

## **HABAKKUK CHAPTER 3(b)/12.19.21**

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4).**

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime — In the Old Testament; were written for our learning — As if he had said, Though this may seem to concern David or Christ only, yet it, and all other parts of Scripture, whether containing promises or threatenings, whether speaking of rewards or punishments, were intended to be useful to God's people in after ages; and by this passage in particular, we may learn to bear with the infirmities of others, a matter of great importance in religion; nay, of absolute necessity, considering that we ourselves, and all around us, not excepting the wisest and holiest Christians, are compassed about with infirmity. (Benson)*

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**7I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.**

Let me again gently remind you that the primary focus of this third chapter is Habakkuk taking solace in contemplations of God Almighty, which I might add, is a wonderful source of consolation.

This verse refers to various historical incidents of nations or peoples being afflicted by tyranny that were ultimately subdued by Jehovah's intervention. The exact historical references are in dispute, some may have occurred prior to

Habakkuk's time, some may have occurred thereafter making this language prophetic, but the point is these are examples of God's intimate involvement in overthrowing human governmental oppression.

The practical application is this: *God's people, when in distress, and ready to despair, seek help by considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and by pleading them with God in prayer.* (Matthew Henry).

Some scriptural samples of this lesson include Judges 3:9 where it says that when the **children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them**[.] When the Lord of Hosts provides deliverance, it's a done deal. We have numerous instances of that truism in this church. And this: **And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?** (Judges 6:13, 14).

**<sup>s</sup> Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?**

This is an obvious allusion to Israel's miraculous passages through the Red Sea and the Jordan. *Can it be imagined, that when God caused the Red sea to be dry in the midst of it, and the waters of the river Jordan to stop, it was done out of displeasure against the waters? Surely not.* (Benson) These are rhetorical questions, that is to say, questions asked in order to produce an effect or to make a statement, rather than to elicit information.

Obviously the Lord was not angry with the rivers and seas; but he used his power in those waters – represented by horses and chariots of salvation -- to display his singular care of, and regard for, his people. **The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.** (Psalm 93:4). (George Costanza; angry sea). God's purpose in these long ago events was the salvation of his elect, and so shall it be in times to come. So we read from verses 25 through 28 of Luke chapter 21: **And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.**

And more of these, what could be called “water-related miracles”, all of which are designed to benefit the Lord's people, are coming, such as described at Revelation 16:3-6: **And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers**

and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. (Did you notice that “angel of the waters?” There is apparently a particular angel assigned to overseeing all things related to the oceans and seas in the context of these coming judgments).

**9 Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.**

The reference to God’s bow, symbolizing his chastisements, has a companion in Psalm 21:12: **Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.** The notion here is that this potent bow has been pulled from its sheath, that storage case has been thrown aside, and the arrow of judgment is ready to fly. **And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horse men, and Kir uncovered the shield.** (Isaiah 22:6).

*The bow represents the threat of the vengeance of Almighty God, from which it is at length discharged, . . .; the longer the string is drawn, the sharper issueth the arrow. So then the more the coming of the day of judgment is delayed, the stricter is the severity of the judgment then issuing. So long as judgment is delayed, the bow seems laid up in its sheath. (Barnes)*

But this bow is ready for action. No longer will judgment be put off. The God of righteous judgment knows just when and how to act. **But God shall shoot at (the wicked) with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.** (Psalm 64:7).

This bow might also properly be looked upon as an emblem of the gospel, and the arrows of this bow the various pure doctrines of the gospel. So, we read in Revelation 6:2: **And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.**

The reference to oaths in this verse doubtless refers to the many promises and oaths made by God to his chosen people, frequently appearing throughout Scripture, crisply described by way of sample at Psalm 89:34, 35: **My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.**

Concerning this verse's mention of the cleaving of this earth with rivers, this refers historically to the rivers formed in the land of Canaan, whereby it became fertile, and consequently was described by Moses as a **land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills**[.] (Deuteronomy 8:7).

Metaphorically, these rivers of running water describe the efficacious grace and large abundance of blessings at God's hand to satisfy his children, especially in times of distress and difficulty. **When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.** (Isaiah 41:17).

**<sup>10</sup>The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.**

These mountains can be taken as an elegant hyperbole, expressing to us the glorious effects of God's power and presence. A scriptural sample of such is found at Exodus 19:18: **And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.**

Or, if you take that reference figuratively, these are kings and countries, whose symbols in Scripture are mountains.

Either approach is instructive and comforting. But, given that this verse tells us the mountains trembled, or were grieved, it would be wise to take this reference to mountains metaphorically – it was (and is) grief to kings and states to see God own, conduct and prosper his chosen people. **Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.** (Numbers 22:3). See, also, Joshua chapters 9-11, describing Joshua's campaign taking kings and cities, remembering that Joshua is a type of Christ: **And Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes.** (Joshua 11:23).

The mention of overflowing waters and the deep appears to be similar to verse 8 previously discussed; the deep channel in which the river Jordan flowed and the high walls alongside the Red Sea. Those miraculous deliveries deserve double mention by Habakkuk when describing the wonders of God!

**11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.**

It is most likely that Habakkuk here has in mind the events described at Joshua 10:12-13: **Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.**

It was to give the Israelites time for the destruction of their enemies, that God caused the sun and moon to stand still; and while these two heavenly bodies gave light for that work, the balance of this verse alludes to God casting down hail stones and lightnings from heaven to disorient the enemy. The Psalmist David spoke of these tools of divine judgment when he sang of the Lord's deliverance in his day: **The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.** (Psalm 18:13-14).

In a word: All of so-called "nature" worked for the benefit of the Lord's people and against their opponents.

Additionally, we can mystically draw from this verse the promises of God as to what lays a short ways down the road of our journey. One such promise, utilizing language similar to our text, is found at Isaiah 60:19-20: **The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.**

Before leaving this verse, one final poignant sentiment is expressed by Ellicott: *Apparently, the conception is that the surpassing brightness of the theophany (from Greek theophaneia, “appearance of God” to humankind) shames the heavenly bodies, which accordingly cease to pursue their journey.*

**12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.**

This marching imagery pictures for us Jehovah’s majestic and irresistible progress before, or in front of, his people. They follow that band leader. **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.** (John 10:27). Without this faithful and effective leader, God’s people would wander aimlessly and ultimately achieve nothing. This focused marching leader we read of here grabs hold of the reigns and takes his fold of sheep to eventual happiness and glory.

Part of that journey necessarily involves threshing – or breaking to pieces – the blood enemies of those followers. **The Lord is King forever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.** (Psalm 10:16). God Almighty does that, and Habakkuk here sings of those attributes of indignation and anger in this ongoing musical tribute to that God.

Remember, this is an ode! An “ode” is a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject, often elevated in style and manner and written in varied or irregular meter; a poem meant to be sung. The subject of this Ode is God. We take up the balance of this majestic piece of music next time.

**Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.** (3 John 14).

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“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and **kindreds**, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;” (Revelation 7:9)

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“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 6:15).

**“WE WELCOME ALL UNASHAMED”**

(SIGN SPOTTED 12.18.21 OUTSIDE LOCAL TOPEKA CHURCH)