

Session 2 The Forerunner Message in Habakkuk 3

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Habakkuk 3

- 3:1** Introduction
3:2 Prayer for God to renew His work of salvation
3:3-7 The Lord is coming in glory and power
3:8-15 The Lord is coming to fight His enemies
3:16-19 Habakkuk's response of faith (3:16-19)

- B. Habakkuk 3 is God's answer to Habakkuk's questions asked in Habakkuk 1. He asked why God allows wicked nations to go unpunished (1:2-4; 13). Habakkuk was surprised by the answers that the Lord gave him (1:5; 3:16), yet responded in faith, rejoicing in His leadership (3:17-19).

II. THE CONTEXT OF HABAKKUK 3: HIS PRAYER AND PROPHECY

- A. Habakkuk complained to God for allowing Judah to continue in such great sin without intervening (1:2-3). The Lord explained that He planned to discipline Judah using Babylon (1:6, 12) which included treating Judah with violence and taking them into captivity in 586 BC (1:9). Habakkuk complained again, asking why He chose a nation more wicked than Judah as His instrument (1:13).

²O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear?...³Why do You...cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence [in Judah] are before me...⁴justice never goes forth [in Judah]...⁵“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...⁶I am raising up the Chaldeans [Babylon] ...They are terrible and dreadful...⁹They all come for violence...they gather captives like sand.”¹²You have appointed them [Babylon] for judgment [of Judah]... for correction [of Judah].¹³You are of purer eyes...and cannot look on wickedness. Why do You...hold Your tongue when the wicked [Babylon] devours a person more righteous than he [Judah]? (Hab. 1:2-13)

- B. Habakkuk set his heart to understand God's reason for using a wicked nation like Babylon as His instrument to discipline His people (2:1). The Lord gave Habakkuk a vision of God intervening to judge wickedness (in Judah and Babylon) and giving insight into His long-term plans that “at the end will speak” (2:3)—including the discipline (1:12) and full restoration of Israel (2:14), and judgment on Babylon (2:5-19) which was a prophetic picture of judgment of the Antichrist (3:3-15). He determined to trust God's leadership (2:4) and to rejoice in God in the crisis (3:18).

¹I will stand my watch...to see what He will say...and what I will answer when I am corrected.²The Lord...said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.³For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak [it speaks of the end; NIV] ...though it tarries, wait for it...it will surely come...⁴The just shall live by his faith...¹⁴For the earth will be filled with...the glory of the Lord...¹⁶The cup of the Lord's right hand will be turned against you [Babylon]...²⁰But the LORD is in His holy temple [in control]. Let all the earth keep silence before Him [as He intervenes].” (Hab. 2:1-20)

- C. The main exhortation of the book is to trust the Lord’s leadership in times of crisis (2:4; 3:17-19). The Lord’s work will result in salvation for His people and the destruction of His enemies (3:3-15). This message was written on tablets for the people “at the end” (2:2) who will face great pressures.
- D. **Premise:** The Lord’s ways are everlasting (3:6). He will use the same pattern for salvation and judgment in the end times that He used in delivering His people from Egypt and Babylon.
- E. Habakkuk highlights God’s final deliverance of Israel, paralleling it with what He did in the past. He saw the Lord’s deliverance in the days of Moses as His pattern for judging Babylon and ultimately the Antichrist. A partial fulfillment of God’s judgment depicted in this passage occurred when Babylon devastated Jerusalem in 586 BC and then was defeated by the Persians in 539 BC.

III. THE “MOSES STORY” ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

- A. Habakkuk drew on God’s plan in Exodus to point to His plan and power in defeating the Antichrist.
- B. Jesus will show Himself as the “*greater Moses*” as He defeats the Antichrist (“end time Pharaoh”) and leads Israel out of captivity; as the “*greater Joshua*” when He leads the dispersed children of Israel to the promised land; as the “*greater David*” when He drives the enemy out of Jerusalem and establishes His throne there; as the “*greater Elijah*” when He destroys the False Prophet (and the end-time false prophets of Baal) and cleanses Israel of idolatry. Each of these men provided a glimpse into the greater One who will accomplish things that they did, but on a much greater scale.

¹⁴“...the days are coming...that it shall no more be said, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ¹⁵but, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’”
(Jer. 16:14-15)

- C. Habakkuk 3 describes aspects of Jesus’ second-coming procession both in the sky and on land as He executes judgment upon the Antichrist’s empire. A prophetic foreshadowing of this occurred when the Lord marched with Israel to the promised land, destroying nations that opposed them.
- D. The trumpet and bowl judgments (Rev. 8-9; 16) parallel the ten plagues released against Egypt.
²I saw...those who have the victory over the beast [the Antichrist]... standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³They sing the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb... (Rev. 15:2-3)
- E. **Jesus’ second coming:** Jesus’ royal procession into Israel and Jerusalem with His people will be far more glorious than the journey of God’s people to the land of Israel under Moses and Joshua.
²⁴They have seen Your procession, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary ...³²Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth...³³To Him who rides on the heaven... (Ps. 68:24-33)
 1. Stage #1: Jesus’ procession **across the sky**: to rapture the Church (Mt. 24:30-31; Rev. 1:7)
 2. Stage #2: Jesus’ procession **on the land**: traveling through Jordan to Jerusalem (Isa. 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3-15)
 3. Stage #3: Jesus’ procession **into Jerusalem**: to the Mount of Olives and then His coronation (Ps. 24:7; Zech. 14:3)

IV. INTRODUCTION (HAB. 3:1)

A. With confidence that the Lord is in His holy temple (2:20), Habakkuk prays for God’s salvation.
¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth. (Hab. 3:1)

B. *Shigionoth*: This was a musical directive, but its precise meaning is debated.

V. PRAYER FOR GOD TO RENEW HIS WORK OF SALVATION (HAB. 3:2)

A. Habakkuk asked the Lord to “revive His work”—that He revealed in chapter 1-2—to release His glory across the earth (2:14; also in Jerusalem) and to judge Babylon, Israel’s great enemy (2:16).
²O LORD, I have heard Your speech [report, NAS, ESV] and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work ...In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3:2)

² LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear... (Hab. 3:2; NAS)

B. *The report*: His prayer resulted from the report that he received that the Lord would use Babylon to discipline Judah (including captivity; 1:6, 9, 12) and later destroy Babylon (2:16).

C. *Afraid*: Habakkuk trembled (3:16) when he was informed that Judah would be taken captive (2:9). Some translate “was afraid” as “*I stand in awe of Your deeds*” (NIV), indicating that Habakkuk was also filled with awe at seeing the great power that God will display in saving His people (3:3-15).

D. *Revive Your work*: This includes God reviving His work that purifies and brings His people to the fullness of His purposes and judges their enemies by manifesting power like He did through Moses.

E. *In the midst of the years*: the years between Judah’s season of divine discipline and her restoration when her great enemy Babylon was removed by the release of God’s judgment on her (2:6-19).

F. *Remember mercy*: He prayed for mercy in the challenging years that were coming to purify Judah.

VI. THE LORD IS COMING IN GLORY AND POWER (HAB. 3:3-7)

A. In response to his prayer in 3:2, the Lord gave him details (3:3-15) about the vision he received in 2:3. He sees the awesome glory associated with the Lord “coming” to earth to bring deliverance and salvation to His people in the end times. Habakkuk 3:3-15 gives more geographic detail than any other theophany in Old Testament. A theophany is an appearance of God in great glory.

³God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. ⁴His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden. ⁵Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet. ⁶He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. The everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting. ⁷I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian trembled. (Hab. 3:3-7)

- B. The verb tenses present a challenge to commentators. Are the events in this passage future, present, or past? Verb tenses in Hebrew do not always give clarity about the past, present, or future. Most of the verbs in this passage are in the perfect tense. The NKJV, RSV, NAS, ESV, NIV, and many others translate the verbs in the past tense. Thus, there is debate among commentators about whether Habakkuk was referring to the Lord's actions in past with Moses or in the future at the time of Jesus' return. I believe that he spoke about both time frames. What the Lord did through Moses in Egypt was a prophetic token of what Jesus will do on a global scale when He returns.
- C. ***Teman and Mount Paran*** (3:3): The Lord will come from Teman and Paran. Teman designates the desert area in Edom (Jordan). Mount Paran was near Teman. Both areas were near the southeastern border of Israel. The ancient city of Bozrah was possibly 10-20 miles from Teman. Rather than coming directly from heaven, Habakkuk described the Lord as coming to Jerusalem from these areas in modern Jordan. God was said to have come from Teman in Moses' day (Deut. 33:2-3; Jud. 5:4-5; Ps. 68:7-8).
- D. ***His brightness was like the light*** (3:4): The majesty of Jesus will be seen in the sky by every eye. Beams of radiant glory and power will flash from His hands as rays of light or like lightning bolts. ***Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)***
- E. ***There His power was hidden*** (3:4): The fullness Jesus' glory must be hidden because of the limited capacity of human beings, even as we cannot look directly into brightness of the sun.
- F. ***Before Him went pestilence*** (3:5): As Jesus moves towards Jerusalem, He will release pestilence before Him to destroy His enemies, and deadly fever will follow Him. In the fifth trumpet, Jesus will release demonic locusts that will sting people for five months (Rev. 9:10), and He will release loathsome sores on those who took the mark of the Beast in the first bowl judgment (Rev. 16:2). There is no biblical record of plagues or fevers going before or after the Lord when He brought Israel to enter Canaan in the days of Moses nor when Babylon was conquered in 538 BC. ***Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet (Hab. 3:5)***
- G. ***He stood and measured the earth***: He will "measure" the earth. This includes evaluating each nation for judgment (Mt. 25:32) and partitioning or distributing the land as Joshua did in Israel. ***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. (Hab. 3:5-6)***
- H. ***The everlasting mountains were scattered***: Jesus will release great earthquakes as part of His arsenal against the Antichrist's empire (Rev. 16:18-20; cf. Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; 13:13; 29:6; Ezek. 38:19; Hag. 2:6, 21; Zech. 14:4-5; Lk. 21:11; Heb. 12:26-27; Rev. 6:12-14; 11:13, 19; 16:18-20).
- I. ***His ways are everlasting***: What God did in the past often indicates what He will do in the future.
- J. ***Cushan and Midian***: Both were nomadic tribes living in the Sinai Peninsula who oppressed Israel. They will tremble in seeing Jesus' great power. Midian lay east of the Gulf of Aqaba. Most see Cushan as Ethiopia. Both people highlight the Lord's journey to Jerusalem from the south. ***I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction [and]...the land of Midian trembled. (Hab. 3:7)***

VII. THE LORD IS COMING TO FIGHT HIS ENEMIES (HAB. 3:8-15)

- A. As the Lord struck the Red Sea and Jordan River in leading His people to possess the land, so again will He display His great power over the sea and rivers. The book of Revelation elaborates on this.
**⁸O LORD, were You displeased with the rivers...was Your wrath against the sea...? ⁹Your bow was made quite ready; oaths were sworn over Your arrows....You divided the earth with rivers.
¹⁰The mountains saw You and trembled...¹¹The sun and moon stood still... (Hab. 3:8-11)**
- B. ***Displeased with the rivers*** (3:8): He will again turn the rivers into blood as He did in Egypt; He will dry up the Euphrates (Rev. 16:12). The third bowl will cause rivers to be as blood. (Rev. 16:4).
- C. ***Wrath against the sea*** (3:8): The second bowl will cause the sea to become like blood (Rev. 16:3).
- D. ***Divided the earth*** (3:9): Jesus will use earthquakes and floods as part of His military arsenal.
- E. ***The mountains saw You and trembled*** (3:10): Creation will shake at Jesus' majestic presence.
- F. ***Sun and moon*** (3:11): There will dramatic cosmic signs in the heavens at the end of the age.
- G. Jesus will march through the land of Teman and Edom on His way to Jerusalem (3:12-13).
¹²You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger... (Hab. 3:12)
- H. Isaiah saw a glorious warrior traveling to Jerusalem (63:1). Jesus will come as a man of war to destroy the armies of the Antichrist surrounding Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2). Isaiah saw Him traveling from Bozrah (in modern-day Jordan) to Jerusalem— there are 70 miles between the two cities.
¹Who is this who comes from Edom [modern-day Jordan], with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? (Isa. 63:1)
- Traveling in the greatness of His strength***: I believe that Jesus will release the seven bowl judgments (Rev. 16) after He raptures the Church at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-18). I see this as occurring during the 43rd month that Daniel saw, that is, the 30 days which extend beyond the familiar 3½ years, referred to as 42 months or 1260 days (Dan. 12:11).
 - Jesus will be seen over His people (Zech. 9:14) and will trample Moab (Jordan; Isa. 25:10)
**¹⁴The LORD will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet and go with whirlwinds from the south [Teman]. (Zech. 9:14)
¹⁰...Moab [on Edom's northern border] shall be trampled down under Him... (Isa. 25:10)
³Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One [Jesus at Armageddon]...⁴And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness... (Ps. 45:3-4)**
 - Israel's journey with God through the desert is a pattern that is repeated when Jesus returns (Ps. 68:7). The Lord marched from Sinai through Edom in the days of Moses (Judg. 5:4).
O God, when You went out before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness. (Ps. 68:7)
⁴LORD...when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth trembled... (Judg. 5:4)

VIII. HABAKKUK'S RESPONSE OF FAITH ((HAB. 3:16-19))

- A. Habakkuk's response to this vision is one of the greatest expressions of faith in the Bible.
¹⁶When 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...¹⁷Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines...and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off...¹⁸Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Hab. 3:16-18)
- B. *When I heard:* After Habakkuk saw the vision (2:2-3) and heard the report (3:2), he was speechless, being totally overwhelmed yet acknowledging that the Lord's leadership was right (2:4; 3:18).
³The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak [it speaks of the end; NIV] ...though it tarries, wait...it will surely come...⁴The just shall live by his faith... (Hab. 2:3-4)
²O LORD, I have heard your speech [report] and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work...in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3:2)
- C. *My body trembled* (3:16): Habakkuk trembled as he waited for the day of trouble when Babylon would attack Jerusalem; he would wait longer for God to destroy Babylon and restore Jerusalem.
- D. *That I might rest in the day of trouble:* Habakkuk shifted from complaining, "How long?" (1:2), to "I will rest," while waiting for the fulfillment of the vision (2:3)
1. Habakkuk's fear and awe were both undergirded with strong faith (2:4; 3:18). He was initially afraid (3:2) when he heard about the "work of God" in disciplining His people (1:12) and yet also awestruck in seeing the extent to which God committed to display His power openly against His and Israel's enemies (3:3-15).
 2. As he waited for the promised victory, he rejoiced in God without seeing any visible signs of His promises. Faith includes loving and serving the Lord with confidence regardless of how difficult the circumstances are.
 3. Habakkuk found a resting place in place of crisis—his relationship with the Lord and his new-found faith that trusted the Lord's leadership regardless what happened (3:18).
- E. Habakkuk focused on the Lord's goodness, promises, plans, and power.
- F. Habakkuk pictured the worst possible circumstances that included the lack of the essentials of life in the nation of Judah and in its capital city, Jerusalem. These conditions occurred—most probably in his life time—when Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem (Lam. 2:12, 20; 4:4, 9-10; 5:17-18).
¹⁷Though the fig tree may not blossom...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—¹⁸Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.¹⁹The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills. (Hab. 3:16-19)