

## **Preface To The Prophet Habakkuk (1526)**

This Habakkuk is a prophet of comfort, who is to strengthen and support the people and prevent them from despairing of the coming of Christ, however strangely things may go. Therefore, he needs all knowledge and everything that can serve to keep faith in the promised Christ strong in their hearts. His message is as follows.

It is true, indeed, that because of their sins, the land must be destroyed by the king of Babylon. But Christ and His kingdom shall not fail to come on that account. On the contrary, the destroyer, the king of Babylon, shall have little good out of it, and he, too, shall perish. For it is the nature of God's work to help when there is need and to come at the right moment, as the song says, "He remembereth mercy when trouble is there"; or as the proverb says, "When the rope holds tightest, it breaks."

In like manner, we must support Christians in anticipation of the Last Day, even though it appear that Christ delays long and will not come; for He Himself says that He will come when men least think it, when they are tilling and planting, buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Thus some, though not all, can be preserved in faith; for this requires both faith and preaching, as we see every day.

From all this we see that this Habakkuk lived before the Babylonian Captivity, possibly in the time of Jeremiah, and the meaning and purpose of his writing is easy to understand.

Some books say of Habakkuk that he brought food from the land of Judah to the prophet Daniel, when he was in prison. This has neither foundation nor probability. Besides, it does not agree with the time reckoning, since, so far as we can gather from Habakkuk's prophecy, he was older than Jeremiah, who lived through the destruction of Jerusalem, of which Habakkuk prophesied. But Daniel

was after Jeremiah, and had lived long before he was thrown into prison.

But Habakkuk has the right name, for Habakkuk means, in German, “an embracer,” i.e., one who embraces another and takes him in his arms. That is what he does in his prophecy; he embraces his people and takes them in his arms; i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a poor, weeping child, so that it may be quiet and satisfied, because things will go better, if God wills.