

December 15, 2019. Sunday 26 after Pentecost.

Prophet Habakkuk (VI c. B.C.). - Martyr Myrope of Chios (251). - Sts. John, Heraclemon, Andrew, and Theophilus of Egypt (IV). - St. Jesse, Bishop of Tsilkani in Georgia (VI). - St. Athanasius, "the Resurrected", of the Near Kyivan Caves (1176). - Ven. Athanasius, recluse, of the Far Kyivan Caves (XIII). - St. Stephen-Urosh IV, king (1371).



Habakkuk, who was active around 612 BC, was a prophet whose oracles and prayer are recorded in the Book of Habakkuk, the eighth of the collected twelve minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible. He is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Almost all the information we have about Habakkuk is drawn from the book of the Bible bearing his name, with no biographical details provided other than his title, "the prophet". Even the origin of his name is uncertain. Outside the Bible, he is mentioned over the centuries in the forms of Christian and Rabbinic tradition.

For almost every other prophet, more information is given, such as the name of the prophet's hometown, his occupation, or information concerning his parentage or tribe. For Habakkuk, however, there is no reliable account of any of these. Although his home is not identified, scholars conclude that Habakkuk lived in Jerusalem at the time he wrote his prophecy. Further analysis has provided an approximate date for his



prophecy and possibilities concerning his activities and background.

Beyond the Bible, considerable conjecture has been put forward over the centuries in the form of Christian and Rabbinic tradition, but such accounts are dismissed by modern scholars as speculative and apocryphal.

Biblical account

Because the book of Habakkuk consists of five oracles about the Chaldeans (Babylonians), and the Chaldean rise to power is dated circa 612 BC, it is assumed he was active about that time, making him an early contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Jewish sources, however, do not group him with those two prophets, who are often placed together, so it is possible that he was slightly earlier than these prophets. Because the final chapter of his book is a song, it is sometimes assumed that he was a member of the tribe of Levi, which served as musicians in Solomon's Temple.

Tradition

Habakkuk appears in Bel and the Dragon. Verses 33–39 state that Habakkuk is in Judea; after making some stew, he is instructed by an angel of the Lord to take the stew to Daniel, who is in the lion's den in Babylon. After proclaiming that he is unaware of both the den and Babylon, the angel transports Habakkuk to the lion's den. Habakkuk gives Daniel the food to sustain him, and is immediately taken back to "his own place".

The only work attributed to Habakkuk is the short book of the Bible that bears his name. The book of Habakkuk consists of five oracles about the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and a song of praise to God.

The style of the book has been praised by many scholars, suggesting that its author was a man of great literary talent. Habakkuk is unusual among the prophets in that he openly questions the working of God (1:3a, 1:13b). In the first part of the first chapter, the Prophet sees the injustice among his people and asks why God does not take action: "O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?" The writings address the questions of why God allows the wicked to prosper; why God delays answering prayer; and, why God is sometimes silent.

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

*The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet,
and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.
To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.*

TROPAR OF SUNDAY IN TONE-1. When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Your Most Pure Body, You arose on the third day, O Saviour, granting life to the world. Therefore, the Powers of Heaven cried out to You, O Giver of life: Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ. Glory to Your Kingdom. Glory to Your Providence, O only lover of mankind.

GLORY to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, KONDAK OF SUNDAY IN TONE - 1. As God, You arose from the tomb in glory, raising the world together with Yourself. Human nature praises

You as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master. Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries out: You, O Christ, are the One Who gives resurrection to all. NOW and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

THEOTOKION IN TONE-6. O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, unchanging mediation unto the Creator, do not despise the suppliant voices of sinners, but be quick to come to our aid, O Good One, who in faith cry out to You: hasten to intercession and come quickly to make supplication, for You, O Theotokos, always protect those who honour You.

Prokeimen -Tone 1) Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have put our hope in You.
Verse:Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous. Praise befits the upright

EPISTLE:

Ephesians 5: 9-19

⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴ Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.”

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*.

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

(Alleluia -Tone 1) God avenges me and has subdued peoples under me. Alleluia. Verse: He magnifies the salvation of the king and deals mercifully for His anointed, for David and for his seed forever. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: Luke 18: 18-27

¹⁸ Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁹ So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ²⁰ You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”

²¹ And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

²² So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

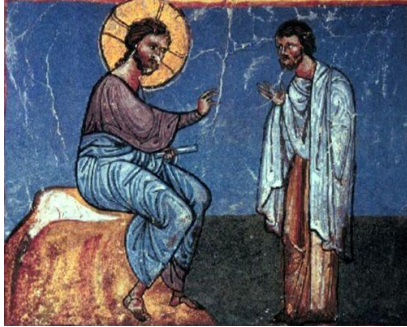
²³ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

²⁴ And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ And those who heard it said, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ But He said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

(Communion Verse) Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest. Alleluia



There is little that has caused such division in the Christian world than the issue of wealth. The truth of the matter is that we living in this country are each wealthy beyond the wildest dreams of any Biblical king or ruler. So what are we to think, when we read today’s rather challenging gospel?

The answer is not found in economic analysis, but in spiritual reality. It is worth reminding ourselves at the outset that there is very little that is inherently evil. Food is given to us for nourishment and enjoyment, but when it becomes an obsessive focus of life, it becomes the sin of gluttony. Sexual intimacy is a God given gift for men and women in marriage, but the misuse of sex produces sins ranging from lust to adultery. In his exchange with the rich young ruler, Jesus is not engaged in economic analysis, but instead in the diagnosis and treatment of souls.

... We are all required, at a minimum, to keep the commandments of God. What could be more simple? But the truth is that the “thou shall not’s of Scripture are only, if

you will, kindergarten for Christians. If we want more, if we want to follow the road of the saints and truly become the children of God, we must not think that our spiritual life stops there.

Jesus, seeing the young man with the eyes of God, knew that, and pierced right to the heart of the matter. The true issue, the key question which every Christian must face, is whether or not a person has surrendered her entire life to God, or does he or she reserve some parts wholly for himself. Put another way, does a person observe the more difficult commandments of the New Testament: that she truly love the Lord God with all of her heart, and all of her strength, and all of her soul, and that she love her neighbor as herself? Or has she compartmentalized her life, so that God is consigned to only one of a great number of boxes, pigeon-holed and kept separate from the rest of life?

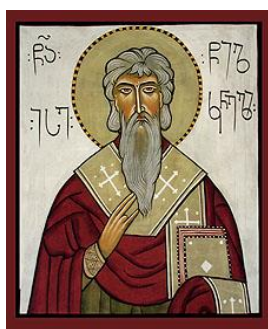
Jesus knew that the focus of the young man was his wealth. It was what characterized his life. It was, in the end, the way in which he defined who he was and what he did. It was, in the end, the thing that kept him from God. He thus challenged his questioner to abandon the very thing that, whether or not the man knew it, separated him from God. To that end, Jesus asked the man to surrender that part of him which he kept separate and that he valued the most—his wealth. Keep in mind that in this instance, wealth was simply the symptom of the disease. In other circumstances, with other people, it was something else. Often it was a rigid attachment to the Law itself, or to the odds and ends of daily life. The point is that in each instance, here is something

separating the person from true worship, from a genuine relationship with God.

... Looked at in this way, we see an immensely important principle that we can, and should apply to our own life. The question is not what do we have in the bank. The question instead is this: how do we

define ourselves? How do we see ourselves, and more importantly, how do we appear to God? *Fr. James Blomeley*
<http://orthochristian.com/75838.html>

Saint Jesse, Bishop of Tsilkani, Georgia



Saint Jesse of Tsilkani arrived in Georgia in the 6th century with the other Syrian fathers and companions of Saint John of Zedazeni.

At the recommendation of Saint John of Zedazeni, Catholicos Evlavios of Kartli consecrated Saint Jesse as bishop of Tsilkani. The holy father traveled throughout his diocese preaching the Holy Gospel. Passing from city to city, from valley to mountain and back, the kind shepherd worked wonders, healed the infirm, cleansed lepers, cast out demons and



raised those who were confined to their beds.

Once, with the blessing of his teacher Saint John of Zedazeni, Saint Jesse performed a miracle to strengthen the people in their Faith. He descended to the bank of the Ksani River, followed by Saint John and a multitude of people. He made the sign of the Cross over the river, touched his staff to the water and commanded: "In the name of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, I command you, river: follow me!" Immediately the river reversed its current and began to flow backwards, following in Saint Jesse's footsteps right up to Tsilkani Church.

Those living near Mtskheta and Tsilkani who witnessed this miracle glorified the Lord Jesus Christ for bestowing upon one of His children the gift of wonderworking.

When the Lord made known to the saint the day of his repose, he gathered his disciples and church servitors, bade them farewell, blessed them, partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and reposed in peace. His last words were "Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!"

Statement on the Global Wildfires His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

In recent weeks, our planet has witnessed extreme heatwaves and expansive wildfires throughout the world—from the rain forests of the Amazon and desert regions of Africa, normally snow-covered regions such as the Arctic and Alaska to far away countries from Spain to Siberia. Month after month, we have experienced record temperatures and unprecedented heatwaves, resulting in the destruction of millions of acres and the disruption of millions of people. And the intensity of these fires and storms is progressively increasing and intensifying, mandating critical and commensurate changes on our part.

Scientists warn us about the threat of such fires to the world's ecosystems, which are becoming increasingly jeopardized and vulnerable. The impact of these fires could reverberate for generations, affecting soil, infrastructure, and human beings. Trees are vital for the soil, for our survival and for our soul. Trees are not simply valuable for their aesthetic beauty or commercial benefit, but essentially for our defense against climate change. Planting more trees is certainly commendable, but cutting down fewer trees is perhaps the most compelling response to global warming.

While this global wildfire crisis may not entirely or exclusively be a consequence or cause of climate change, the calamitous events that the world is now experiencing undoubtedly and undeniably sound the alarm about the urgent and dire repercussions of a rising level of carbon emissions. Therefore, if nothing else, such extreme phenomena compel us to consider the fundamental fragility of nature, the limited resources of our planet, and the unique sacredness of creation.

We pray for all those threatened or afflicted by the fires in all corners of our world. We call all faithful and all people of good will to consider carefully how we live, what we consume, and where our priorities lie, using the words of the Divine Liturgy: “Let us be attentive! Let us stand with awe!”

At the Phanar, Saturday August 24th, 2019

Note re Bulletins: I have been unable to access the Cantors' Association website because it is “under maintenance.” Until this is fixed, I will be able only to include material in the Sunday Bulletin from the Epistle and Gospel readings and information about the commemorated Saint(s) of the day. I am grateful to Fr Peter Haugen for sending me a copy of his parish's Bulletin so I was able to incorporate the troparia and Prokimena for today, but only in English.