

## Habakkuk 3:1-15 The Vision and Worship Of God's Power

Interpretive Note: Habakkuk receives God's answer. As his heart turns to worship and faith, his focus is fixed on God's deliverance of His people in the past. He focuses on the exodus, which is the major event celebrated in Israelite worship. He remembers the events from the four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, culminating in the people's deliverance from Pharaoh's control, on through the wilderness wanderings, the events around Mount Sinai, the handover from Moses to Joshua, right up to their entry into the promised land. As he reflects on these things in prayer, he encounters God in depth.

The Lord's righteousness and power are no longer challenged, and the prophet has learned the lesson of 2:4, as is evident in 3:19. At all points God has proved faithful. Regardless of how bleak the national situation becomes, Habakkuk promises to watch, wait, and hope for the Lord to act (3:16–18)

This chapter differs in structure from the first two. It is given as a worshipful song to be sung by the congregation in worship for God's acts. This chapter ends with Habakkuk's statement of faith.

### I. Habakkuk Responds In Prayer (1-2)

#### A. Introduction to Habakkuk's Prayer (1)

1. Shigionoth – the meaning of the word is uncertain but widely understood as a form of musical notation
2. The last verse of this chapter confirms this - To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

#### B. Habakkuk Acknowledges God's Word and Work (2)

1. Habakkuk Declares His Reception of God's Words
  - a. He has "received" the words that the Lord has spoken
  - b. He has taken God's declaration of His nature in faith
2. Habakkuk Confesses that He will Fear the Lord's Work
  - a. To fear His work is to stand in awe and honor of what God is doing
  - b. He is no longer conflicted or confused about God's actions
  - c. He accepts that God is indeed working – even if it seems evil goes unchecked

#### C. Habakkuk Requests God's Deliverance (2)

1. Habakkuk asks God to work in his day
  - a. This is the only request in the chapter
  - b. He asks God to revive his past works in Habakkuk's day
  - c. He calls on God to deliver in power just as He did in past time for Israel
    - i. Habakkuk "wants God's purpose to be fulfilled, God's work on earth to be done, God's actions to be seen clearly by faith in the passages of history.
    - ii. Habakkuk calls on God to work in the present day in the way he had worked in the past. In a sense, Habakkuk meant for God to work a new redemption from the tyranny of Babylon as he had delivered Israel from the old tyranny of Egypt.
2. Habakkuk asks God to remember His mercy

- a. He accepts that wrath is coming against Judah
- b. He cries for God to remember His mercy, even as discipline and judgment fall

## II. Habakkuk's Vision Of God's Work (3-7)

NOTE: This will be the declaration of faith which will sustain Habakkuk in evil times  
It is given as a Psalm to be sung by Israel to likewise help them live by faith.

### A. God Has Come Forth In Glorious Power (3-5)

#### 1. God has come forth for His people (3a)

- a. Teman designated a district of Edom, located to the southeast of Judah. Teman probably stands for the area of Edom as a whole.
- b. Paran was a mountainous area southwest of Judah in the Sinai Peninsula and west of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- c. Together, the two areas refer to God's coming in the past when he delivered the people from Egypt, gave the law and led the people of Israel through the wilderness.
  - i. 1 This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. 2 He said, "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir [Edom] upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand. – Deut 33:1-2
  - ii. Yahweh is seen advancing from the region where he first revealed himself to the Israelites and from which he led them on to victory
- d. SELAH – debated term – probably denotes musical interlude for reflection

#### 2. God has revealed His glory in power (3b-4)

- a. His splendor covers the heavens – shows the power and glory of his presence as he marches forth for His people (See Psalm 8:1; 113:4)
- b. His praise fills the earth – shows the submission of all creation as he comes
- c. God is pictured as the divine warrior marching forth in glorious brilliance, whose power overcomes all
  - i. Veil = lit. the hiding place of his power
  - ii. the radiance of his glory is more brilliant than the sun

#### 3. God has brought judgment in His coming (5)

- a. Pestilence and Plague going before him is a picture of his judgment on Egypt and his redeeming work for his people against a wicked nation
- b. God's coming is with judgment upon the wicked and redemption for his people
  - i. See Psalm 78:42-

53

### B. All Creation Is Overcome At His Presence (6-7)

#### 1. God's presence displayed His power (6)

- a. He measures the earth
  - i. Like a great colossus towering over the mountain peaks, the Lord God measures the earth, claiming the right of domain inherent in himself as Creator.
  - ii. To measure something is an indication that it's yours and you can do with it what you please. It's also a preliminary step to action, as though the Lord were surveying the situation and estimating how much power it would take to execute His wrath on the nations
- b. He shakes (startles) the nations

- i. His very gaze instills fear among the nations
- ii. See Exodus 15:14-16 Moses' song after the red sea
  - the nations heard of what God did there and they feared
- c. Creation bows before His power
  - i. "The 'mountains' and 'hills' are symbols of grandeur, permanence, and security in the 'earth' yet they too are revealed as frail and impermanent ... Although they appear to be 'age-old', in truth God alone is eternal."
  - ii. The everlasting hills collapsed – his ways are everlasting
  - iii. READ Psalm 114 & Psalm 68:7-8

NOTE: Having seen the awesome God who led his people from the south into the land of promise, Habakkuk saw that God could deal with the sin of Judah and with the arrogance of Babylon

- 2. God defeated His people's enemies (7)
  - a. 25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.' Deut 2:25 (Also Josh 2:8)
  - b. Midian lay to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba, though the Midianites were a nomadic tribe often found to the west of the Gulf as well. "Cushan" occurs only here in this form.
  - c. Some think Cush- But Cushan had been repulsed in the time of the Judges by Othniel, and Midian by Gideon. As the LORD had brought deliverance in times of internal disorder and corruption in Israel through those two champions, so Habakkuk anticipates victory in his own day, as God shakes the nations.

### III. Habakkuk's Praise Of God's Glorious Power (**Habakkuk now turns to speak TO God**)

#### A. Habakkuk Extols God's Victory Over All (8-11)

- 1. God's Power Moved the Waters (8)
  - a. Again, the imagery evokes the events around the exodus, as in the vivid description of God's horses and chariot (8) attacking the (Red) sea on leaving Egypt, and the rivers (such as the Jordan) on entering the promised land.
    - i. It was wrath and judgment upon the land – but it meant redemption for his ppl.
    - ii. Did he battle against these waters?
- 2. God's Victory Resounded through all Creation (9-11)
  - a. Stripped the sheath – uncertain Hebrew phrase – lots of translations
    - i. battle spears are sworn by an oath
    - ii. See Deut 32:40-42 – oath of the Lord
  - b. The Mountains wrore
    - a. Judges 5:4-5 4 "LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. 5 The mountains quaked before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel.
  - c. The Deep Gave Forth Its Voice

- a. b. Psalm 93:3-4 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. 4 Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!
  - c. The Sun and Moon stood still – God’s miracle in Joshua’s Battle (Josh 10:11-13)
    - i. He will stop the very movements of the universe for His people
- 3. He is the God of glory who reveals His glory in creation and in history. He is the living God who makes the dead idols of the nations look ridiculous. He is the God of power who can command land and sea, heaven, and earth, and therefore, He is the God of victory who leads His people in triumph.
- B. God’s Glorious Power Marches Out For His people (12-15)
  - 1. God defeats all the nations (12)
    - a. God treaded down nations as Israel took the land
    - b. Threshed is also the word for trampled – God was marching with his people
  - 2. God crushes the wicked for his people’s salvation (13) – WHY HE IS COMING
    - a. all God’s Works were for the redemption and good of his people
    - b. All God’s works were to judge the wicked to deliver his people
      - i. This is why the divine warrior comes forth
    - c. God could have stayed put, letting it all happen and doing nothing about it. That had been Habakkuk’s original fear and the substance of his urgent cry to God. Now he knew better. As God had dealt with a succession of enemies, from Pharaoh onwards, so he would deal with the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar.
  - 3. God defends His afflicted people (14-15)
    - a. You pierced him with his own arrows – retributive justice like taunt song
      - i. This had specifically happened at one point in the past, when Jehoshaphat was king in Jerusalem. The Moabites and the Ammonites, as well as the inhabitants of Mount Seir, attacked the city in overwhelming numbers. Jehoshaphat’s response was to lead his people in praise and worship: ‘And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, and they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them utterly, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another’ (2 Ch. 20:20–23).
    - b. You tread upon the waters – READ PSALM 77:15-20

Prayer and a Psalm – to be sung as an encouragement

- God is same yesterday today and forever
- God has acted for His people – and will do so again
- God still acting for His church – momentary affliction cannot keep us from living by faith because God is faithful always.