



Habakkuk a Prophecy for the World

Dr. Oliver L. Johnson, Jr.

Introduction

Habakkuk's prophecy was directed to a world that, through the eyes of God's people, must have seemed on the edge of disaster. Even when the Northern Kingdom had been destroyed in 722 BC, God's people remained in Judah. However, with another powerful foreign army on the rampage, faithful people like Habakkuk were wondering what God was doing. Hadn't He given the land to His people? Would He now take it away? Habakkuk's prayer of faith for the remainder of God's people in the face of such destruction still stands today as a remarkable witness of true faith and undying hope.

THE PURPOSE OF HABAKKUK

The book of Habakkuk differs from other books of prophecy in one special aspect. Instead of taking Jehovah's message directly to the people, he takes the complaint of the people to Jehovah, representing them in the complaint" and acting more like a priest than a prophet. Priest represented the people to God (prayers and request upward) and prophets represented God before the people (God's messengers to the people). Habakkuk is a man of God; a man of faith; who is perplexed by what is happening around him. He doesn't understand why God is doing what He is doing. It seems inconsistent with what has been previously revealed.

Therefore, the prophet goes to God and asks some difficult questions, and he receives some answers, which greatly puzzle him. Nevertheless, through it all, whether he understands or not, his faith in God never wavers!! "His spirit is deeply troubled How could God permit so much suffering and death? How could God punish His own people, even though they had sinned, and were now being used as judgment by a nation that was even more wicked?" "How can a righteous God use the wicked Chaldeans to punish His people, which, in spite of its apostasy, is still more righteous than they?" (Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible).

Why is evil and suffering rampant in our world? Goodness and justice seem to fail! How is it, God, that you are so against wrong but you go on tolerating wrong? God, is what you are doing fair? Is this honestly the moral, ethical thing to do?" (D. Stuart Briscoe). Habakkuk is a freethinking prophet who is not afraid to wrestle with issues that test his faith. Such spiritual struggles are not new! "Jeremiah, too, questions and expostulates with God as he struggles with the intractable problem of the prosperity of the wicked; Ref. Jeremiah 12:1-4; 13:17; 15:10-18; 20:7-18

Practical Application: The application to the reader of Habakkuk is that it is permissible to question what God is doing, even when it's done with respect and reverence. Sometimes it is not evident to us what is going on, especially if we are thrown into suffering for a period of time or if it seems our enemies are prospering while we are just barely getting by. The Book of Habakkuk affirms that God is a sovereign and omnipotent God who has all things under control. We just need to be still and know He is at work. He is whom He says He is and does keep His promises. He will punish the wicked (even when we cannot see it); He is still on the throne of the universe. We need to stay focused on this: "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:19). Enabling us and taking us to higher places with Him where we are set apart from the world (sanctified). Sometimes the way we have to go to get us there is through suffering and sorrow, but if we rest in Him and trust Him, we come out where He wants us.

Chapter 1, Habakkuk ask God Why the Delay in Judgment

1. (Habakkuk 1:2-4)

“O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” and You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds.”

a. **Even cry out to You, “Violence” and You will not save:** Habakkuk looked at the **violence** and injustice around him in the nation of Judah. He wondered where God was, and why God did not set things right. Habakkuk had seen the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and now the Southern Kingdom of Judah were in the bull’s-eye of the Babylonian Empire; namely the Chaldeans which were a race of Semites who lived in the Southern part of Babylon. Nevertheless, Habakkuk could not understand why these heathen nations seem to prosper in all their unrighteousness while the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Like their sister to the north) were teetering on the brink of devastation.

b. **Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?** This is an excellent question. Why does God allow us to see iniquity and trouble, in our self or in others?

1. Why God allows us to see iniquity in our selves.

- To keep us humble
- To make us submissive in the hour of trouble
- To make us value salvation all the more
- To bring us to repentance

2. Why God allows us to see iniquity in others.

- To show us what we might have been ourselves

- To make us see the wickedness of sin, that we might pass by it, hate it, and not indulge in it ourselves
- To make us admire the grace of God when He saves sinners
- To set us more earnestly to work that God can use us to save others and extend His kingdom.

c. Iniquity . . . trouble . . . plundering and violence . . . strife . . . contention . . . the law is powerless . . . justice never goes forth . . . perverse judgment proceeds:

Habakkuk sees trouble and sin everywhere, from personal relationships to courts of law. This distresses him so much that he cries out to God and asks God why He doesn't set things straight.

1. Habakkuk deals with the questions that come up when someone really believes God, yet looks around them and the world doesn't seem to match up with how God wants it. Habakkuk sees it - especially remembering the prior times of revival under King Josiah and asks, "Lord, why are you allowing this?"

2. This prophecy deals with the problems created by faith; and with the Divine answers to the questions, which express those problems.

3. We as believers in America (just as Habakkuk) still are asking the same questions to this day?

- Why is immorality promulgated today
- Why does it seem that there are two laws—1 for the rich and well to do—2 another set of rules for the common man
- Why are our Christian values under such attack today
- Why do the righteous suffer (Ref. Psalm 73:1-15)

B. God's answer to the first problem.

1. (Habakkuk 1:5-6) God's astounding work: bringing the Babylonians to judge Judah.

"Look among the nations and watch; be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs."

a. **Be utterly astounded:** God tells the troubled prophet, "Don't worry about it. Look at the surrounding nations and from them will come a nation that will be My instrument of judgment on sinful Judah." Just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel played the harlot, so too was Judah.

1. "I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery." (Jeremiah 3:8). Suffice to say, since God put away Israel, so too would He do to Judah. However, God would attempt to reconcile His chosen people by bringing the promised Messiah from the tribe of Judah, but they rejected Him also.

2. However, Israel will be God's chosen people in time. What I mean by that is after a certain time period (after the great tribulation period), God will reconcile the twelve tribes of Israel in their own land for 1000 years. Afterwards, the New Heaven and the New Jerusalem will come down and God will once again remarry Israel consecrating the marriage relationship established at Mt. Sinai (Ref. Exodus 19:5-8, Isaiah 54:8).

3. Why did God choose Israel of all the nations in the world to be His own personal people? The answer lies in the book of Deuteronomy and says, "7 The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8 But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.9 Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;10 And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to

his face” (Deut. 7:7-10).

b. I will work a work in your days, which you would not believe: We understand the idea of something “too good to be true,” but that isn’t what God is talking about here. This is something “too bad to be true,” a work of judgment so astounding that Habakkuk would have a hard time believing it.

c. I am raising up the Chaldeans: When the Babylonians (**the Chaldeans**) eventually came against Judah, they came as the wrath of the LORD. It wasn’t that they themselves did not want to come, but God allowed their sinful desire to conquer Judah to come to fruition. If God had not allowed them to do it, they never could have conquered Judah and exiled God’s people out of the Promised Land.

1. The Chaldeans lived in the Southern portion of Babylon and worshipped many gods. Prior to their settlement in Babylonia, they were a nomadic people

2. (Habakkuk 1:7-11) The strength and speed of the Babylonian army.

“They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; their cavalry comes from afar; they fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat. They all come for violence; their faces are set *like* the east wind. They gather captives like sand. They scoff at kings, and princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, for they heap up earthen *mounds* and seize it. Then *his* mind changes, and he transgresses; he commits offense, *ascribing* this power to his god.”

a. **They are terrible and dreadful:** The LORD lets Habakkuk know that the judgment will indeed come, and when it comes through the Babylonians it will be **terrible and dreadful**.

b. **He commits offense, ascribing this power to his god:** When the Babylonians overwhelm the land of Judah, they will wrongly give the credit to their false gods. The LORD knew they would do this before it ever happened.

1. We see the divine providence of God at work here. Let me tell you what God's providence is:

- The word "providence" comes from the Latin *providentia* (Gk. *Pronoia*) and means essentially foresight or making provision beforehand. On the human plane it may be used positively, as when Tertullus praised Felix by saying, "Your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation" (Acts 24:2), or negatively, as when Paul admonishes us to "make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (Rom 13:14). When applied to God the idea takes on a vastly larger dimension because God not only looks ahead and attempts to make provision for his goals, but infallibly accomplishes what he sets out to do. Because it is God's governance that is in view, it encompasses everything in the universe; from the creation of the world to its consummation, inclusive of every aspect of human existence and destiny. Providence, then, is the sovereign, divine superintendence of all things, guiding them toward their divinely predetermined end in a way that is consistent with their created nature, all to the glory and praise of God. This divine, sovereign, and benevolent control of all things by God is the underlying premise of everything that is taught in the Scriptures.

C. The second problem: "Why do it this way, O LORD?"

1. (Habakkuk 1:12-17) Habakkuk wonders why God would use a nation more wicked than Judah to bring judgment on Judah.

"Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. *You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, *and* hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a *person* more righteous than he? *Why* do You make men like fish of the sea, like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them? They take up all of them with a hook, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

Therefore they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their dragnet; because by them their share *is* sumptuous and their food plentiful. Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity?"

a. **Why do You look on those who deal treacherously:** Habakkuk was first troubled that there was no judgment against Judah; God answered by telling him judgment was on the way. Now Habakkuk is troubled by the agent of judgment, the Babylonians - who were an even more wicked people than the people of Judah.

1. It would be like crying out to God about the state of the church in America, and hearing God respond by saying, "I'll fix the problem by a Communist invasion of America." We would say, "Wait a minute LORD - the problem is bad, but your cure is worse than the disease!"

2. Some people face personal crisis like this all the wrong way. They withdraw from the church and from fellowship and they pull back into a little spiritual corner. Others give up on God altogether. If you happen to be teetering in that situation, let me suggest a few things:

- *Stop to think* - before talking about it, think about it and meditate on it all the while praying about it.
- *Restate basic principles* - As you think about the problem, look at the problem from a historical context of what God has done in the past and while doing so, go back further to basic principles about God and His dealing with man in past situations.
- *Apply the principles to the problem* - now, think about your problem in light of these basic biblical principles regarding your circumstance(s).
- *Commit the matter to God in faith* - whether you know what to do or not. This should have been at the top of the list, but when we commit the problem to God, we must wait on Him and not try and jump the shark.

b. **You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness:** This is even more problematic to Habakkuk because he knows the character of God. Since he understands the holy character of God, he is even more troubled than ever as to why God would judge wicked Judah by exalting an even more wicked Babylon.

c. **Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity?** Habakkuk wonders how long God will allow the Babylonians to continue their cruel conquest of nations. It is as if God's people are conquered as easily as fish in a net.

1. Easily we are taken and destroyed. We have no *leader* to guide us, and no *power* to defend ourselves. Nebuchadnezzar is here represented as a fisherman, who is constantly casting nets into the sea, and enclosing multitudes of fishes; being always successful, he sacrifices to his own net.

2. (Habakkuk 2:1) Habakkuk resolutely waits for God's reply.

"I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected."

a. **And watch to see what He will say to me:** Habakkuk has raised two important questions to God, yet he asks both with a great attitude. He anticipates an answer from God and is willing to **watch** - that is, *wait* for it. Often when we question God we don't expect Him to answer, or we are too impatient to wait for His answer, but Habakkuk does. Other times we not only *expect* God will answer, but we *demand* that He answer, and answer according to our time schedule. Habakkuk approaches this with the right attitude.

1. How often God's answers us and comes and find us gone! We have waited for a while, and, thinking there was no answer, we have gone our way but as we have turned the first corner coming in view of the sea, God's ships touch at our shores; but there is no one to unload the cargo (blessings) . It is not enough to direct your prayer unto God; look up, and look out, until the blessing alights on your heart.

b. **And what I will answer when I am corrected:** Habakkuk's attitude is also right because he *expects* God to correct him. From this we see that Habakkuk didn't ask God

this question because he thought God was wrong and had to explain Himself. He asked it because he knew that he was wrong and needed to be corrected. His questions were his invitation to God saying, “God, I don’t understand what you are doing, but I know that you are right in all things. Please speak to me and enlighten me”

Chapter 2, God Justifies His Judgment

A. The proud rebuked.

1. (Habakkuk 2:2-3) Preparation for the answer: how to publish the vision.

“Then the LORD answered me and said: “Write the vision and make *it* plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

a. **Write the vision and make it plain:** God told Habakkuk to record this “question and answer” time for the benefit of others - **that he may run who reads it**. Habakkuk’s revelation wasn’t just for himself, but also to edify others. Those who read it would make rapid progress (**may run**), but they couldn’t make this progress if Habakkuk did not **make it plain**.

1. Habakkuk first had to *see the vision*. The preacher cannot make anyone else see what he does not see for himself. That’s why we should not solely depend our Pastors or ministers to answer the question, but ask God for wisdom to understand what we need to hear from Him in both His Word and our prayers.

2. Habakkuk then had to *make it known*. The preacher must do what he can to make the word of God known, and make it known in as many ways as possible, yet not substituting God’s Word for his own.

3. Habakkuk had to make it known as *permanently as possible* - he was told to **write the vision**. The preacher must do what he can to make a permanent impact on his listeners. He cannot do that if he is not involved in daily prayer time with God and the study of His Word.

4. Habakkuk had to *make it plain*. I have often times thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their duty to make the message elaborate, to go to the very bottom of the subject, and stir up all the sediment they could find there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way as well. They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible, which difficulties most of their hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them. It is one thing to tell people all about the difficult things in the bible, but they also expect their Pastors and teachers of the bible to guide them to the summation; no problem is solved by just looking at the problem, but a solution must be sought also.

5. Habakkuk had to *make it practical* - **that he may run who reads it**. It doesn't say, "that he who runs may read it," but "**that he may run who reads it.**" The *running*, the activity and progress all comes forth from God's Word.

b. **For the vision is yet for an appointed time:** Habakkuk spoke to an age beyond his own. The Babylonian conquest would not be evident in his own day, but in the future.

2. (Habakkuk 2:4-8) God knows how to deal with the proud.

"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, *he is* a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he *is* like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples. Will not all these take up a proverb against him, and a taunting riddle against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases *what* is not his; how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'? Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you, because of men's blood and the violence of the land *and* the city, and of all who dwell in it."

a. **Behold the proud:** Habakkuk wondered why Babylon - a nation even more sinful than Judah - would be used to bring judgment to Judah. In answering the prophet, God first assures him that He sees **the proud**, and knows that **his soul is not upright in him**.

1. Pride is everywhere and takes all manner of shapes.

- Here is the rich man, proud of what he has i.e. he doesn't accept God, therefore he loses that which is most precious; his soul.
- There is the poor man, proud of his "honor" in having less i.e. the person who accepts their status in life and refuses to grow.
- Here is the talented man, proud of what he can do; i.e. putting forth one's talents not acknowledging who gave said talents in the first place.
- There is the man of few talents, proud of his hard work; i.e. again the person who works hard in life and prides himself in his work ethic.
- Here is the religious man, proud of his religion; religion comes from the word 'relegere' which means to bind; this person gets bound up in their religion.
- There is the unbeliever, proud of his unbelief i.e. atheist and agnostics
- Here is the establishment man, proud of his place in society i.e. senators, millionaires and billionaires who acknowledge their wealth and status in life as a result of their own self actions leaving God out of the equation.
- There is the counter-cultural man, proud of his "outcast" status; i.e. the thug or the crook; you can see their pride in their music in vile rape songs or those thugs who are proud of being called a thug.
- Here is the learned man, proud of his intelligence and learning; i.e. scientist, scholars who hold their intelligence in great esteem; again not acknowledging the One who endowed them with their intellectual gifts.

2. If there is a sin that is universal, it is pride. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a person's heart, and it will live equally at its ease in a shack. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?

- I heard a story about a visiting pastor at this local church who also had a doctoral degree and as he was introduced to the congregation as Pastor... from...church. The man preached his sermon and after church was dismissed, this same pastor went up to the man who introduced him and chastised him

about not including the fact that he had a doctorate degree as well as being a pastor.

- Preachers and ministers of the gospel need to understand something about titles: Jesus said about titles, “They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, **7** greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' **8** But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. **9** Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. **10** And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. **11** But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. **12** And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:6-12).

3. Pride can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to Sylvester Brown after a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he preached. “You’re too late,” Brown answered. “The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit.” Satan can tell the praying brother to be proud of his ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

4. “*Wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God.* Why! pride is even hateful to men. Men cannot bear a proud man because in their minds it places the prideful person loftier than they themselves leading to jealousy and dislike. The bible says, “Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

b. **But the just shall live by his faith:** In contrast to **the proud**, there are **the just**. The principle of their life is **faith**, instead of pride that looks to self. True **faith** looks outside of self to the LORD God, while pride always sets itself up as holier than thou.

1. This brief statement from the prophet Habakkuk is one of the most important, and most quoted Old Testament statements in the New Testament. Paul used it to show that the **just** live **by faith**, not by law. Being under the law isn’t the way to be found **just** before God, only living by faith. The law was only our tutor to lead us to Christ who was the fulfillment of the law.

2. If you are declared **just** - that is, *approved* - before God, you have done it by a relationship of **faith**. If your life is all about living under the law, then God does not find you approved because that says that you reject the death of His Son for the justification of sin.

3. In Hebrew, the important part of the verse has only three words: “the justified man,” “by his faith,” and “will live.” Every word in Habakkuk 2:4 is important, and the Lord quotes it three times in the New Testament just to bring out the fullness of the meaning

- Romans 1:17 is the commentary on *the justified man* - “The **just** shall live by faith”
- Hebrews 10:38 is the commentary on *faith* - “The just shall live by **faith**”
- Galatians 3:11 is the commentary on the *Christian life* - “The just shall **live** by faith”.

4. We are called to live by faith, and nothing else.

- Some Christians live by devotions; they are devoted to God, but in the face of adversity exude little faith.
- Some Christians live by works; works are dead if that’s all it is.
- Some Christians live by feelings and many seek an emotional fix through church attendance; that’s not living by faith.
- Some Christians live by circumstances; these are individual who have no plan in life and live day to day.

*Each of these are meaningless and perhaps *dangerous* without faith.

c. **He enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied:** God sees the proud man and how the proud man **cannot be satisfied**. The one who is declared just by faith is satisfied, but the proud man keeps grasping. Any wonder why the rich (even though they have millions in the bank) seek more riches through investments wanting more money than they could ever spend in several life times.

d. **Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you:** Here, God assures Habakkuk that He knows how to deal with nations like Babylon. He promises the Babylonians that just as they **plundered many nations**, so one day others would **plunder** them. The Babylonians were perfect examples of the proud who set themselves against those who are declared just by faith and Habakkuk could take comfort in the fact that God would deal with them for the Persians and the Medes would see to that.

1. The immediate value of the God's word was that Habakkuk learned that God's employment of the Chaldeans did not mean the permanent power of this evil people. God uses people, nations and circumstances to work His will.

B. Four woes to silence sinful man.

1. (Habakkuk 2:9-11) Woe to the greedy.

“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster! You give shameful counsel to your house, cutting off many peoples, and sin *against* your soul. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timbers will answer it.”

a. **Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house:** God addresses the greedy man, and tells him that he is ripe for judgment. The greedy man does his best to protect himself (**set his next on high**), yet all his best will come to nothing.

b. **You . . . sin against your own soul:** The greedy man thinks in terms of nothing but gain, but ends of losing his own soul. Jesus' parable in Luke 12:16-21 is the perfect example of the greedy man who sins against his **own soul**. Let's go ahead and look at that parable:

"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸ So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to

him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'

c. **For the stone will cry out from the wall:** Habakkuk pictures a beautiful house built by a greedy man, and the very stones of the house **cry out** from the wall against the man's greed.

1. For the Chaldeans this meant even inanimate things shall raise their voice to denounce the Chaldeans' wickedness. **The stone shall cry out of the wall.** A proverbial expression to denote the horror with which their cruelty and oppression were regarded; it is particularly appropriate here, as these crimes had been perpetrated in connection with the buildings in which they prided themselves, which were raised by the enforced labor of miserable captives and adorned with the fruits of fraud and pillage.

2. (Habakkuk 2:12-14) Woe to the violent.

“Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity! Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

a. **Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed:** The LORD is not only displeased with the greedy, He also pronounces a woe against the *violence and the oppression of one nation upon another or an individual upon another*.

b. **The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD:** The violent man thinks that *his* might makes right, so he feels free to abuse others for his gain. As a correction and a rebuke, the LORD reminds the *violent man* of His ultimate triumph.

3. (15-17) Woe to the drunk.

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing *him to* your bottle, even to make *him* drunk, that you may look on his nakedness! You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also; drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the Lord’s right hand *will be* turned against you, and utter shame will be on your glory. For the violence *done to* Lebanon will cover you, and the plunder of beasts *which* made them afraid, because of men’s blood and the violence of the land *and* the city, and of all who dwell in it.”

a. **Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor . . . You also; drink!** Through the prophet Habakkuk, the LORD rebukes both the drunk and those who promote drunkenness. Though they think that alcohol makes them feel good, God rightly says they are **filled with shame instead of glory**.

1. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul calls drunkenness *dissipation*; drunkenness is a *waste* of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. I can use my own testimony in that regard for when I got drunk many years ago to forget about my problems, as soon as I awoken, those same problems were staring me right back in the fact.

- Many use alcohol as an escape mechanism not realizing that though for a small amount of time you forget about your problems, but nothing is solved from your temporary escape be it with alcohol or drugs. On the contrary, things are rather exacerbated because now you become dependent on alcohol or drugs to solve your problems that may provide a temporary fix instead of looking to God who can give a permanent fix.

2. The damage of drunkenness goes beyond the act itself and into what it affects in lives and families. Yearly in the United States alcohol is responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

3. Alcohol in moderation is not a bad thing for God said, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts” (Proverbs 31:6; also ref. 1 Timothy 5:23).

b. **The cup of the Lord’s right hand will be turned against you:** The drunk and those who promote drunkenness loved their own cup full of drink; now God promises a **cup** for them, a cup of judgment and just recompense for their sin because those who become drink usually commit sinful acts either in deeds or of the mind and can lead others into sin as well.

4. (Habakkuk 2:18-20) Woe to the idolater.

“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

a. **Woe to him who says to wood, “Awake!”:** Having dealt with the greedy man, the violent man, and the drunk now God speaks to the idolater - who treats inanimate objects as if they had life and intelligence.

b. **In it there is no breath at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple:** In contrast to lifeless idols, the LORD is alive and well **in His holy temple**. The folly of the idolater will be exposed by the majesty of the living God.

1. Today God no longer dwells in temples or buildings made with hands and the bible says, “ However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:” (Acts 7:48). God temple is you the believer; that’s where He dwells. 1 Corinthians says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:6)

2. Through it all, the point is proven. Habakkuk couldn't understand why God would judge a sinful nation (Judah) by an even *more* sinful nation (Babylon). Yet God reminds Habakkuk of His own wisdom and strength, and of His ultimate triumph over the wicked. God knew that Babylon was filled with the proud, the greedy, the violent, the drunk, and the idolater - and the LORD knew how to deal with them all.

Chapter 3, Habakkuk's Prayer Before God

A. Seeking revival from the God of all power.

1. (Habakkuk 3:1-2) A plea for revival.

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard your speech *and* was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known; in wrath remember mercy.”

a. **A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet:** The first two chapters of Habakkuk give us the prophet's “question and answer” time with God. Now that God has answered Habakkuk, the prophet brings a prayer to close the book.

b. **O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years:** Habakkuk simply prays for *revival*. He knows how God once worked and how His people once responded, and Habakkuk wants to see that again.

1. The prayer of Habakkuk shows us that revival is a work of God, not the achievement of man. There is something man can and must do for revival - simply cry out to God and plead for His reviving mercy.

2. Notice the prayer: **revive Your work**. Often, my prayer is really “revive *my* work,” but I must have a heart and mind for God's work, far bigger than my portion of it. Shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with party, and now pray, ‘Lord, revive thy work, and if thy work happen to be more in one branch of the church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do let thine own purposes be accomplished, and thine own glory come of it, and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown. We as Christians are not to become envious nor spiteful of other churches in the community who might happen to have a larger congregation or are known as the best church in town. We should rejoice in their success in bringing believers into the congregation of the Lord.

3. At the same time, this must be a *personal* prayer: “LORD, revive *me*.” We too often blame the church for sin, corruption, laziness, prayerlessness, lack of spiritual power, or whatever and we forget that *we are the church*. Pray for personal revival and diligently search yourself:

- Check your conduct - does your walk glorify the LORD as it should? How about your *private* conduct, which only the LORD sees; yes He sees through His omniscience (all knowing).
- Check your conversation - is your speech profane or impure? Do you talk about Jesus with others? The Holy Spirit will not dwell in an unclean temple of which your body is the temple of the Lord.
- Check your communion - are you living a growing, abiding life with Jesus and are you giving of your time, effort and money to the church?

c. **In the midst of the years make it known:** Habakkuk longs for God to do a work that is *evident* to everyone as a work of God. He prays that revival would be **known** at a definite *time and place (in the midst of the years)*, not just as an idea in someone’s head.

d. **In wrath remember mercy:** Habakkuk prays knowing that Israel doesn’t *deserve* revival, yet he prays for **mercy**. The idea is, “LORD, I know that we deserve your **wrath**, but in the midst of your **wrath remember mercy** and send revival among us.”

1. So far in reading Habakkuk I see so many similarities in regards to the United States. Nevertheless, today we think we carry an exemption card in regards to God’s wrath because we are all powerful. We have sunk lower and lower into a depraved state in particular where morality is concerned and we definitely need a revival. The book of Chronicles says, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

2. What is more troubling are the many churches that are turning biblical doctrine that is unrecognizable to God i.e. same sex marriages, emphasis on prosperity gospel and straying away from the order in which God has said He wants His church to run. O

God, have mercy upon thy poor church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength; she has desired to keep thy word; oh, refresh her; restore to her thy power, and give her yet to be great in this land.

2. (Habakkuk 3:3-15) The power of God on behalf of His people.

“God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. *His* brightness was like the light; He had rays *flashing* from His hand, and there His power *was* hidden. Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet. He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways *are* everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian trembled. O LORD, were *You* displeased with the rivers, *was* Your anger against the rivers, *was* Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation? Your bow was made quite ready; oaths were sworn over *Your* arrows. Selah. You divided the earth with rivers. The mountains saw You *and* trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice, *and* lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of Your arrows they went, at the shining of Your glittering spear. You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah. You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret. You walked through the sea with Your horses, through the heap of great waters.”

a. **His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise:** As Habakkuk prays for revival he begins to praise the God who brings revival. In this song of praise (punctuated by several expressions of **Selah**, as in the Psalms) Habakkuk glorifies the power and majesty of God. *Selah* means to pause.

1. It is good to praise God like this, and God’s people need to do more of it. It is good to praise God and let’s look at some reasons:

- Because it gives appropriate honor and glory to God
- Because it declares God's specific works
- Because it teaches and reminds us of who God is and what He has done
- Because it places man in proper perspective under God
- Because it builds confidence in the power and works of God

b. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed:

As Habakkuk remembers how God has saved in the past; it makes him full of faith for what God can do right now and in the future. He also declares that salvation is brought **with Your Anointed** and the LORD's anointed is none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

c. You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed.

These verses have a future pronouncement of how God will use Cyrus the Great of Persia as a type or a prefigured Christ who goes forth and strikes both the nations of Assyria who placed in captivity the Northern Kingdom of Israel and crushes the Babylonian empire who took the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity. This can also be considered as a double-reference prophecy because it has its meaning in regards to the aforementioned case involving Cyrus of Persia and Jesus Christ who comes and strikes the wicked nations who come against Israel in the Battle of Armageddon. Let's go the book of Isaiah and says, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel" (Isaiah 63:3).

1. What is a double-reference prophecy? This tendency to speak of events that are separated by time as though they were not is called the principle of double reference. In the case that we have been discussing in paragraph c has its finding in future events where Cyrus (King of Persia) liberates Israel and finds its finality when Christ comes back and again liberates Israel from those nations that come against her at the battle of Armageddon.

B. The triumph of the prophet's faith.

1. (Habakkuk 3:16-18) Knowing God's strength, Habakkuk can trust the LORD even in a crisis.

“When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at *the* voice; rottenness entered my bones; and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, he will invade them with his troops. Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

a. **When I heard, my body trembled:** Habakkuk shows the proper response of man under the sovereign power of God. He recognizes his own weakness and low standing before this God of all majesty and power.

1. When we come to God we need to do it in all reverence for God is not one to be fooled, nor trifled with. You can take a person who declares that God does not exist or even call Him names for all the world to hear and nothing happens to him/her at that moment in time. However, believe me when I say that even though God doesn't exact His wrath in the twinkling of a moment, He will certainly catch up with an unrepentant or hostile person. Let me give you an example of two wannabee priests in the Old Testament who came before God in an unholy manner and their names are: Nadab and Abihu (two of Aaron's sons) who chose to offer strange fire adding incense offering unauthorized fire before the LORD. When they did this, fire shot out from the altar burning both Nadab and Abihu to a crisp (Ref Lev. 10:1).

b. **He will invade him with his troops:** The prophet remembers that the Babylonians are coming and that this God of sovereign power and majesty is directing their work against Judah.

1. This action by God against Judah was brought to accomplish several things: First to punish Israel for their idolatry, wickedness and to satisfy His justice. Also, to bring

Israel out of captivity to ensure that the Messiah (who would come from the tribe of Judah) would come as prophesized by the prophets: Mica, Jeremiah and Isaiah.

c. **Though the fig tree may not blossom, no fruit be on the vines . . . yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation:** In almost a vision, Habakkuk sees the Judean countryside desolate, from the invading Babylonian army. In the midst of this almost complete loss, Habakkuk can still **rejoice in the LORD**.

1. He knows that this God of majesty and power is not *diminished* because man faces difficult trials. Sometimes we think, “If God is so great and powerful, how come I am going through a hard time even though I pray for relief?” Pointedly speaking, God allows us to go through tribulation for two main reasons: To bring about chastisement for sin and to bring us closer to Him. Habakkuk (like Job), knew this was the wrong question and the wrong attitude. Instead, he says: “I know you are strong and mighty, and if we are in desolate circumstances it is because we deserve it. I will praise You still, and even rejoice in You.”

2. **Rejoice in the LORD . . . joy in the God of my salvation:** With desolate circumstances like he just described, Habakkuk can find no joy in the **fig tree** or in the **vines** nor in the **fields** or **flocks**; yet God is unchanged. He can still **rejoice in the LORD**, because He is unchanging and that God does what’s best for mankind.

3. Habakkuk didn’t just practice positive thinking and shut out the idea of the barren fig tree and the empty cattle stalls, but instead he saw those problems for what they were and remembered that God was greater than them all.

2. (Habakkuk 3:19) Knowing God’s providence, Habakkuk can trust God for strength.

“The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s *feet*, and He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.”

a. **The LORD God is my strength:** Habakkuk can only properly pray this after he prayed the prayer of faith in the previous verses. He rightly declared that his strength was *not* in fig trees or vines or fields or flocks, but only in the **LORD God**.

1. We might even say that *what many praise are their our strength*. If by his words, life, or heart a man lives to praise his own achievements and resources, that those are his *strength*. If by words, life, or heart one praises a person or an idea, then those are his *strength*. We demonstrate that the **LORD God** is our **strength** when we praise Him for giving us our spiritual and mortal gifts especially when we use them in His service.

2. People ask me all the time why at such an age are you still able to weight lift such large amounts of weight or how do you maintain such a physique in your advance years? I always give God all the glory for not only my physical gifts, but my mental as well as spiritual gifts also.

b. **He will make my feet like deer's feet:** Habakkuk thought of the deer running swiftly about on the **high hills**, never losing a step and never falling. More than that, the deer positively dance and leap on the hills; they are full of life and joy. So the prophet declares, "God will order my steps for which I will rejoice in. As I trust in Him, He will not allow me to slip or fall, and I will do more than merely plod along; I will skip about with life and joy."

1. Notice Habakkuk more or less says he will skip about with *joy* and not happiness. Joy is everlasting when you have God in your life. Although one may find themselves with a terminal illness or imprisoned in a state correctional facility, the joy that Christ brings to your life cannot be taken away by circumstances nor by a person. On the other hand, happiness is temporary in this life. A person can be happy one day and sad the next, but the person who knows Jesus will one day have both joy and happiness for all eternity. Amen!

