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Habakkuk 3.

(2014)

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Habakkuk 3.

Topics.

- The prayer of the prophet Habakkuk.
- The eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low.
- The LORD marched through earth in fury; and threshed nations in anger.
- With his own arrows the LORD destroyed all who came to scatter Israel.
- Habakkuk waits for the day of trouble to come on people who invade Israel.
- God is my strength; he makes me tread on my high places.
- The commonwealth of Israel.

INTRODUCTION: Habakkuk was probably written about 640–615 B.C., just before the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon. God used Assyria to punish Israel (722); now he would use Babylon to punish Judah. This prophecy would be fulfilled several decades after Habakkuk, in 586. The “theme question” of Habakkuk is how can God use a wicked nation such as Babylon for his divine purpose?

God judges all nations, said Habakkuk, and even Babylon would eventually be judged (Babylon fell to Persia in 539). But God’s people are held to a higher standard because they have greater revelation. Though God’s ways are sometimes mysterious, “the righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4) while awaiting salvation. These words are quoted three times in the New Testament. (Rom. 1:17) (Gal. 3:11) (Heb. 10:38).

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

The Prayer of the Prophet Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 3:1-2 ----- ¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. ²O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

In the visions of the previous two chapters the LORD has revealed to Habakkuk that He is about to use Babylon (the Chaldeans) as His servant to bring judgment upon the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem because of their rebellion and gross wickedness. Habakkuk having now taken account of everything the LORD has said in the visions of the previous two chapters is in a state of fear and trembling so in prayer he asks God to have mercy when He revives the vision and brings it to pass in the near future and to show mercy when He is accomplishing His judgment in wrath and punishing Judah for their rebellion and gross wickedness.

Sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem: following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. The following sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God’s Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land.

They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel.

Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land.

Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

God uses Secular Nations.

The LORD uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. He used Assyria to bring judgment on Israel (the ten tribes) in the land of Samaria and Babylon (the Chaldeans) to bring judgment on Judah (the two tribes) at Jerusalem. Many times God through the prophets warned Judah and Israel of their impending doom but they would not listen.

The vision of Habakkuk was revived after his death: Assyria had already invaded the land of Samaria and taken Israel captive, later Babylon (the Chaldeans) armies surrounded Jerusalem and after a bitter siege of a year and a half the city fell to Nebuchadnezzar and was destroyed. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken there with him (587 B.C.).

The Eternal Mountains were Scattered; the Everlasting Hills Sank Low.

Habakkuk 3:4-6 ----- ³God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. *Selah.* ⁴His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. ⁵Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. ⁶He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

Teman: was a grandson of Esau through Eliphaz and an Edomite city in the north eastern part of Edom, noted at one time for the wisdom of its people.

Paran: Paran Mount is a poetic name for Mount Sinai, the Ishmaelites settled in the desert or wilderness area of Paran, it is located in the central region of Sinai.

Mount Sinai: the Sinai Mountain is near the centre of the Sinai Desert which lay to the south of the wilderness of Paran. It was on this mountain that God met and talked with Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments.

- **God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran:** (v3) refers to Mount Sinai which was in the wilderness of Paran.
- **His splendour covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise:** (v3) refers to God descending on Mount Sinai and giving Moses the Ten Commandments.
- **God's brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power:** (v4) refers to God covering His glory from Moses.

- **Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels:** (v5) refers to the ten plagues of Egypt.
- **He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered, the everlasting hills sank low:** (v6) refers to Judah and Israel being judged and punished by Babylon.
- **Eternal mountains were scattered:** refers to Judah and Israel being scattered throughout the surrounding nations when Israel was invaded by Assyria and Judah was invaded by Babylon (the Chaldeans).

The LORD marched through Earth in Fury; and threshed Nations in Anger.

Habakkuk 3:7-12 ----- ⁷I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. ⁸Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? ⁹You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. *Selah* You split the earth with rivers. ¹⁰The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. ¹¹The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. ¹²You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.

Cushan: probably a region near Midian at the top of the Red Sea on the east side in Arabia below Edom.

Midian: was a son of Abraham by Keturah. In Genesis a caravan of traders is called "Ishmaelites," then "Midianites" the former referring to their descent from Ishmael and the later to their abode in the land of Midian. His descendants dwelt in a region near Edom which also included the southern and Eastern parts of the peninsula of Sinai in the wilderness of Paran.

The LORD is pictured as riding through the earth in fury on a horse and a chariot of salvation holding a glittering spear and a bow with many arrows, examining and judging the nations in such powerful anger that even the sun and moon stand still at the light of the LORD'S arrows and his glittering spear as they sped by. The arrows of the LORD in this vision refer to Assyria and Babylon. Assyria invaded and conquered the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and Babylon attacked the two tribes of Judah and burnt their homes in the city of Jerusalem and destroyed God's Temple.

With his Own Arrows the LORD destroyed all who came to Scatter Israel.

Habakkuk 3:13-14 ---- ¹³You went out for the salvation of your people (Judah and Israel) for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. *Selah* ¹⁴You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me (Judah and Israel), rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.

The head of the house of the wicked: was Babylon (the Chaldeans).

The LORD'S own arrows: refer to Cyrus the king of Media Persia this is because God used Cyrus to set His people Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon (the Chaldeans). The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and also called him by name they also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations. God not only favoured Cyrus and gave him a great victory over the Empire of Babylon and all nations aligned with Babylon, but also used him as His anointed shepherd to give written permission that allowed Israel to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God.

- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).

- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name.* ⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, *I call you by your name, I name you,* though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* ⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you,* and there is no other, no god besides him.' (Isaiah 45:14).

At this time Isaiah is speaking to Israel who is held captive in Babylon. God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after Conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God. But, Isaiah's message transcends the era of Isaiah and Cyrus and echoes a future King who the LORD also calls His anointed shepherd, and his name is not Cyrus, but the Lord Jesus Christ, in who God is also building a Temple made up of Jews and Gentiles (also called a new nation or new creation in Christ). For further information concerning the spiritual temple God is building in Christ at this present time, see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel" (at end of this Chapter).

Habakkuk waits for the Day of Trouble to Come on People who Invade Israel.

Habakkuk 3:15-16 ---- ¹⁵You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. ¹⁶I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

The people who invade us: refers to Babylon invading Jerusalem.

Habakkuk comes to the end of his vision, and is overwhelmed and in absolute fear at the enormous and widespread devastation and ruin that he has seen coming in his vision, nevertheless he says he will quietly wait for the destruction that will come upon the nations who burnt Israel's houses in the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple of God and slaughtered the people of Israel.

The vision fulfilled: this foreboding vision of Habakkuk was fulfilled through Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his fierce and cruel armies and then through Cyrus king of Persia. Israel set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the enormous and widespread devastation and ruin Habakkuk saw in his vision upon them.

The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd and took by His right hand to conquer the Empire of Babylon (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

God is my Strength; He makes Me Tread on My High Places.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 ---- ¹⁷Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

This is a fanatic prayer and shines a brilliant spotlight upon the great faith Habakkuk had before God. He has just been given a vision that clearly shows him the cruel and fierce armies of Babylon are about to invade the city of Jerusalem and lay it waste and he prays this prayer that is great faith. In some circles today God is presented as a type of Santa-Claus God who only brings good upon His people, but this is not type of faith the faithful men and women had in the Old Testament or the type of faith the apostles teach. In fact the apostle Peter wrote: -

- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:3-7).

Certainly all who belong to the global body of Christ will be abundantly blessed when the Lord returns in glory, but while we live in this mortal and corrupt world with sin running rampant there is no promise that we will be kept from suffering, troubles and sorrow. In fact Paul wrote: -

- The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹²if we endure (suffer in KJV), we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us. (2 Tim. 2:11-12)

The word endure ((suffer in KJV) comes from the Greek word (hupomeno) and carries the idea of patiently undergoing and bearing trials, to have fortitude and perseverance while enduring suffering. This is the type of faith Habakkuk had, after God had revealed to him that devastation, destruction and ruin was approaching it

did not dent his faith in the LORD in anyway, God remained his Sovereign Awesome Almighty God who will always be praised, exalted and honored no matter whether the circumstance surrounding his life were good or bad. There is no doubt Habakkuks faith will be found to be more precious than gold that perishes and that he will be accepted by the Lord with great honour.

The Commonwealth of Israel.

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ.

This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) this means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called, a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said: -

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

The Glory of the Spiritual Temple God is Building in Christ.

Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity.

When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building.

Peter wrote: -

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when: -

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

End.