then complains, God, you didn't even answer my question. And I every time I read this passage, the end of chapter one, beginning of chapter two, I got this picture in my head Habakkuk, standing there with his hands on his hips, like really got on, that's not even an answer to my question. And then God responds, basically, tough. This is my call. I'm god, you're not. I'll make things right, in my time. Have faith in me, even when you don't have an answer. So this is really Habakkuk looking around going, I don't understand what's going on. God, you're not providing me with answers that I want to hear. And God going, Yeah, I know, trust in me

anyway. And then it closes with a prayer from Habakkuk, which includes this wonderful little line, "In wrath remember mercy."

All right. That's Habakkuk. It's a fascinating exchange. And one of the things I love about it is it shows that God's okay with us arguing with him. You know, walk in obedience but if you've got questions, he's ready to hear your questions. He may not give you the answers you want. But you're allowed to ask him. The Psalms tell us that Habakkuk tells us that so that's great.

The next book we'll read is Zephaniah. Zephaniah was a high ranking person, probably related to Jewish royalty. He prophesied early in Jeremiah's ministry time, when Doom was impending. It was about to come. It had already come to Israel, and it was about to come to Jerusalem. He's one of many Old Testament prophets that warns about becoming, quote, Day of the Lord, closed quote. What's interesting about Zephaniah that's different than most of the other prophets is, it's written in first person from God's voice. So it's not Zephaniah saying God will do this. It's first person, it's God saying, I will do this. So when you read Zephaniah, the AI in Zephaniah is not Zephaniah. It's God speaking in first person through the prophet Zephaniah, so pay attention to that the first chapter that we're reading it is against Jerusalem. The second chapter is against the Jerusalem's enemies. And then the third chapter is hope of restoration. So that's how that breaks down.

And then we will get to the last three Old Testament books. And they also happen to be the last ones that were written in the Old Testament. So we come back into timeline, we actually conclude the Old Testament with the final words written in the Old Testament, so it matches the chronology. Up until now, as we've talked about so many times, the prophets have been back and forth and the timeline, but we end with the last three books that are last in the timeline.

First of all, Haggai. It's another very, very small book, it's only two chapters long, Haggai and Zechariah. The book that comes after Haggai prophesied at about the same time, the exile to Babylon is over. The people are allowed to now come back to the land to build the temple. And Haggai is encouraging the Hebrews, who have been exiled for seven years, he's encouraging them to return to their own land, and to rebuild the temple. We know this because he gives us an exact timestamp. He prophesied during a four month period in 520 BCE. Notice the timestamps as we go through Haggai.

We then go to Zechariah. Zechariah also ministered after the exile when they were allowed to come back into the land. He was a priest, who was born in Babylon during the exile, and returned with the first group of people who returned with Zerubbabel in 538 BCE. Haggai was an old man who may have seen the destruction of the temple 70 years earlier, and was at the end of his life when he prophesied Hegel back to the to the nation. Zechariah, on the other hand, was a very young prophet, who had been born in Babylon had never seen the temple. And so he prophesied even after Haggai was off the scene. So you've got Haggai, beginning his prophecy, as a very old man who's been around a while Zechariah is a really young guy coming along with a similar prophecy and Zechariah continuing after Haggai is dead.

The returned exiles, by the time Zechariah starts prophesying, the return exiles had started to build the temple, but then they had abandoned it, as we saw in week 21 when we went through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. So his prophesied prophecy is intended to get them back on track, look, you started this temple, you haven't finished it, it's sitting there abandoned, you better get back and build that temple. That was the reason you came back to begin with. It also has some apocalyptic vision. So some of the apocalyptic writing we've seen

previously, in Daniel, and Ezekiel, we'll see a little bit of that in the book of Zechariah. So you're gonna see some visions with horseman and a man with a measuring line and a gold lampstand. All of trees, a flying squirrel. And again, if you know much about Revelation, that sounds familiar, because we will see all of that echoed again in week 52, when we get to the book of Revelation.

And then it ends with a strong call for and a promise of the coming Messiah, which leads us then to the final book of the Old Testament, which is the last book written in the Old Testament and as the last of the chronology of the Old Testament. By the time Malikai starts to prophesy, that people have returned to the land after the exile, the temple has been rebuilt. But shortly after rebuilding the temple, as they do constantly, they are now back falling into sin again. So Malikai speaks to that sin of people who have come back to the land and rebuilt the temple. It includes one of the most quoted passages in the entire Bible about the importance of tithing, you will read that in chapter three. And it ends with a reminder to follow Moses law, and that Elijah will return.

Now, if you know the Gospels, you know that there's something familiar about those two people. So near the end of Malikai, he says, follow Moses law, and Elijah is going to return and Moses and Elijah, of course, are the two people who appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which we'll be getting to really soon, of course. Now, the last verse of Malikai, then is a promise that the Messiah is coming.

So what to look for this week? Well, we are in week 40 of 52 weeks, but we are in the final week of the Old Testament. This is the last week that we'll be reading in anticipation of the main character of Scripture, Jesus, starting the following week, we'll see Jesus in all of his glory. So as we close out the Old Testament, first of all, reflect on what we've seen through the entire Old Testament, beginning with creation, our fall into sin, the start of God's plan of salvation, the promise that this plan of salvation will be fulfilled by God Himself through Jesus. Also, this week, as you read out the end of this Old Testament, try to imagine what it might have been like being back then and there. You're a member of God's chosen people, the Hebrew people, the sons and daughters of Abraham. But now you've been scattered. You spent 70 years in exile, it's going to be another 400 years. They call it the years of silence between the Old and New Testament, it'll be another 400 years where they're scattered all over the place, all of it under the thumb of one tyrant after another for almost the entire 400 years.

So these last books that we'll read this week, are a cry from God "Returned to me, I'm about to send my Messiah to you, things are going to change", and sit with that idea of what it must have been like to anticipate Messiah but not really know what the return on Messiah was going to look like, sit with that this week, because after this week, everything, and I mean, everything is going to change. Get ready for that. We'll see you next week.

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