

## THE WATCHMAN'S VISION: DIVINE ASSURANCE AND JUDGMENT (HABAKKUK 2:2-20)

See session 3

## THE WATCHMAN'S PROCLAMATION OF WOES: FORETELLING THE DOOM OF OPPRESSORS (HABAKKUK 2:5-20)

Interpreting verse 4 shapes the understanding of verses 5 to 20. If directed to the Chaldeans, the subsequent verses warn against their oppressive rule. If aimed at the Antichrist, they prophesy the downfall of oppressive powers in the end times. If generally directed, they serve as a timeless warning against the outcomes of pride and oppression. All interpretations provide unique insights: historical context, eschatological themes, and timeless wisdom. A well-rounded understanding considers all these views.

### VERSES 5-18 -

See session 4

### VERSES 19-20 — THE FIFTH WOE

Verses 19-20 critique idolatry, highlighting the absurdity of expecting guidance from a lifeless idol. This is applicable historically and prophetically, referencing Revelation 13:15's end times prophecy. Verse 20 contrasts this with the living God, emphasizing His majesty and authority. It calls for awe, reverence, and submission to God, underlining the futility of idolatry and His supreme worthiness of worship.

## THE WATCHMAN'S PRAYER: FROM FEAR TO FAITH (HABAKKUK 3:1-19)

## THE WATCHMAN'S PLEA AND RECOLLECTION: SEEKING MERCY AND RECALLING PAST DELIVERANCES (HABAKKUK 3:1-15)

### VERSE 1 -

Chapter 3 of Habakkuk is one of only two independent psalms in the Bible, with the other being found in Isaiah 38:9-20. The significance of these two independent psalms will be discussed in greater depth when we explore verse 19.

Habakkuk presents this prayer "upon Shigionoth." This Hebrew word is rare, only appearing here and in Psalm 7, which makes its meaning somewhat elusive. The King James translators typically translated every Hebrew word. However, in this case, they considered the word as a proper name and kept it in Hebrew, a convention followed by all major modern translations. There are two potential root words for Shigionoth: one means "to cry aloud," and the other means "to wonder." Given that both Psalm 7 and Habakkuk 3 do not relate to wondering, the consensus is that this was a song meant to be "cried."

### VERSE 2 -

The Psalm begins in verse 2 with Habakkuk's testimony, "I have heard" the speech of the Lord. His reaction was fear, a pattern often seen in scripture.

Habakkuk pleads with the Lord to revive His work. From chapter 1, we know that Habakkuk's main concern is the silence of God and his longing for God to act, particularly through judgment for wickedness. He requests that the Lord's work be revived "in the midst of the years," a phrase repeated twice in the verse for poetic emphasis.

What are these "years" Habakkuk refers to? The answer is purely speculative. However, it's plausible that Habakkuk, like Daniel and Jeremiah, received a vision of God's scheduled work. Jeremiah saw 70 years of captivity, and Daniel saw 70 weeks of God's work with Israel. Unlike Jeremiah and Daniel, there is no revelation about any specific years Habakkuk might have known.

The years appear to be filled with wrath, as Habakkuk prays for leniency, saying, "in wrath remember mercy." Although God may be silent, Habakkuk anticipates a time of wrath and asks for mercy.

Could the "years" in question be the period most Christians refer to as "the tribulation," also known as "the day of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7)? This is intriguing because there is a significant event that occurs in the middle of the 7-year tribulation. Despite being a time of wrath, God provides a shelter, a hiding place in the desert, for His nation.

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#### VERSE 3 -

When Habakkuk cries that "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran," there is likely both a past-tense and a future-tense in mind, with the emphasis on the future.

Many dispensationalists interpret eschatology with the understanding that God will provide a hiding place in the wilderness during the second half of the tribulation. This place will serve as a safe haven for Israel (Psalms 91, Revelation 12:6). Furthermore, it is believed that when Jesus returns, His first stop will be this wilderness hideaway to gather His remnant. If this understanding is correct, it aligns with Deuteronomy 33:2, which references the second coming of Jesus and specifically mentions Paran, the same location Habakkuk refers to. This connection further supports the interpretation of a future deliverance provided by God for His people in the midst of tribulation.

Habakkuk then uses the Hebrew word "Selah," which he will use three times in this chapter. Bullinger argues that the musical term is to connect to passages together. He says, "It is a **THOUGHT-LINK**, which bids us look **BACK** at what has been said, and mark its connection with what is **TO FOLLOW**; or to some additional consequent teaching" [FN1].

<aside> 📖 [FN1] Ethelbert W. Bullinger, **THE COMPANION BIBLE: BEING THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF 1611 WITH THE STRUCTURES AND NOTES, CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY AND SUGGESTIVE AND WITH 198 APPENDIXES**, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2018), Appendix 96.

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Taking this approach provides solid verification for taking verse 3 as a future description of the Second Coming, for the second half of the verse is descriptive of the earth **ONLY** in the days of its restoration in the millennium.

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#### VERSE 4 -

Habakkuk envisions a magnificent revelation of the Lord's arrival, likely referring to what we call the Second Coming. The Lord appears in a brilliance reminiscent of the first day of creation. Moreover, "he had horns coming out of his hand." The term "horns" could mean musical horns, altar horns, or rays of light. The KJV includes a translator's note for the phrase "horns coming out of his hand," suggesting an alternative translation: "OR, BRIGHT BEAMS OUT OF HIS SIDE."

The verse ends with a puzzling statement, "and there was the hiding of his power." At face value, this seems strange. Why would there be a concealment of power in a segment dedicated to showcasing God's power and glory? However, grammatically, another interpretation exists. If we consider "there" as a location, it not only ties in with Teman and Mt. Paran from verse 3, but also relates to the concept of a hidden place in the wilderness. "There," in the secret place of the Most High, was "the hiding of his power," or "his powerful hiding place."

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#### VERSE 5 -

In this verse, Habakkuk speaks in more general terms, referring to the "pestilence" and "burning coals" of judgment. While less specific, these symbols echo the catastrophic events depicted in the tribulation. They serve as stark reminders of the severity of God's judgment, and the dire consequences that befall those who defy His will.

In the context of Habakkuk 3:5, the Hebrew word translated as "before" is לְפָנָיו (l'fanav), which can carry both spatial and temporal connotations:

- **Spatially**, it could be understood as indicating that pestilence and burning coals are proceeding or moving in front of God, as in a procession or as heralds of His approach. This interpretation highlights the manifestation of God's power and judgment in a tangible, visible form as God Himself moves or manifests in a particular direction or location.
- **Temporally**, it could suggest that these elements of judgment (pestilence and burning coals) come or occur prior to God's arrival, serving as precursors or forewarnings of His imminent presence. This interpretation emphasizes the sequence of events leading up to God's direct involvement.

Like many prophetic Psalms, this one is written in the past tense, although it almost certainly refers to a future event. Regardless of whether you accept the eschatological interpretation, the events that Habakkuk celebrates concern God's impending judgment on Judah.

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#### VERSE 6 -

Verse 6, if taken literally to any extent whatsoever, must lead to an eschatological interpretation. If the eschatological sense is rejected, the question then arises: can this be linked to God's judgment through the Chaldeans? It would be highly unlikely. Phrases like "measure the earth," "defeat the nations," "scatter the mountains," and "bow the hills" are clearly metaphorical. If they are intended to depict the eventual downfall of the Chaldean/Babylonian empire, it would be such an extreme exaggeration, potentially earning the top spot in the hyperbole category of biblical interpretations. Even attempting to link this to the great flood of Noah's day or the scattering of nations during the Babel era requires an imagination that exceeds acceptable limits in biblical interpretation. To me, it's almost undeniable that this Psalm, at least in its opening verses, depicts the future Second Coming