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**How to Remember the Minor Prophets**

Hunting Hosea

Jaguars Joel

And Amos

Overweight Obadiah

Jockeys Jonah

Might Micah

Not Nahum

Help Habakkuk

Zebras Zephaniah

Have Haggai

Zany Zechariah

Mustaches Malachi

(Continued From Page 1)

Babylon was a fabulously wealthy realm, a world power unmatched in any day. The capital described by ancient historians was one of astonishing architecture. A thirty story tall wall surrounded a city of two hundred fifty-six square miles. With stores of food, arable land to grow additional crops, and a river flowing through the city, they could withstand a siege forever, completely self-sufficient. Written accounts describe eighty story buildings inside the city, with indoor plumbing. This was also the home of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Reportedly, it was built by the king for his wife who was from Lebanon and was homesick for the mountains where she had grown up. Nebuchadnezzar promptly built a huge “mountain” garden for her personal pleasure. Historians describe it as a tiered structure, a multilevel horticultural paradise, watered by pumps capable of lifting the necessary amounts of the precious liquid to the top of his five hundred foot tall edifice. Full size trees and plants beyond imagination, populated the various levels. Incredible to behold, it was just one of many achievements of one of the greatest rulers the world has ever known. The Israelites would face difficulty, but they would do so in a most luxurious environment. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God even urged the displaced Jews to pray for the welfare of the country to which they were being deported. He clearly told them to flourish while they were there and that if the nation of Babylon prospered, they would also.

God chose seventy years of captivity for His people for a very specific reason. The Law required the observance of the Sabbath. Clearly detailed for the Israelites was the fact that the Sabbath rests were not just a one day per week occurrence. Among the many additional times of rest, God pointed to a special Sabbath rest for the land. Every seventh year, the land was to lie fallow, unworked and unplanted. God had issued a challenge to his people. If they would abide by His commandments, their crop production would be augmented abundantly during the sixth year to survive the year of no production. In fact, He promised sufficient excess to ensure the need to throw out surplus grain at the harvest on the ninth year. Scripture says they chose not to trust God in this area. His patience simmered for four hundred ninety years. The Bible describes the exile in Babylon as a time that God’s Promised Land would enjoy the seventy years of Sabbaths that it was not given during the time Israel tended the land for God. They were reminded by Him, on numerous occasions, how the land belonged to God and He was simply allowing them to live there. Today, we too are stewards and tenants, faithfully administrating the things that God has entrusted to our care.

During a period of approximately twenty years, the Babylonians successfully took Judah captive. The temple was looted and destroyed, the walls of Jerusalem pulled down, and the city burned. Those who were not killed by the ravaging Chaldean army were taken back to Babylon as servants and slaves. Only a small handful of poor people were left behind to work the land for the Babylonians. God’s own chosen people would experience the dark side of the love of God for seventy years. Before and during this time of trauma, several prophets of God warned and explained in detail exactly what was happening and why. They had tested the patience of God and lost. The loving God who had brought them to the Promised Land removed them in loving punishment for their lack of obedience.

The book of Habakkuk, though short, is quoted by the great theological books of the New Testament. Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews refer to passages found there as proof texts, to support the challenges Paul put forth to the Jews and Gentiles that Jesus was the Christ, and that the ultimate plan of God was the salvation of all men. Habakkuk, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, records an amazing claim in chapter two, verse five. *The just shall live by his faith.* Our salvation is not found in our observance of rules or regulations. It is to be found in a child-like faith in Jesus Christ, and a belief in what He did on the cross many years ago.





Habakkuk, the miner prophet.

(I think.)

For your own personal safety and of those around you, DO NOT hold this hole up to the light and attempt to look through it.

Thank you

