

HABAKKUK

MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Habakkuk has made his two complaints and has listened to God's explanation of his intentions. God would punish Judah for her wickedness, violence, and sin. He would use the ruthless and ungodly Chaldeans as his instrument of judgment, but then he would act with his justice to punish and ultimately destroy the Chaldean kingdom.

In chapter 3, Habakkuk again goes to God in prayer recognising the greatness and splendour of the Creator.

Recognition of God's Working 3:1 - 15

The prayer of Habakkuk was meant to be sung. The word *Shigionoth* (plural) "refers to a distinctive type of music, sung in a spirit of victory and excitement."¹ The singular *Shiggaion* is used in the heading of Psalm 7. The word *Selah* seen in the margins of the text are some type of musical note or direction; perhaps a pause in the reading or singing for emphasis. *Selah* is used repeatedly in Psalms. The final clue that this is a prayer or psalm to be sung comes in the closing phrase of the book, "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments."

Habakkuk uses the personal name (*Yahweh*) to address God. Habakkuk knew that God would keep his word and though he promised to punish Judah, Habakkuk asks for mercy in the execution of his wrath. He knew God was trustworthy because he had "heard the report of you" referring to the many stories of God's working throughout the Old Testament period. Habakkuk reacts to the working of God with reverent fear and asks for a revival of God's work and that God's work might become known.

In the great time of punishment Judah was going to endure as Jerusalem is destroyed and God's people carried off into captivity, it was vital that the people remembered what God had done in the past.

Habakkuk begins to recount many of God's workings in the history of Israel. In verse 3, God, the Holy One, is said to come from Teman, a large town in Edom and Mount Paran, the desert of the Sinai Peninsula. The idea is that God is "retracing his steps from the region where eight centuries earlier he had come with Israel to dispossess the Canaanites. Now he was coming to bring judgment to dislodge Israel from the same land."²



I. How does the recounting of God's past actions bring hope to those in the present?

¹ <http://www.icr.org/books/defenders/5278/>

² ² Smith, James E. *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: A Christian Interpretation*. Lulu, 2011. p. 177.

The splendour of God's work is all encompassing from the heavens to the earth and those on earth praise him for the divine display of his glory. When looking at his glory Habakkuk describes his brightness like light. From his hand flashes rays of light showing the penetrative power of his glory and his ability to shed light on all things. As amazing as this display appears, it is but only a veiled view of his awesome and unlimited power. Habakkuk must have been looking back at God's actions in leading the children of Israel from Egypt and of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 34 the face of Moses shone because he had been in the presence of God.

2. How does Paul describe the light of God's glory in 1 Timothy 6:16?

3. Why do the wicked fear and hate light?

In verse 5 Habakkuk recalls the plagues and pestilence that God sent against Egypt. God's people should constantly remember what God had done in his past actions. In verse 6 he reflects on how God sent Israel to Canaan and drove out nations before them.

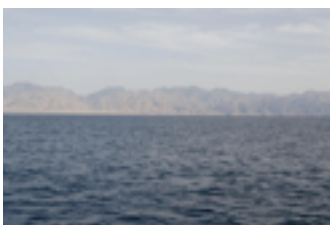
By measuring, God shows that he sees all and that his judgments are made after consideration of what he has observed. This verse also points us to the way in which God told Moses to divide the Promised Land for the Jews. "This is symbolic of what God was about to do to the Gentile nations that lived in Canaan--destroy them."³

Both here in Psalm 68:7-8 God is said to have shaken the mountains. If God can shake even the foundations of the earth mankind stands powerless before his mighty judgment.

4. What do verses 4 and 5 tell us about the holiness, power, and wrath of God?

5. Why does Habakkuk use the word "everlasting" to describe God's ways and how does this contrast with his creation in verse 6?

Cushan and Midian were desert tribes that stood between Sinai and the Promised Land. The tents of the desert tribes in Cushan were troubled and the curtains of the Midianites quivered. No foe can stand in the way of God's will.



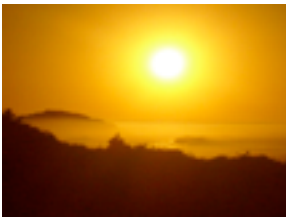
God turned the Nile to blood, and divided the Red Sea and the Jordan to benefit his people. He was not angry at the rivers or seas, but no river or sea can stand as an obstacle between God and his purposes. God does not need to literally ride on horses or chariots, but these pictures serve as metaphors for his leading of Israel as the God of deliverance and salvation.

The weapons of battle are seen in verse 9 as the Lord took the sheath from the bow and called for the arrows. The primary weapon used by those in the ancient chariots were arrows shot from bows. Here the metaphor continues with God charging ahead as leader of his people. Pharaoh's army followed Israel in chariots, but it is God who is controlling the battle.

³ Cobb, Bradley. *Wait, Not The!: A study of the prophecy of Habakkuk*. McCloud, OK: Cobb Publishing.

When Israel came to Jordan, which at that time of year overflowed its banks, it was divided (Joshua 3:15). There is no nation or physical obstacle that will stop God from any task he seeks to accomplish.

The judgment of God affects the mountains again in verse 10 with the description of an earthquake accompanied by raging floodwaters. The deep refers to the ocean itself. No mountain, no body of water, no storm can stand between God and the deliverance he brought to Israel. All of creation obeys his commands. God is so powerful that he can alter the laws of nature that he created.



The power of God extends from beyond the confines of the earth to include the sun and moon. In Joshua 10:12-13 the sun and moon stood still as God led his people to victory. Creation is always subject to the Creator. The light, arrows, flashing, and glittering spear probably refers to lightning.



God intervened in his Creation (marched through the earth in fury) to afflict his wrath on the nations. “As Micah before him (Micah 4:13), Habakkuk uses the strong figure of pulverizing grain on a threshing floor to describe what Yahweh will do to the enemies of his people.”⁴

God went out to bring salvation to his people and this was accomplished through his anointed. Though this may refer to Moses as God used him as deliverer, God’s salvation ultimately comes through the Jesus, the Messiah.

In the past God destroyed many kings and kingdoms like he did with Pharaoh. His victories are so complete and the kings and kingdoms so defeated that they can be said to have had their heads crushed and been laid bare from thigh to neck. This was what now awaited the Chaldeans.

6. How does the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 relate to Habakkuk 3:13?

In verse 14 the very weapons of the enemy are turned against him. In Habakkuk 2 we see that the Chaldeans will face the same wrath they have dispensed to others; they will reap exactly what they have sown. Habakkuk uses the word “me” in verse 14 showing that he expected to be in the midst of the conflict with the Chaldeans, but in the end the enemy would fall under the weight of their own wickedness. They thought they could get away with their sin as if it was done to the poor in secret, but their ruthless behaviour did not evade the eyes of God.

Often in Scripture the strength of an enemy is turned against them. Haman was hung on his own gallows (Esther 7:10) and Daniel’s enemies perish in the the lion’s den in which he had been cast (Dan. 6:24).

Since the Messiah has been in view we might interpret verse 14 in light of 2 Cor. 5:21 which says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Sin is the domain of Satan, but when Jesus, who knew no sin, took upon sin on the



⁴ Smith, James E. *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: A Christian Interpretation*. Lulu, 2011. p. 187.

cross he defeated the power of sin and Satan. The enemy's destruction came through the very sin he promoted and his end will be in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

In verse 15 Habakkuk returns to the imagery of God's deliverance through the sea and the waters. God delivered Israel from the hands of Egypt and Habakkuk looks forward to the time when God will again deliver his people.

7. What are some of your favourite stories of God's working in the Old and New Testaments? How do these help you in times of trial?

After Habakkuk's two previous prayers and God's response he accepted that Judah would be punished for their sin, violence, and ungodliness. He now understood God's righteous judgment would not allow the wicked Chaldeans to escape. They faced a terrible future and ultimate destruction as a nation because of their sin.

When Habakkuk reflects upon God's actions through the ages he cannot help but pray and sing with exuberance of God's great workings. The Creator of all who commands even the sun, earth, and moon will eventually right every wrong, avenge every evil, and bring salvation to his people.

In the beginning of Habakkuk's first prayer he cannot see God working and he asks "How long?" Now he recalls God has acted in mighty ways over and over again and Yahweh's past faithfulness builds a foundation of hope and faith for the future.