

4. What two concepts did the Jews find hard to grasp? (As stated by Dr. Maurice Harris)
5. Show how Nahum's question to Nineveh (*Nahum* 3:8) could be asked here of Judah.
6. What do you understand is the Biblical doctrine of "election?"
7. How does dispensationalism pervert the doctrine of election?
8. What word more accurately states the idea of election?
9. What is implied by Habakkuk's use of the term "O Rock" in reference to Jehovah?
10. What two falacies combine to confuse Habakkuk in reference to God's purity and Babylon's impurity?
11. Describe the activity of the Babylonians toward neighboring nations.
12. In a sentence, what is Jehovah's answer to Habakkuk's second question?
13. List the five woes with which God gives His answer.
14. Show how these woes describe eternal principles in God's dealing with nations in history.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PROPHET'S POETIC PRAYER

VISION OF GOD IN JUDGEMENT . . . Habakkuk 3:1-15

RV . . . A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth. O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid: O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years; In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; He had rays coming forth from his hand; And there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence. And fiery bolts went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; And the eternal mountains were scattered; The everlasting hills did bow; His goings were as of old. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was Jehovah displeased with the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers, Or thy wrath against the sea, That thou didst ride upon thy horses, Upon thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite bare; The oaths to the tribes were a sure word. Thou didst

cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and were afraid; The tempest of waters passed by; The deep uttered its voice, And lifted up its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation. At the light of thine arrows as they went, At the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation; Thou didst thresh the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, For the salvation of thine anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked man, Laying bare the foundation even unto the neck. Thou didst pierce with his own staves the head of his warriors: They came as a whirlwind to scatter me; Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst tread the sea with thy horses, The heap of mighty waters.

LXX . . . A PRAYER OF THE PROPHET AMBACUM, WITH A SONG. O Lord, I have heard thy report, and was afraid; I considered thy works, and was amazed: thou shalt be known between the two living creatures, thou shalt be acknowledged when the years draw nigh; thou shalt be manifested when the time is come; when my soul is troubled, thou wilt in wrath remember mercy. God shall come from Thaeman, and the Holy One from the dark shady mount Pharan. His excellence covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness shall be as light; there were horns in his hands, and he caused a mighty love of his strength. Before his face shall go a report, and it shall go forth into the plains, the earth stood at his feet and trembled: he beheld, and the nations melted away: the mountains were violently burst through, the everlasting hills melted at his everlasting going forth. Because of troubles I looked upon the tents of the Ethiopians: the tabernacles also of the land of Madiam shall be dismayed. Wast thou angry, O Lord, with the rivers? or was thy wrath against the rivers, or thine anger against the sea? for thou wilt mount on thine horses, and thy chariots are salvation. Surely thou didst bend thy bow at sceptres, saith the Lord, The land of rivers shall be torn asunder. The nations shall see thee and be in pain, as thou dost divide the moving waters: and deep uttered her voice, and raised her form on high. The sun was exalted, and the moon stood still in her course: thy darts shall go forth at the light, at the brightness of the gleaming of thine arms. Thou wilt bring low the land with threatening, and in wrath thou wilt break down the nations. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, to save thine anointed: thou shalt bring death on the heads of transgressors; thou hast brought bands upon their neck. Thou didst cut asunder the heads of princes with amazement, they shall

tremble in it; they shall burst their bridles, they shall be as a poor man devouring in secret. And thou dost cause thine horses to enter the sea, disturbing much water.

COMMENTS

Having been answered in no uncertain terms by God Himself, Habakkuk bows in prayer. There are no further questions, only the recognition of God's sovereign authority over nations and peoples and a hymn of faith.

The prayer of recognition comprises verses 1-15 of chapter three. The hymn of faith comprises the remainder of the book. This chapter will become well used by the Jews in intercession and meditation during the years of Babylonian captivity.

(Verse 1-2) Habakkuk owns the receipt of God's answer to his questions and the impression made upon him by the answers. He confirms having heard Jehovah's speech. (*v. 2*)

In 2:1 he had set himself to see how God would answer his unanswerable logic. Now he knows. He is struck with consternation by Jehovah's response. His concern now turns to Judah during the impending captivity. He is concerned lest they be utterly rooted out from being kept so long. He prays that, as God has manifest Himself in this vision, so He will strengthen the people "in the midst of the years."

The prophet prays earnestly that *for the elects'* sake these days of trouble may be shortened or the trouble of those days mitigated and the people supported and comforted.

Interestingly, this intercessory prayer is couched in terms of concern for "thine own work" rather than in the terms of national pride as was used in challenging God with the second question. (1:12-ff) Apparently Habakkuk has become convinced that the people were for God's sake rather than their own.

Rather than praying for national or racial glory, he now entreats God to act for His own honor and praise.

Even those who are under God's wrath must not despair of His mercy! The prophet has learned the ultimate lesson. Men must *trust* God rather than instructing Him.

(Verse 3-15) It has been the usual practice of God's people, when in distress and ready to fall in despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, (cp. *Psalm 77:5*) and pleading

them with God in prayer, as He seems sometimes to plead with Himself. (cp. *Isaiah* 63:11)

So the prophet here looks back to God's first forming of His people, when He brought them miraculously out of Egypt into Canaan, which was then possessed by mighty nations. These words and wonders done in time past are magnificently described here to encourage greater faith on the part of the people during captivity.

1. God appeared in His glory, as never before nor since (v. 3,4). The visible display on Mount Sinai (*Deuteronomy* 33:2) is meant. Then "the Lord came down . . ." in a cloud (*Exodus* 19:20). He appeared as a devouring fire. His glory covered the heavens which glowed with the reflection of His appearance. "The earth was full of His praise" (or splendor) as people at a distance saw the cloud and fire on Mount Sinai and marvelled at Israel's God.

His brightness outshone the sun. Even Moses' face glowed when he came down from the Mount. The rays shone not directly from the face of God but around the side of His hand as He hid His face. There was a hiding of His power.

2. The prophet's prayer turns (v. 5) to the plagues by which God had delivered the people from Pharaoh. The pestilence which slew the first-born, the burning coals when the plague of hail mingled with fire, the diseases which blasted Egypt . . . these were "at His feet" . . . at His coming . . . at His command.

3. He divided Canaan to His people Israel, and expelled the nations before them. (v. 6) (cp. *Deuteronomy* 32:8-9) He exerted such power that the nations which stood in Israel's way crumbled and fell as the walls of Jericho. The mountain shook, even Sinai. (*Psalms* 68:7-8)

And "His ways are everlasting." He has lost none of His terrible power. All the nations still rise and fall at His command. (Habakkuk has learned his lesson well.)

Jehovah's covenants are unchangeable, despite outward appearances. His mercy endures forever.

All the inhabitants of the neighboring nations are called to note the lesson the prophet has learned. Cushan and the Midianites are especially to take warning.

In the days of Othniel, God delivered Cushan into his hand. (*Judges* 3:8) In the days of Gideon, a barley cake, in a dream, overthrew the tent of Midian. (*Judges* 7:18) Habakkuk sees in these historic events the same principles Jehovah has set forth in the five woes.

4. He divided the Red Sea and the Jordan when they stood between Israel and God's purpose in the people. (v. 8) One might have thought God was displeased with the rivers and that His wrath was against the sea, had one been unaware of God's purpose in this activity.

As a general at the head of an army, so God rode at the head of Israel in His chariots of salvation. Habakkuk returns to this in v. 15. When they came to enter Canaan, the Jordan, which at that time of year overflows its banks, was divided. (*Joshua 3:15*) When the difficulties in the way of Israel's salvation seem insuperable as an overflowing river, then God in His might breaks them as He divided the waters.

"The deep uttered his voice" (v. 10), *ie.* the Red Sea and the Jordan were divided, the waters roared and made noise as though sensible to Jehovah's restraint. "They lifted up their hands (or sides) on high," for the waters "stood upon a heap." (*Joshua 3:16*) The Lord was mightier than they. (*Psalms 90:3-4*)

With the dividing of the Jordan and the sea, notice is again given to the "trembling of the mountain" as if the stopping of the waters gave a shock to the adjacent hills. (*Psalms 114:3-4*) The whole creation is yielded to God.

5. He arrested the sun and the moon to bring about Israel's victories (v. 11). (Cp. *Joshua 10:12-ff*) Attempts have been made by defenders of the Bible to explain this phenomena on scientific terms. Some such attempts have smacked of dishonesty. We will do better to take God at His word in such matters. Once we have accepted the principle of direct divine intervention in human history, such "miracles" are no problem.

6. He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan. (*Psalms 136:17-18*) This is largely insisted upon here as a proper plea with God to enforce the present petition, that He will restore them again to the land of which they were put in possession at the cost of so many lives and miracles.

Many expressions are used here to describe the conquest of Canaan. God's bow was made naked, *ie.* drawn from its case. He marched through the land in indignation, as scorning to let the Canaanites any longer possess it. He threshed through the nations, despising their confederacies. He wounded the head . . . of the house of wicked men, *ie.* he destroyed the families of the Canaanites.

Some question how a loving God could do what He did to the Canaanites. God answered that question to Habakkuk's satisfaction in chapters one and two.

In giving Israel so many bloody victories, God made good His promises to their fathers. (v. 9) The promises were made for the sake of the entire world (as we have seen).

HYMN OF FAITH . . . Habakkuk 3:16-19

RV . . . I heard, and my body trembled, My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entereth into my bones, and I tremble in my place; Because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble. For the coming up of the people that invadeth us. For though the fig-tree shall not flourish, Neither shall fruit be in the vines; The labor of the olive shall fail, And the fields shall yield no food; The flock shall be cut off from the fold, And there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, And will make me to walk upon my high places.

LXX . . . I watched, and my belly trembled at the sound of the prayer of my lips, and trembling entered into my bones, and my frame was troubled within me; I will rest in the day of affliction, from going up to the people of my sojourning. For though the fig-tree shall bear no fruit, and there shall be no produce on the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall produce no food: the sheep have failed from the pasture, and there are no oxen at the cribs; yet I will exult in the Lord, I will joy in God my Saviour. The Lord God is my strength, and he will perfectly strengthen my feet; he mounts me upon high places, that I may conquer by his song.

COMMENTS

Within these few lines, we have the prophet in the highest degree of trembling and triumphing. In this world, God's people experience both. In heaven there is only triumph.

1. When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to lay up something in store for that day. The best way to so prepare is to tremble within ourselves at the Word of God.

Habakkuk's fear was that when the Chaldean came to lead off the people, he will break them up as Assyria broke up the northern kingdom. Should this happen, God's people would be no more and God's covenant would go unfulfilled. The fig-tree (v. 17) would not flourish, the vine would bear no fruit, the flock would be cut off and no herd would be in the stalls. Apart from His covenant people, God's purpose would not be realized.

Of course, the truth of this concern is seen historically in that God did not allow it to happen. The captives of Babylon were not scattered. Their children returned to rebuild God's temple.

2. The prophet had looked back on the experiences of the people in former ages, and had recalled great things God had done for them. From his trembling, he recovered himself. His fright gave way to faith and he was overwhelmed with holy joy. Despite the calamities he foresaw in the vision God granted him, he saw beyond it to the day of restoration.

It was the joy of faith. A century of suffering lay between the vision and the return of the remnant. Other centuries lay beyond before the coming of Him Who is the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose in Israel.

Habakkuk closes on a note of optimism only possible to one who has finally learned to take God at His word despite outward appearances.

Chapter XVIII—*Questions*

The Prophet's Poetic Prayer

1. Habakkuk's final chapter is a poetic prayer. Its two sections are _____ and _____.
2. How does God's answer to his second question strike Habakkuk?
3. With what is the prophet primarily concerned in the first section of his prayer?
4. Why does the prophet recall the past events of God's people?
5. List the past events alluded to here.
6. How can a loving God do what Jehovah did to the Canaanites in their overthrow by Israel?
7. The second section of Habakkuk's prayer . . . the Hymn of Faith, shows the prophet progressing from _____ to _____.
8. What is the best way to prepare for a day of adversity?
9. In remembering God's past dealing with Israel, Habakkuk's fright gave way to _____.
10. How do you account for the optimism with which Habakkuk closes?