

# Habakkuk

## Habakkuk — Chapter One

Before getting into the text, it is observed that the critics who do not believe in predictive prophecy have attacked this book all through the years. Interestingly, the critics keep dying off, and Habakkuk continues to live through the providence of GOD.

**Hab. 1:1** “The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.”

“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.” (ASV)

“The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.” (NKJV)

“The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw” (NASV)

The first verse introduces us to a man named Habakkuk, who is only mentioned by name twice in the Bible, both of which are in this book. From this book of the Bible, it will be seen that he does something not found in any other book of the Bible — he speaks both **to** GOD for the righteous and **for** GOD to the people. It will be obvious as one studies this book that Habakkuk lived before the Babylonian captivity of Judah, because that was a major part of his prophecy, i.e., the Chaldeans’ taking Judah into captivity. It is also to be observed that he questioned GOD, and in this sense, this book is very much like the book of Job. It is to be observed that neither Job nor Habakkuk was condemned by GOD for asking **honest questions of inquiry**.

In the first chapter, there appear to be two questions asked by Habakkuk which are addressed to GOD: (1) **Will Judah be punished for her sins?** and (2) **Will her oppressor (Babylon) be punished for its wickedness?** GOD will then answer each of the questions, basically with the answer, “Yes, they will.”

“burden” — mawwa — “utterance, oracle, burden” (BDB); “a masculine noun meaning a burden or load; by extension, a burden in the form of a prophetic utterance or oracle” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 674); “this Hebrew noun is derived from a verb meaning ‘to lift up,’ and consequently signifies ‘what is lifted up,’ and thus ‘a burden’” (Cook, p. 1508); “the word signifies an oracle or revelation in general; but chiefly, one relative to future calamities” (Clark, p. 740).

Regarding the “burden” which Habakkuk felt, Poole wrote, “*that the prophet seems to speak of the grievous things here intended as a burden to himself, a trouble he did feel and groan under*” (Vol. 2, p. 966). There is little doubt, when the questions he asked are considered, that he was perplexed concerning the situation around him. He saw injustice all around him and wondered why GOD had not punished Judah for her growing wickedness. The righteous were in the minority, and the sins of the majority were a weight which bore upon Habakkuk’s mind. The burden he may have felt became a

revelation of doom from GOD against both Judah and Babylon.

All that is known about the man Habakkuk is that he was a prophet, i.e., one to whom GOD communicated a message to be delivered to mankind. Sometimes the message was to be delivered to GOD's people, and sometimes it was to be delivered to those who were not His people. In this book, both classes of people are addressed. The chief thing to observe is that the message he delivered was not something he concocted — it came from GOD.

“no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

How did Habakkuk receive this oracle from GOD? It appears to have been delivered to him in a vision — “the prophet did see.” This was one of a number of ways GOD communicated with His spokesmen in time past.

“GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1, emphasis mine, RK).

**Hab. 1:2** “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!”

“O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save.” (ASV)

“O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, Violence! And You will not save.” (NKJV)

“How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, Violence! Yet You do not save.” (NASV)

Habakkuk seemed to feel that GOD was not hearing His prayers. Is not this a problem sometimes with all godly people? Evil surrounds GOD's people, and they often are caused to wonder as the slain in The Revelation wondered — “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth” (6:10)? If one considers carefully, he can imagine GOD's saying, “Patience, My child.” GOD's people have often wondered down through time why GOD was not answering their prayers.

“How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me” (Psalm 13:1-2)?

When these times of feeling lonely come, because one thinks GOD does not hear, is GOD whispering, “Trust Me?” GOD's children must trust Him when everything seems to be going wrong.

Habakkuk was crying out to GOD about the “violence” in the land and wondering why GOD did not appear to be doing anything about it.

“violence” — chamas — “violence; by implication wrong; by metonymy unjust gain” (Strong); “violence, wrong, cruelty,

*injustice*" (BDB); *"A masculine noun meaning violence, wrong. It implies cruelty, damage, and injustice"* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 351).

He knew that GOD's justice demanded that those who were doing wrong should be corrected, and he wondered why GOD had not administered such yet.

*"Punishment does not come without sin, nor does sin endure without punishment"* (Pusey, Vol. 2, p. 179).

Habakkuk further implied that this **"violence"** had been going on for a lengthy time. This shows the longsuffering of GOD toward sinners. GOD had given them time to repent, but instead of getting better, they had gotten worse in the wrongs they committed toward each other.

**"Thou, O Lord, art a GOD full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth"** (Psalm 86:15).

**"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"** (2 Peter 3:9).

**"and Thou wilt not save"** This phrase seems to denote that the righteous (including himself) were suffering at the hands of the unjust. Everywhere he looked, he saw injustice among the people. Thus, the question would be, **"Why have You not saved us from this violence?"** No doubt as a prophet, he had proclaimed the guilt of the people to them many times, but they refused to listen and obey. His perception was that GOD was doing nothing to stop this wickedness. But again, his **perception** was wrong. GOD was preparing Babylon for this task. One is reminded just here that Jeremiah was a contemporary of Habakkuk. Note what Jeremiah said about the **"violence"** in the land of Judah.

**"Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know Me? saith the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it"** (Jeremiah 22:13-17).

Their hearts were fixed on doing that which was evil. Listen to Jeremiah as he besought GOD.

**"Righteous art Thou, O LORD, when I plead with Thee: yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously"** (Jeremiah 12:1)?

Sound familiar to the present text under consideration? Consider the words of Job as he suffered the cruelties of Satan in his life.

“Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment” (Job 19:7).

Listen to Hosea as he spoke of the ten northern tribes of Israel.

“Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of GOD in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood” (Hosea 4:2).

*“Thou wilt not save means that Judah had gone too far in her abominable course to be spared the judgment of God”* (Zerr, p. 339).

The prophets did their job — they warned the people of GOD’s impending wrath and their need to repent — **but they would not listen or repent.**

*“Habakkuk was not a singular voice asking God to explain how divine justice can explain the ‘success’ of evil in society”* (Kachelman, p. 17).

**Hab. 1:3** “Why dost Thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.”

“Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and look upon perverseness? for destruction and violence are before me; and there is strife, and contention riseth up.” (ASV)

“Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises.” (NKJV)

“Why do you make me see iniquity, And cause me to look of wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises.” (NASV)

What did Habakkuk see all around him? He saw “iniquity,” “grievance,” “spoiling,” “violence,” “strife,” and “contention.”

“iniquity” — aven — “wickedness; specifically an idol” (Strong); “Trouble, wickedness, sorrow...idolatry” (BDB); “a masculine noun meaning nothingness, trouble, sorrow, evil, or mischief. The primary meaning is that of emptiness and vanity” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 26).

“grievance” — amal — “wearing effort; hence (worry) whether of body or mind – grievance” (Strong); “toil, trouble, labor” (BDB); “a masculine singular noun meaning trouble, labor, toil. This word can be used for the general difficulties and hardships of life, which can be seen by its use in conjunction with sorrow; affliction; futility” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 847).

**“spoiling”** — shod shod — *“ravage: spoil, wasting”* (Strong); *“havoc, violence, destruction, devastation, ruin”* (BDB); *“a masculine noun meaning violence, destruction, desolation, robbery, spoil, wasting. The primary meaning of this word is violence or destruction”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1104).

**“violence”** — chamas — *“violence; by implication wrong; by metonymy unjust gain”* (Strong); *“violence, wrong, cruelty, injustice”* (BDB); *“a masculine noun meaning violence, wrong. It implies cruelty, damage, and injustice”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 351).

**“strife”** — rivb rib — *“a contest or contend, multitude, strive, suit”* (Strong); *“strife, controversy, dispute, quarrel...case at law”* (BDB); *“a masculine noun meaning a strife, a controversy, a contention. The primary idea of this noun is that of a quarrel or dispute”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1052).

**“contention”** — madon — *“a contest or quarrel: contention, strife”* (Strong); *“strife, contention...object of contention”* (BDB); *“A masculine noun referring to strife, dissension. It refers to a quarrel or dispute that cannot be stopped once it starts; or to arguments and contentions that create barriers between persons”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 572).

Needham has given a concise overview of the sins listed above which may be helpful to the readers and is given below for consideration.

*“He sees **iniquity** (lawlessness), **grievance** (labor, toil, distress, misery, people being wronged), **spoil** (thievery, robbery), and **violence** and those who **raise up strife and contention** (rabble rousers and fuss makers)”* (p. 80).

Habakkuk has shown a scene of chaos among GOD’s people because they will not obey Him. Injustice of every sort has been rehearsed by the prophet as existing among the people of Judah. He seems to view all this evil and wonder how GOD could see all this evil and do nothing about it. But his assumption was flawed. Because GOD does not immediately strike all error and injustice down does not mean that He is indifferent and doing nothing about it. GOD was developing, as mentioned previously, a nation which would teach Judah a lesson it would never forget — especially with regard to idolatry.

There is another thought which may blend with those presented in the last paragraph. Habakkuk was well aware of the Assyrian invasion of the northern ten tribes and how they were removed from the land. He also knew what had caused their removal — they had abandoned GOD and served idols, just as Judah was presently doing. Perhaps he was fearful, and well he should have been, that Judah was about to suffer the same punishment as Israel had.

*“The prophet was sick of the sight of wrong doing and fearful*

*of what it would bring”* (Phillips, p. 206).

He knew the suffering which would occur should GOD turn Judah over to an invader, as He had done with Israel.

Friends, when one looks at the complaints of Habakkuk because of all the evil surrounding him, *are his complaints not very modern, and in fact have always been the case? Do not the same things happen on a daily basis in the present world?* All one has to do is turn on the nightly news, and he will be overwhelmed by all of the negative news — murders, homelessness, rapes, drugs, theft and the growing tides of atheism, anarchy and lawlessness. *Does such not cause the serious Christian to wonder at times why GOD allows all of this to continue?* Yet, be assured, in His own time, GOD will take care of the evil and banish it forever. Note the comment of Gill here regarding Habakkuk.

*“accuses God of not hearing when he prays. His prayers have lifted the specific sins of violence before God. In return he sees more and more of that about which he has prayed”* (p. 173).

**Hab. 1:4** *“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”*

*“Therefore the law is slacked, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore justice goeth forth perverted.”* (ASV)

*“Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.”* (NKJV)

*“Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted.”* (NASV)

**“Therefore the law is slacked”** *What law is being spoken of here?*

It is the law which GOD gave Moses on Sinai.

*“slacked” — pug — “to be sluggish: (cease) be (feeble) (faint) be slacked”* (Strong); *“to grow numb, be feeble, be benumbed”* (BDB); *“a verb meaning to be stunned, to be paralyzed, to be feeble...It has the sense of something being paralyzed in usage, not used, ignored”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 891).

*The Law’s being paralyzed signifies that it was powerless. Why?* Obviously the leaders of Judah were not enforcing it, because they were just as corrupt, maybe more so, than the average citizen. Look around America — *do you not see the same thing today in public leaders?* As seen above, lawlessness was apparently rampant. There seems to be the idea here that if evil is not punished and thus curtailed, then it will grow; for the law breaker will have no respect for, or fear of, the law being enforced. The Bible states that that is the case.

**“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in**

them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

“judgment doth never go forth” The ASV and NKJV both render the word “judgment” as “justice.” Why would justice not prevail? It would seem that those who should decide such matters were probably corrupt, possibly taking bribes to render verdicts in favor of the highest bidder.

“the wicked doth compass about the righteous” The wicked, criminal transgressors surrounded the righteous. When the majority are living in error, they will do everything they can to corrupt those who are trying to do right. They will try to deceive and snare them into doing wrong. If such does not corrupt the righteous, then the next step will be to declare what is right as being wrong — persecute the righteous.

“wicked” — raw-shaw — “morally wrong; concretely an (actively) bad person: wicked, that did wrong” (Strong); “wicked, criminal...wicked, guilty of sin (against God or man)” (BDB); “an adjective meaning wicked, guilty, in the wrong, criminal, transgressor” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1080).

“wrong judgment proceedeth” These were the kind of judgments that called evil deeds good and good deeds evil. When “justice” was proclaimed, it was twisted to favor the evil.

“wrong” — aqal — “a primitive root; to wrest: wrong” (Strong); “To bend, twist...to be bent out of shape, be distorted, be crooked” (BDB); “a verb meaning to be perverted, to be made wrong. It refers to a twisted distortion of justice that results in injustice being done” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 864).

“How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:2-4).

The time of Habakkuk is thought by many scholars to be during the reign of Jehoiakim. His “reign was marked by injustice, treachery, and bloodshed” (JFB, p. 624).

“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,

drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem”  
(Jeremiah 22:13-19).

Today, should one look at society in America as Habakkuk did Judah in those days, he would probably see a vivid basis for comparison. This writer has decided to enter here a lengthy quote by John Phillips, which was written in 1998 about the evil in American society. **It has gotten worse!**

*“Today the law is emasculated. Criminals are coddled: the death sentence has been abolished in many places and judges slap repeat-offenders on the wrist. Pleas of temporary insanity can absolve perpetrators from the penalties for the most heinous crimes. Hardened criminals can play the appeals system for years and escape with punishments far lighter than their deeds deserve. Court cases are deferred until the memories of witnesses become hazy. Judges are inconsistent, often open to bribes, and frequently more concerned with protecting than punishing the guilty”* (p. 206).

If Mr. Phillips were writing this paragraph today, he probably would add the growing plague of homosexuality and prosecution of those who oppose it. The legalization of more recreational drugs, and even politicians who run for office advocating that bestiality, child-sex, and incest should be decriminalized. **How long will GOD let America stand? How long before GOD punishes America for its intolerable sins?** Be assured — He will at some point uphold His laws regarding justice and judgment.

*“A certain indication of the decadence of a society and its approaching ruin is always a breakdown of the system for administering justice”* (Coffman, p. 69).

In the first four verses of this chapter, Habakkuk expressed to GOD his concern, because the evil in Judah had not been dealt with by a righteous and just GOD. He has, in essence, asked GOD when He will bring His justice to bear on the situation. In verses 5-11, GOD is going to answer Habakkuk by showing him what is on the horizon of time. In the mean time, Habakkuk and the righteous of Judah needed to remember the Psalmist’s words.

**“Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed”** (Psalm 37:1-3).

**Hab. 1:5-6** **“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.”**

**“Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvellously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs.”** (ASV)

“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. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.” (NKJV)

“Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days – You would not believe if you were told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs.” (NASV)

One can simply state here that GOD answered Habakkuk (vv. 6-11), telling him that Judah was going to be punished for her disobedience. Further, He told him how He would accomplish it.

*“Look among the nations and watch-Be utterly astounded!”* (NKJV) The first thing he was told was to observe carefully the nations around him, see what had been going on. Egypt had made a vassal out of Judah until the Babylonians had crushed Assyria and then utterly defeated the Egyptians. Egypt was the ruling power when Habakkuk wrote, and Babylon was yet a small power. The Babylonian power was on the rise, conquering her neighbors one by one. GOD was behind her rise to power. He had given her strength and power to conquer, and it was Babylon whom He would use to punish Judah. When Habakkuk carefully observed what had been happening among the nations, it would greatly astonish him. Judah had become just as wicked as the heathen nations around her.

*“astounded” — tamahh — “to be in consternation”* (Strong); *“to be astounded, be stunned, be amazed, be dumbfounded”* (BDB); *“a verb meaning to be amazed; to be astounded. It means to be shocked, stunned at something”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1231).

*“which ye will not believe, though it be told you”* Judah seemed to think she would not be destroyed by a wicked nation. GOD had chosen her as His people. Habakkuk seemed to express this sentiment in verses twelve and thirteen of this chapter. But Moses had long ago prophesied that, if GOD’s people turned from Him to work wickedness and serve the idols, they would be overthrown.

*“They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not GOD; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation”* (Deuteronomy 32:21).

GOD had done this with sister Israel, yet Judah did not pay attention. Instead, she followed the example of her rebellious sister. Jeremiah had also prophesied about Babylon’s conquering Judah, but the Jews would not believe him and persecuted him for telling them they should submit to Babylon rather than fight her.

*“thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry*

them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword” (Jeremiah 20:4).

“hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein...Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste” (Jeremiah 27:9-11, 17)?

“Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire” (Jeremiah 38:4-6).

Verse six begins a description by GOD of the Chaldeans (Babylonians). “For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation.” Baker/Carpenter state that the meaning of the word “bitter” in this passage refers to the “ruthless” nature of the Chaldeans. Smith states that “bitter and hasty” refers to their being “angry and impetuous” (p. 441).

“which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs”

*“The early years of Nebuchadnezzar were devoted to conquest. Nineveh fell in 612 BC. Pharaoh was crushed in 605 BC. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar even invaded Egypt in 568 BC.”* (Smith, p. 441).

One of the truly amazing aspects of this prophecy was that, at the time it was given, no one would have expected Babylon to become a world power. Further, the rapidity with which it was accomplished is also amazing. But then, GOD was behind her remarkable success.

**Hab. 1:7** “They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.”

“They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.” (ASV)

“They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.” (NKJV)

“They are dreaded and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves.” (NASV)

*“The Chaldeans are described as self-assured, self-sufficient, self-deified, and deadly (cf. Jer. 51:20)”* (McArthur, p. 1030).

“They are terrible and dreadful” From their past conduct, the Chaldeans were known to be frightful and to be feared, i.e., it was not just their appearance which caused fear, but they indeed deserved to be feared by their enemies.

“**terrible**” — *ayom* — “to frighten; frightful: terrible” (Strong); “**terrible, dreadful**” (BDB); “*an adjective meaning terrible, horrible, dreadful, awesome...it depicts a dreadful or terrible people*” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 45).

“**dreadful**” — *yare* — “to fear; morally to revere; causatively to frighten” (Strong); “to fear, revere, be afraid” (BDB); “a verb meaning to fear, to respect, to reverence, to be afraid, to be awesome, to be afraid, to make afraid, to frighten” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 470); “to be afraid, to fear, revere; to be feared; to be dreadful; to be revered; to terrify, make afraid. There are two main types of fear described by *yare*: (a) the emotion and intellectual anticipation of harm, what one feels may go wrong for him; (b) a very positive feeling of awe or reverence for God, which may be expressed in piety or formal worship” (Zodhiates).

“**their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.**” Babylon looked at others with disdain, recognizing no one as her superior. She was afraid of no one, not even GOD. Therefore, she did whatever she wished to do and felt that no one had the right to question her authority to do it. She believed that because she thought it, said it, that that made it so. She thought everything she had accomplished as a nation was through her own power. Whatever she wanted she took. She honored no one, not even GOD, Who made her the power she was. GOD was going to judge Judah with this nation which had no regard for Him or His will.

“**Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called GOD, or that is worshipped; so that he as god sitteth in the Temple of GOD, shewing himself that he is god**” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Note the words of Jeremiah 27:6.

“**now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him**” (emphasis mine, RK).

Nebuchadnezzar was GOD’s servant, not to do the despicable things he did, but for one purpose only — to chastise God’s people so that they would repent of their wickedness and turn back to Him.

*“God did not make the Chaldeans wicked, but used them because they were wicked”* (Needham, p. 84).

Their tactics were devised by themselves for war. Their cruelty came from their own wicked hearts. Their inhumane treatment of others came from themselves. GOD simply used them to punish Judah because of her idolatry. When the time was right, when the remnant repented, then GOD would overthrow wicked Babylon.

**Hab. 1:8** *“Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.”*

*“Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen press proudly on: yea, their horsemen come from far; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour.”* (ASV)

*“Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat.”* (NKJV)

*“Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.”* (NASV)

This writer believes that the horses here are used for the purpose of considering the soldiers who rode them. Without them, the horses would have no guidance. Thus, the soldiers are likened to three animals which are descriptive of the army’s ability to move swiftly and destroy its opponents: (1) Faster than leopards, (2) More alert than evening wolves, and (3) A bird of prey to devour its prey. When one considers these animals, he sees that they have two things in common: (1) they are DEADLY, and (2) they are predators.

*“Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves”* Leopards are the fastest four-legged creature on the planet, which seems to indicate how quickly Nebuchadnezzar’s armies would move from place to place. Before one knew it, he was confronted by them.

Wolves are known to hunt primarily in the evening, hunting in packs and coordinating their attacks so that their victim stands little chance of escape. They hunger for the blood of their prey.

*“Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword”* (Jeremiah 5:16-17).

*“their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.”* These soldiers will spread out quickly, as the eagle is known for its speed once it has its prey in sight. The distance they needed to travel did not matter to them. They came swiftly from great distances. This reminds this writer of something he read once about the armies of

Genghis Khan. It is said that his soldiers all had several horses which they led on their journeys. When the horse being ridden tired, they switched horses, leading the tired one. Without the weight of the rider and his gear, the tired horse was able to keep up. Thus, they were able to cover huge distances in an extremely short time, allowing them to be upon their enemies before the enemy army thought they could possibly be there.

Note some of the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar found in the Scriptures.

“Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab” (Jeremiah 48:40).

“A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers” (Ezekiel 7:3).

“like a lion, and had eagle's wings” (Daniel 7:4).

**Hab. 1:9** “They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.”

“They come all of them for violence; the set of their faces is forwards; and they gather captives as the sand.” (ASV)

“They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand.” (NKJV)

“All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.” (NASV)

“They shall come all for violence” The picture here is of a violent people who enjoy and love violence. They are thus destructive in nature, not productive. This idea seems to be bolstered by the next phrase: “their faces shall sup up as the east wind.” The “east wind” spoken of here was one familiar to people of that area of the world. When it blew, it took the moisture out of everything, destroying life in its path. They would swallow up everything in their path like the east wind, sucking up all the moisture and bringing death. This wind is commonly known as the “*Simoon*” (JFB, p. 625). Note a number of examples from the Bible to show the “east wind” used to symbolize destruction.

“behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.” (Genesis 41:6).

“Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts” (Exodus 10:13).

“Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew” (Ezekiel 17:10).

“Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels” (Hosea 13:15).

“they shall gather the captivity as the sand” The sand cannot be numbered, because of the great quantity of it. The number of captives taken by the advancing Babylonians will be so large in number that they will not be able to be counted.

**Hab. 1:10** “And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.”

“Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him; he derideth every stronghold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it.” (ASV)

“They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it.” (NKJV)

“They mock at kings and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress and heap up rubble to capture it.” (NASV)

“And they shall scoff at the kings”

“scoff” — galas — “to disparage, i.e., ridicule: mock, scoff, scorn” (Strong); “to mock, scoff” (BDB); “a verb meaning to mock, to deride, to scorn. It means to make fun of persons, to insult them...to hold someone or something in disrespect; not to fear or take something seriously” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 998).

“and the princes shall be a scorn unto them”

“scorn” — miwchag — “a laughing stock: scorn” (Strong); “object of derision” (BDB); “a masculine noun indicating scorn, an object of derision. It indicates an object of laughter or of little concern or respect” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 679).

“they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.”

“deride” — wachag — “to laugh” (Strong); “to laugh, play, mock...usually in contempt or derision, to sport, play” (BDB); “a verb meaning to laugh; to celebrate; to rejoice; to mock” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1123).

Why did the Chaldeans hold all before them in contempt?

Because no matter how great these kingdoms might have been in the past, they could not stop the Babylonians from destroying them. Their fortified (walled) cities might as well have stood with their gates wide open to receive their enemies. Their walls did them no good, for the Babylonians heaped up dirt (built ramps) to their heights and over-ran them as if there were no walls there. Their fortified cities might as well have been sand castles for all the good they did them.

The same conceit is seen in all great powers. When one looks around him in the present time, he sees the same thing. These

nations believe they cannot be beaten, that no one can conquer them. Many in America today believe that even GOD cannot destroy America (and other nations feel the same way). This is the way Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian people felt, but that nation sits on the ash heap of history. If the world lasts long enough, the same will happen to the “*mighty powers*” which exist today. The only kingdom which cannot be destroyed is the one that belongs to GOD.

**“in the days of these kings shall the GOD of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”** (Daniel 2:44).

**Hab. 1:11 “Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.”**

“Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, even he whose might is his god.” (ASV)

“Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.” (NKJV)

“Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.” (NASV)

**“offend”** — asham ashem — **“to be guilty; by implication to be punished or perish”** (Strong); **“to offend, be guilty, trespass...to suffer punishment”** (BDB); **“to trespass, offend, commit an offense, do wrong; to suffer for; to be destroyed; to be held guilty”** (Zodhiates); **“a verb meaning to be guilty or to do wrong. This word is most often used to describe the product of sin – that is, guilt before God...often the idea of punishment for a wrong done is implied”** (Baker/Carpenter, p. 106).

GOD shows Habakkuk the distant future, in which the Chaldeans would fall to their enemies just as rapidly as they had conquered others. **Why would they fall?** Because of their arrogance, their cruelty, and their pride. Instead of giving the GOD of Heaven recognition for raising them up, they gave the credit to themselves and their pretend gods. One might recall that when the Philistines captured the ark of GOD, they took it to the temple of their god (Dagon). They attributed Dagon as being more powerful than the GOD of the Israelites. One remembers the humiliation brought upon Dagon, as he was found fallen down before the ark with his hands and feet cut off. In attributing their might to their gods, Babylon and its rulers had committed the greatest of sins — they worshiped the gods they created instead of the One who had created all things.

One might also remember here the events of Numbers 20, when the people murmured (complained) because of a lack of water. GOD told Moses to take his staff and told Aaron to go to the rock and speak, and the water would flow. Instead Moses struck the rock after he said the following words.

**“Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this**

rock” (Numbers 20:10)?

He took credit for what GOD had done. Note that GOD told Moses and Aaron the consequences for their action.

“the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Numbers 20:12).

At one time in the history of the United States, its leaders sanctified GOD, they credited Him with creating this nation. The time has come when most in America attribute this nations great power to themselves rather than to GOD. In essence, America is deifying itself. **How shall GOD deal with this arrogant contempt of Himself?**

*“Babylon guilty of numerous sins: murder, theft, pride, kidnaping, and worshiping their own strength rather than giving credit to the Lord for their victories. God, through Habakkuk, made it clear that they were guilty. While they were capable of doing what God had appointed them to do – namely, punishing Judah for her sins – their violence, their sins, and their guilt raised a second question in Habakkuk’s mind and in the minds of other righteous people”* (Roper, p. 309).

In verses 12-17, Habakkuk will ask his second question of GOD.

**Hab. 1:12** “Art Thou not from everlasting, O LORD my GOD, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty GOD, Thou hast established them for correction.”

“Art not Thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my GOD, my Holy One? we shall not die. O Jehovah, Thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction.” (ASV)

“Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my GOD, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction.” (NKJV)

“Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my GOD, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct.” (NASV)

In verses 12-17, Habakkuk recognized the justice of GOD but wonders how His people can be corrected by a nation which is far more wicked than they. There is a common failure by man to judge another’s sins as more wicked, or just as wicked, as his own. The failure involves the fact that any sin is serious and that anyone’s sin, no matter what it is, will condemn him if repentance does not occur.

Note the contrast seen between verse eleven and the present verse. The idols mentioned in verse eleven were temporary, but GOD has always been – “**from everlasting.**” They would change from generation to generation, be adored in different forms — yet GOD has always been the same, unchanging. Further, GOD has been from “**everlasting,**” whereas the idols were Johnny-come-latelies (way too late).

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, **Thou art GOD**” (Psalm 90:2, emphasis mine, RK).

Habakkuk might not have understood how his nation could be corrected by an evil nation, but he recognized GOD as sovereign. His faith was that GOD would work His will, and His justice would prevail. The phrase shows that He did not believe the Israelites would be totally destroyed — punished, but not obliterated. He knew there were still men of great faith, such as himself, in the nation, and he probably remembered the promises of a Messiah which was to come from them. He also knew that what GOD had decreed (Chaldeans’ coming and destroying) would happen. He knew that GOD had a plan for correcting Judah. He just did not understand it.

The heathen may have had their gods and ignored GOD, but note the way Habakkuk referred to GOD. He is “**my GOD, mine Holy One.**”

The world could abandon GOD, but Habakkuk and those for whom he spoke were not going to abandon Him, no matter what might come.

“**Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my GOD: for unto Thee will I pray**” (Psalm 5:2).

“**O LORD my GOD, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me**” (Psalm 7:1).

“**Preserve me, O GOD: for in Thee do I put my trust**” (Psalm 16:1).

Note that Habakkuk also said of GOD, “**O mighty GOD.**” In the ASV, NKJV, and YLT — this is translated as “**O Rock.**”

“**mighty GOD**” — tsur tsur — “*properly a cliff (or sharp rock as compressed) generally a rock or boulder; figuratively a refuge*” (Strong); “*rock, cliff*” (BDB); “*a masculine noun meaning a rock. It refers to a large rock, a boulder...of a rock as a symbol of stability*” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 945).

When looking at the Psalms of David, it is seen that he used this term to describe GOD quite often. GOD is indeed the refuge of the righteous and the only true stability and safety which one may obtain in this life. All else is crumbling and perishable.

“**The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my GOD, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower**” (Psalm 18:2).

“**Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me**” (Psalm 31:3).

Remember that, like Job, the questions being asked by Habakkuk came from a strong heart of belief and dependence upon GOD. GOD is the foundation of Habakkuk’s faith and the faith of all GOD’s children of all time.

“**thou hast established them for correction**” **Of whom does this speak?** Judah was going to be corrected. **But what about Babylon?** It would seem to this writer that the above phrase speaks of Babylon

as well.

**Hab. 1:13** “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

“Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he;” (ASV)

“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?” (NKJV)

“Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?” (NASV)

Judah was wicked during the days of Habakkuk, and he had questioned why GOD was allowing the wicked to go unpunished. GOD then revealed that He was raising up a chastening rod in the nation of Babylon. But Babylon was far more wicked than Judah. **How could GOD use such a wicked nation to punish those who were less wicked than they were?** It seems that Habakkuk may have been thinking that a nation less wicked than Judah should be the one to chastise her. **How could a just and righteous GOD use the unjust to punish His people?**

Habakkuk seems to think that the idea that GOD is pure is incompatible with His character in raising up (giving power to) such an evil nation to punish Judah. After all, evil surely displeased GOD and was disgusting to Him.

“The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth” (Psalm 34:16).

“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (Proverbs 8:13).

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil” (Proverbs 3:7).

Habakkuk was crying out to GOD to help Him understand. Just here one should remember that GOD told him, “I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, (it will be incomprehensible to you —

RK) **though it be told you**" (v. 5). Habakkuk simply does not understand how GOD could show favor to such a wicked nation. The fact is that GOD did not favor Babylon, and the proof will be in their utter devastation. When GOD destroyed Babylon, it would become a place where no one would dwell.

**"Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when GOD overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged"** (Isaiah 13:19-22).

*"Instead of speaking evil against God, he went to God himself for the remedy of his perplexity"* (JFB, p. 828).

*"Jehovah, in revealing His intention to raise up the Chaldeans against Judah, did not say He would overlook Babylon's evil. Divinely recorded history proves He did, in fact, no such thing"* (Gill, p. 181).

When Habakkuk spoke of those **"more righteous,"** was he speaking of the nation of Judah as a whole, or was he speaking of the remnant of righteous people in Judah? Again, remember that his first question to GOD was basically, **"Why are you not punishing Judah for her evil?"** When he was told that a nation was being prepared to punish her, then he asked how GOD could use a nation more evil than Judah to punish her, even though he knew and agreed that Judah should be punished.

**Hab. 1:14 "And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?"**

"and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?" (ASV)

"Why do You make men like fish of the sea, Like creeping things that have no ruler over them?" (NKJV)

"Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them?" (NASV)

Habakkuk continued showing how wicked the Chaldeans were. He may have been comparing the people of the nations as being helpless against the Chaldeans, like the seas where the larger fish prey upon the smaller. Without a ruler over them, they have no defense, no one to protect or guide them. Clarke believes the picture is of Nebuchadnezzar's being like a net which is cast into the sea and catches many fish; but after a while, the net becomes useless and is

discarded (p. 742). Zerr believes this signifies that the Chaldeans had no more regard for people than they did the dumb animals (p. 340). Roper thinks he was picturing the people's being swept away before Nebuchadnezzar's armies to be as helpless as the fish in the sea (p. 310).

**Hab. 1:15** "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad."

"He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad." (ASV)

"They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad." (NKJV)

"The Chaldeans brings all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad." (NASV)

Habakkuk continued to describe these ruthless invaders to GOD, though GOD knew quite well the inhumanity of which they were capable. Again, remember that GOD did not make them cruel. They made themselves cruel. He did not make them use cruelty to punish His people, for as seen already in Jeremiah, if they had not resisted the Chaldeans, they would have been allowed to stay in their land and reap their crops. Also, the ongoing emphasis in Habakkuk's mind was, "How could GOD allow these merciless people to conquer them?"

He described the Chaldean army as being fishermen casting their hooks, nets and dragnets, catching the defenseless and helpless fish. The fish represented the enemies of Babylon. The hook would catch one at a time, but the net and dragnet would catch many at once. When they had captured great numbers and destroyed most of them, they would rejoice over their victories.

When one considers a fishing hook, he realizes that deception is the goal of the fisherman. The fish look at a free meal. The "meal" disguises a hook which, once fastened in his jaw, delivers the fish into the fisherman's hand (and soon his stomach). On the other hand, the net sweeps away vast numbers to destruction at one time.

*"Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans are herein a faint image of Satan, who cast out his baits and his nets in the stormy sea of this life, taking some by individual craft, sweeping others in whole masses to do evil...he allures, hurries, drags away as his prey"* (Pussey, p. 188).

"They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad."

"Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:11-12).

The hook and nets represent the power and ease with which they were able to subdue all who stood before them. They also represent the brutality of the Chaldeans.

*“Monuments from Mesopotamia document the custom of literally driving a hook through the lower lip of captives. Long lines of captives with hooks through their lips are depicted being hauled off to Babylon...In one relief from this period the major Babylonian deities are depicted dragging a net in which their captives squirm”* (Smith, p. 445).

*“He (Nebuchadnezzar, RK) was sweeping up nations like a fisherman dragging a net”* (Needham, p. 86).

**Hab. 1:16** “Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.”

“Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous.” (ASV)

“Therefore they sacrifice to their net, And burn incense to their dragnet; Because by them their share is sumptuous And their food plentiful.” (NKJV)

“Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful.” (NASV)

**“net”** — cherem cherem — *“physically (as shutting in) a net (either literally or figuratively); usually a doomed object”* (Strong); *“a thing devoted, thing dedicated, ban, devotion...(appointed to) utter destruction”* (BDB); *“it means something devoted unto divine service; a ban, a curse, extermination; a person or thing which has been marked for destruction, a net, an enticement. The essential meaning is ‘forbidden’ or ‘prohibited.’ It was an object surrendered to God and to his service or something declared for utter destruction. The most famous example was the entire city of Jericho and everything in it”* (Zodhiates); *“a masculine noun meaning devoted things, devoted for destruction, devotion, things under ban, cursed”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 380).

The Chaldeans had made their power their god, and worshipped those gods whom they thought had given them this power.

**“Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god”** (Habakkuk 1:11).

But note something in the definitions of the word **“net”** above. What they worshipped was doomed to destruction by the GOD of Heaven and earth. Their power over the nations around them brought them prosperity, so they sacrificed and burned incense to their **“nets.”** The word **“drag”** refers to fishing nets in the original.

*“They sanctified brutality and deified greed”* (Smith, p. 446).

*“Any person, or any people, who trust not in God, but attribute all of their success, wealth, and prosperity to their system of government, their fertile lands, their natural resources, their powerful armies, their great armaments, their army, navy, or air force, or anything else that was given to them through their intelligence and labors — all such persons are worshiping their nets and burning incense to their drags”* (Coffman, p. 80)!

*“They worshipped the means by which they conquered and became wealthy. Rather than worshiping the Lord God, they worshiped their own might”* (Roper, p. 311).

**Hab. 1:17** *“Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?”*

*“Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?”* (ASV)

*“Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue to slay nations without pity?”* (NKJV)

*“Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?”* (NASV)

Fishermen use their nets to catch great numbers of fish. They empty them, and then cast the nets again to catch more fish. The question may be *were they going to be able the do this on and on — possibly without end?* The application to Babylon was that they had captured great numbers of people, but their appetite was not quenched. The more they captured, the more they wanted.

*“They are running from conquest to conquest; burning, slaying, sacking, and slaughter. Like the fishermen, who cast after cast while any fish are to be caught, so Nebuchadnezzar is destroying one nation after another”* (Clarke, p. 743).

*Will this go on forever? Will GOD stop their plundering and punish their evil deeds as He punished Judah?* Yet, there is hope, for Habakkuk knows how GOD renders punishment to those who do evil. He knew that Judah deserved corrective punishment.

*“These are questions which through the centuries have been raised in the hearts of many as they beheld the ruthless destroyers riding roughshod over the weaker”* (Hailey, p. 281).

GOD gave Habakkuk an answer to this question which perplexed him in the next chapter.

## Habakkuk — Chapter Two

**Hab. 2:1** “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint.” (ASV)

“I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.” (NKJV)

“I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.” (NASV)

It should be remembered from the first chapter that the last question Habakkuk asked was basically, “How can a just GOD chastise His people with a nation more wicked than His people?”

Habakkuk compared himself to a watchman who stood upon the city wall. The watchman’s job was to watch for an enemy who might come and try to surprise them. His obligation (if he saw an enemy) was to warn the city, so that the gates might be shut and the city could put men on the walls to defend it. This was an important job. The prophets indeed acted as watchmen to warn GOD’s people of their sin, so that they would not be overcome and destroyed by it. Listen to what GOD told Ezekiel about being a watchman.

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul” (Ezekiel 3:17-21).

Later in the book of Ezekiel, GOD repeated His warning regarding the responsibility His prophet had in warning the people about sin (Ezekiel 33:7-11). Preachers and Christians should carefully consider their responsibility to warn people about sin and the consequences of sin. It should also be observed from the writings of other prophets that they considered themselves watchmen for GOD’s revelations to the people.

“My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights...The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night” (Isaiah 21:8, 11)?

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken” (Jeremiah 6:16-17).

Note that Habakkuk was not going to desert his post — “I will stand upon my watch.” He patiently waited to receive GOD’s answer to his questions. He was attentive, paying close attention to hear what GOD would say to him. Further, note that he expected GOD to give him the answer to his questions. Note the phrase “what I shall answer when I am reprov’d.” He expected GOD to “reprove” (KJV), “corrected” (NKJV), and “reproof” (YLT) him. Or is it that he was seeking an answer from GOD so that he could give an answer to those who questioned him, the unbelievers who assaulted him and the righteous (Habakkuk 1:4)? No matter which of the two positions above are correct, one thing is certain — Habakkuk eagerly awaited GOD’s reply.

Patience was a strong suit of the prophets who waited upon GOD to reveal Himself and His will.

*“He knew that there was a ‘method in the madness’ surrounding him and that God would sooner or later reveal that answer” (Kachelman, p. 19).*

**Hab. 2:2-3** “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

“And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.” (ASV)

“Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.” (NKJV)

“Then the Lord answered me and said, Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.” (NASV)

The first thing to notice is that this vision was to be written down. **Why?** It was something which was going to happen in the future. Thus, having a written record would prove (when the event took

place) that it had been prophesied and that GOD's word always comes to pass just as He proclaimed it.

**“make it plain upon tablets”** The message was to be clear, i.e., easily understood, detailed. There was not going to be one who thought it meant one thing and another who thought it mean something else. Everyone who read the engraving would be able to understand it.

**“plain”** — *baar* — *“a primitive root; to dig; by analogy to engrave; figuratively to explain: make clear”* (Strong); *“to make plain, distinct”* (BDB); *“a verb meaning to declare, expound. It is used to describe Moses' oral exposition of the Law given at Sinai. It also indicates a written process of clarifying and recording a revelation from GOD”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 115).

Engravings like these would then be hung in a public place where all could read them.

*“God does not mumble. He speaks with clarity and forthrightness”* (Cook, p. 1512).

**“that he may run that readeth it”** There are three possibilities as to the significance of this phrase: (1) One running by could grasp its meaning while running, (2) Make the message so plain that a messenger who was passing it on to others would not mistake the message it gave, or (3) One who reads it would run away in fear.

**“For the vision is yet for an appointed time”** **Why should it be written permanently?** Because it was a prediction for the future which must not be allowed to fade from their memory. GOD assured Habakkuk that all He said would come to pass exactly as He declared it.

**“at the end it shall speak, and not lie”** What is to be written is GOD's word, and it is described in terms of animation — it is alive, a living thing. GOD's word is not a “dead letter,” as some have blasphemously claimed in latter years (**“it shall speak;”** **“it will surely come”**).

**“GOD is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good”** (Numbers 23:19)?

**“wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”** Hebrews 10:37 seems to be a quotation of verse three in the present text. In that context, the persecuted Hebrew Christians were urged to have patience because the end was coming and their reward was certain.

**“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of GOD, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry”** (Hebrews 10:35-37).

Some have tried to make a contradiction out of the two phrases **“though it tarry”** and **“it will not tarry.”** The prophecy probably would seem to those who heard it as if it were taking forever to fulfill; yet in GOD's time frame, it was coming quickly. Before they knew it, the events described would be upon them.

“beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8).

These phrases were simply another way of emphasizing that GOD’s word would be fulfilled when it was the right time according to His time schedule. In looking at all of the evidence available, it appears that this prophecy had an application pertaining to Babylon and an even further application to the second coming of the Lord in judgment.

There is another thought here which could be explored. GOD’s prophecies of future events give scoffers the opportunity to rail against GOD as if the promises were fabrications of someone’s mind.

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation...The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:3-4, 9).

Why does GOD delay His promises? It would seem that He does so in order to allow unbelievers the opportunity to become more steeped in their unbelief or give them the opportunity to repent.

Hab. 2:4 “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

“Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith.” (ASV)

“Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith” (NKJV)

“Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.” (NASV)

Here is a huge contrast between pride (Babylonians and all unrighteous people) and faith (which GOD’s people exhibit).

*“Some object and quarrel, contest with God, proudly, discontentedly, and impatiently; others inquire humbly, submitting themselves to God, and waiting for him”* (Poole, p. 969).

“lifted up” — aphal — “to swell; figuratively be elated: be lifted (up), presume” (Strong); “to lift up, swell, be lifted up...to presume, be heedless” (BDB); “a verb meaning to be proud, to presume. It describes carrying on an act of presumption, arrogance, against the best advice” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 856).

“faith” — emunah emunah — “literally firmness; figuratively security; moral fidelity” (Strong); “firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness” (BDB); “a noun meaning truth, faithfulness” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 68).

This passage is quoted three times in the New Testament, as listed below.

“For therein is the righteousness of GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of GOD, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11).

“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:37-38).

At the time this prophecy was given to Habakkuk, Babylon was a nation which could barely be seen — it was in the very beginning of its infancy. But GOD was declaring it to be finished before it accomplished all that it did. Their pride would lead to their destruction.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

“the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them” (Hosea 5:5).

When one looks at the second part of verse four, he sees GOD gently remind His people to trust Him. When looking above at the passages where this sentiment is quoted, the picture begins to become clearer. **Do you want to live?** Trust GOD; hold on to your faith in Him — do not give it up. Things looked bleak, but a new day was coming — GOD’s justice would prevail. The unbelieving Jews and Babylonians would suffer destruction, while the faithful would have life through GOD’s justification of them. Another thought here is that the proud rely upon themselves for salvation, whereas the just rely upon GOD for salvation.

*“In one short saying the two general aspects of the prophet’s inquiry are dealt with: the pride and injustice of the invader are dealt with, and the just man is assured of life, i.e., preservation from evil and salvation, on the condition that he hold steadfastly to the principles of Truth”* (Cook, p. 168).

The Chaldeans placed their trust in their military power as they became more and more decadent. **Does this remind the reader of anyone today?** More and more, America relies on its military power, while the nation as a whole becomes increasingly decadent. While immorality and ungodliness of all sorts grow in America, those who fully trust in GOD await their deliverance. The scoffers will sit back and say it is impossible for America to fall, but history shows that all “great” nations felt the same way and have long since perished from the earth. *“In the end, justice will be done”* (Roper, p. 318). Let it plainly be declared here, that just as Judah deserved GOD’s punishment for its sins, just as Babylon deserved GOD’s punishment for its sins — so too does America, who has abandoned GOD for its

god of secularism!

**Hab. 2:5** “Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:”

“Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples.” (ASV)

“Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations And heaps up for himself all peoples.” (NKJV)

“Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.” (NASV)

Babylon would be judged by GOD for many sins, a few of which are listed in verses five through nineteen. Drunkenness, pride and greed seem to be the focus of the present verse.

Regarding the drinking of wine (alcoholic beverages), note some of the things that Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said about it.

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again” (Proverbs 23:31-35).

“Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart” (Hosea 4:11).

Who can honestly read the words of Solomon and Hosea without realizing that the drinking of alcoholic beverages is sinful? The end of Babylon came at a drunken feast held by Belshazzar, when he called for the instruments of GOD’s Temple to be brought and used in his drunken party (Daniel 5). Along with the sin of drunkenness, the pride of Babylon caused its destruction.

*“Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom and his reason through pride, received them back when he humbled himself; Belshazzar, being proud and impenitent, lost both his kingdom and life” (Pusey, p. 195).*

“he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home” He was not happy with the kingdom he had, but he constantly went beyond its borders seeking new territory to be conquered. He was never satisfied, no matter how many lands he brought under his control (“enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death”). “hell” (sheol) The place where departed souls go, is never satisfied with the number it receives, but is always seeking more.

“The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough” (Proverbs 30:15-16, emphasis mine, RK).

The Babylonian empire was never satisfied, always seeking more (“gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people”).

**Hab. 2:6** “Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!”

“Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges!” (ASV)

“Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, Woe to him who increases What is not his-how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges?” (NKJV)

“Will not all these take up a taunt song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him and say, Woe to him who increases what is not his – for how long – and makes himself rich with loans?” (NASV)

“thick clay” — abtiyt — “something (pledged), i.e., (collectively) pawned goods. (Thick clay is by a false etymology.)” (Strong); “Weight of pledges, heavy debts” (BDB); “a masculine noun referring to loans. It refers to what is borrowed from a creditor, whether of goods or money. It may have the sense of extortion in context” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 799).

What goes around comes around. Babylon was brutal in the way it treated other nations. When it fell, it would be treated the same way it had treated others.

“Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!” Babylon had become rich through campaigns against the other nations. But in the end, those riches would be taken by another.

“As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool” (Jeremiah 17:11).

“He is living royally off that which he has ‘borrowed’ from other people” (Smith, p. 453).

“how long?” There seem to be three possibilities here. (1) How long would they be able to keep what did not belong to them? (2)

How long would they be able to continue this? (3) How long before GOD gave them their just deserts? The context answers — not long.

**“to him that ladeth himself with thick clay”** The plunder they had taken from others would one day become a debt they could not pay. His ill-gotten gain will become a burden, just as it is for any gain of wealth, for fear will beset one because of the possibility of losing it. Also, it becomes a burden, in that whatever is gained is not enough — he must have more and more and more. Thus, Babylon is likened to one who has pawned his goods and must one day pay an exorbitant price for them — but he does not have the ability to redeem them.

*“The spoils of war are like a ‘mass of pledges’ of the conquered nations to retaliate for the wrongs done to them at a later time and under other circumstances”* (Needham, p. 91).

**Hab. 2:7** **“Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?”**

“Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them?” (ASV)

“Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty.” (NKJV)

“Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them.” (NASV)

**“Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee”** Those nations that had been victimized by Babylon would suddenly, without warning, rise up against them. They would bring swift destruction. The imagery might suggest the adder, which would suddenly strike and bite the unaware traveler, injecting its deadly venom. Babylon fell unexpectedly when Cyrus and a handful of his soldiers unexpectedly appeared among them, opening the gates of the city for his army to march in. This was accomplished by diverting the Euphrates River, which ran through Babylon, so that Cyrus was able to walk into the city through the river bed itself. Suddenly, these soldiers rose up in the center of the city — the city was taken (October, 539 B.C.).

*“It looked as if Babylon was getting away with everything. But they weren’t getting away with anything at all. Whenever we sin and rob somebody else, we are adding up for ourselves a debt that is going to be paid with compound interest”* (Wiersbe, p. 62).

**“and awake that shall vex thee”** The word **“vex”** means **“to shake”** or **“agitate”** (Strong). It is the idea of being violently shaken so as to cause fear and terror. The conquered nations would awake from the feelings of helplessness and bring Babylon to its knees.

**“and thou shalt be for booties unto them”** The Chaldeans had robbed other nations, taking as spoil all they wanted. Now their enemies would make a spoil of all their property and make them slaves, as Babylon had done to them.

**“He that oppressteth the poor to increase his riches, and he**

that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want” (Proverbs 22:16).

“I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 50:10).

“Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house” (Matthew 12:29).

**Hab. 2:8** “Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.”

“Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.” (ASV)

“Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.” (NKJV)

“Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you – because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to town and all its inhabitants.” (NASV)

**Why would the nations “bite” and “spoil” Babylon?** Because Babylon had spoiled other nations with the violent shedding of blood.

“Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee” Babylon would not be spoiled simply because it had spoiled Judah, but because of the way it had spoiled **many nations**. Jeremiah 27:3 lists some of the nations which had been conquered by Babylon.

“And thou hast put them on thy neck, and hast sent them unto the king of Edom, and unto the king of Moab, and unto the king of the sons of Ammon, and unto the king of Tyre, and unto the king of Zidon, by the hand of messengers who are coming in to Jerusalem, unto Zedekiah king of Judah.”

The spoiler would be spoiled by those whom he had spoiled. **Who would inflict this damage to Babylon?** The remnant — those left in their lands who had not been killed.

“Woe, spoiler! and thou not spoiled, And treacherous! and they dealt not treacherously with thee, When thou dost finish, O spoiler, thou art spoiled, When thou dost finish dealing treacherously, They deal treacherously with thee” (Isaiah 33:1).

“because of men's blood” Babylon's treatment of the people of other nations had been barbaric. It did not have to be as blood-thirsty as it had been in order to accomplish GOD's plan. That was its choice. It had gained its spoils through much bloodshed.

“and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein” Note that the “city” and “land” are not defined. It was not what it had done to any particular land or city which caused its destruction — it was what it had commonly done to all these places. All the violence it had inflicted upon others would be inflicted upon it.

*“Evil men will reap what they sow, often in this life, most surely in the life to come”* (Smith, p. 454).

“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same” (Job 4:8).

**Hab. 2:9** “Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!”

“Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!” (ASV)

“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!” (NKJV)

“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity!” (NASV)

“coveteth” — *batsa* — “plunder” (Strong); “to cut off, gain by unrighteous violence, get, finish, be covetous, be greedy” (Thayer); “A verb meaning to cut off, to gain by violence” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 155).

“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house”

Verse nine begins the second “Woe” GOD pronounced on Babylon. This woe was pronounced because it had plundered other nations in the greedy desire for more and more — never satisfied with what it had. It had acted as a tyrant, oppressing all its neighbors, and the time would come when it in turn would be oppressed.

So often man tries to build great wealth, thinking it will protect him from the evils of common men. Yet, often that wealth draws the attention of the thief, extortioner and criminal. This is basically what happened to Judah when Babylon saw its wealth.

“At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my

treasures that I have not shewed them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (2 Kings 20:12-18).

*“The house that has been built upon evil in an effort to reach earthly security will itself ‘cry out’ against the evildoer”* (Kelley, p. 64).

*“that he may set his nest on high”* Poole states that this is a proverbial phrase of birds of prey, which build their nests high for protection (p. 970).

*“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD”* (Obadiah 4).

Babylon could try to protect itself all it wanted, but when the Lord decided it was time to punish Babylon, it would fall. This writer must take advantage of this thought to issue a warning — **America, are you listening?** Nebuchadnezzar had built a mighty empire, but it was built on the wrong things — blood, covetousness, et cetera. Because it was built on the wrong principles, the generations which followed would pay the price. Even if it had been built in the correct way, if it had then changed to a state of evil, then generations which followed those evil producers would suffer. Look at the principle of this thought expressed in Genesis 20:5.

*“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy GOD am a jealous GOD, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.”*

Babylon’s attempts to insulate itself from destruction were all for naught. The Babylonians had built a mighty city (Babylon) with walls which could not be breached in that time of history. The people thought they were invincible — until Cyrus (as mentioned already) taught them otherwise.

*“Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, straddling the Euphrates, was protected by a huge wall more than eleven miles long and eighty-five feet thick”* (Pfeiffer, p. 127, quoted by Hailey, p. 285).

**Hab. 2:10** *“Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.”*

*“Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul.”* (ASV)

*“You give shameful counsel to your house, Cutting off many peoples, And sin against your soul.”* (NKJV)

*“You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many*

peoples; so you are sinning against yourself.” (NASV)

The bloodshed was so enormous that it caused shame for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. This blood was shed because of Babylon’s insatiable greed, and rather than bring honor to the nation it brought just the opposite. The counsel it had received seems to be that if it destroyed everything in its path, then it could not be destroyed, i.e., its safety would be assured. But Babylon’s cruelty became the motivating factor of its destruction by the other nations.

**“hast sinned against thy soul.”** All of the blood which Babylon shed was not simply something done to its neighbors — GOD was also involved. Because of its actions, it would not just have to answer to the nations it destroyed, but it would also have to answer to GOD for its crimes. Mistreating others is a serious offence against GOD, as well as man.

*“In ‘cutting off many peoples’ to accomplish his end, he had sinned against his soul”* (Hailey, p. 285).

GOD raised up Babylon to punish His rebellious people, but He did not direct its course of conquest by slaughter. Babylon’s actions made it its own destroyer.

**“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of GOD made he man”** (Genesis 9:6).

**Hab. 2:11** **“For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.”**

“For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” (ASV)

“For the stone will cry out from the wall, And the beam from the timbers will answer it.” (NKJV)

“Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework.” (NASV)

*“Works of mercy go up for a memorial before God, and plead there; great works, wrought amid wrong and cruelty and for man’s ambition and pride, have a voice too, and cry out to God, calling down His vengeance on the oppressor”* (Pusey, p. 199).

It was as if the walls of the city and the beams in the houses which were built by the aid of blood and oppression could speak. **What did they say?** They were witnesses to the injustices of their builders, and thus, called for vengeance.

This reminds this writer of Jesus as He entered Jerusalem on the way to the cross. The crowds gathered and were proclaiming Him a King with great shouts. Some of the Pharisees wanted Jesus to rebuke His disciples, i.e., stop them from making such proclamations. Jesus answered them by proclaiming, **“I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out”** (Luke 19:40). It was as if to say that the creation knew who had created it and would proclaim Him the anointed One, even if no one else did. So too, in

this text, the cry for justice was too great to be silenced. All of Babylon's enemies could be eliminated, but the cry for justice would still be heard. This is called personification.

**Hab. 2:12** "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!"

"Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!" (ASV)

"Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity!" (NKJV)

"Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence!" (NASV)

Verse twelve begins the third "Woe" placed upon Babylon because it was a cruel murderer dealing in very oppressive policies. The first woe dealt with pride, the second with covetousness. The city was built upon cruelty toward those who were conquered — built by captives in forced labor. The blood shed by its armies had provided the wealth upon which it was built. Daniel 4:27 gives insight into Babylon's cruelty. Note carefully what GOD told Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel.

"O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

He was told to quit his actions of "iniquities" (*"perverseness"*), which hints of immorality, but could include many other sins. It also suggests his turning away from what is right and good. GOD had raised Nebuchadnezzar up to do His bidding, but Nebuchadnezzar went far beyond what GOD intended for him to do. Nebuchadnezzar withstood GOD's directions toward mercy, especially toward the poor. Like all tyrants, he took from the poor to make his lifestyle, and those of his friends, richer.

*"Murder, bloodshed, oppression, and tyranny were the tools employed in this building project"* (Cook, p. 1514).

He used his ill-gotten gain to build a city so strong that he thought no one could conquer it.

*"God himself has written 'Futile' over the works of men that are wrought without regard for the Creator and his sacred law. The whirling suns shall brush every civilization into the grave unless that civilization is built upon Truth, i.e., God's truth. The sands of time will bury the wicked; the tides of history shall wash them away. The only kingdom that cannot be destroyed is the kingdom of the Lord (Hebrews 12:28)"* (Coffman, p. 92).

When people refuse to acknowledge GOD as the ruler of their lives and thus abide by His laws, the end is predictable — destruction.

**Hab. 2:13** "Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

“Behold, is it not of JEHOVAH of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity?” (ASV)

“Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain?” (NKJV)

“Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toy with fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?” (NASV)

The Babylonians used violence and bloodshed to build their empire. When men build upon such, their labor is contrary to GOD’s will, and with time He will destroy their labors. In their pride and vanity, men build great empires and cities of beauty, but all of their labor is in vain. Empires built on violence and bloodshed will suffer the vengeance of GOD. At some point, GOD will destroy all that exists, and the pride of man will be nothing.

**“the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7).**

Fire is often used in the Bible to show GOD’s anger against the unrighteous and their works. The glorious city of Babylon as it was, built with so much laborious manpower, would be utterly destroyed — a waste of their energies. Man would take the credit for destroying this city, but it was GOD who did so through the use of feeble man.

*“God tells us through Habakkuk that he is not responsible for the atrocities of the iron-fisted tyrants of the world. He may use them to do his will as he sees fit, but it is a mistake to think that all the blood thirsty usurpations of tyrants are of God, nor should they think their aggressions will pay off in the long run. Their acquisitions are only temporary” (Needham, p. 93).*

**Hab. 2:14 “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”**

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.” (ASV)

“For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.” (NKJV)

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (NASV)

There may be an allusion to three things here. The first is Babylon. GOD’s power was absolutely manifested in the destruction of Babylon, and it would have been spoken of wherever men were gathered at that time. The knowledge of GOD’s power would be known. In verse thirteen, GOD spoke of Babylon’s labor to build a mighty kingdom as being worthless, because He would destroy it. It might have appeared at the time that it was developing a universal kingdom which would rule all, but that was simply a fantasy. GOD’s kingdom, on the other hand, would indeed be one which ruled all nations — not a physical one, but rather a spiritual kingdom. The fact that mighty Babylon would fall to the Medes was foretold by Jeremiah

(chapter fifty-one).

*“Since God had accurately predicted the fall of Assyria, and since the destruction of Babylon would certainly occur as He had foreordained and declared, the whole earth would be moved to acknowledge God’s glory”* (Needham, p. 325).

It should not be forgotten that in one twenty-four-hour period, Babylon went from looking as if it were impossible to be defeated, to utter defeat without any resistance.

Second, this may be a prediction of GOD’s knowledge being spread throughout the earth at the time of the establishment of Christ’s kingdom. After Pentecost, the disciples spread the Gospel all over the world, beginning at Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world, covering it like the waters of the sea. Unlike Judaism, which was meant primarily for the Jewish people, the Gospel was given for all people and spread throughout the world.

*“Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power (authority) is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:18-20).

The third could be at the end of time, when all men have to come before GOD at the judgment scene. No one at all will be able to deny Him then.

*“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to GOD”* (Romans 14:11).

Man in his pride has often considered that he can lift himself up to great heights, that he can save himself. All of the great accomplishments which man has seemingly reached are in fact worth nothing. Only the knowledge of GOD which leads him to glorify GOD through obedience to Him is worth anything. All else which may be accomplished without GOD is vanity — it cannot save man. One can only imagine the surprise of those who in this life were so arrogant in their “accomplishments” when they face GOD and discover their worthlessness.

**Hab. 2:15** *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!”*

*“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!”* (ASV)

*“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!”* (NKJV)

*“Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness!”* (NASV)

**“drunken”** — shakar — *“to become tipsy; in a qualified (sense) to satiate with a stimulating drink or (figuratively) influence”* (Strong); *“to be or become drunk or drunken, be intoxicated”* (BDB); *“an adjective indicating drunken, made drunken. It is used to indicate a state of intoxication...a verb meaning to become drunk, intoxicated. It refers to the act and process of a person’s becoming inebriated, overcome with wine or strong drink”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1141).

The fourth **“Woe”** is now leveled at Babylon, and it seems to deal with intoxication and its leading to debauchery.

*“the psychology of sin is such that those who wish to live wicked lives are determined to drag others down with them”* (Smith, p. 455).

*“Babylon was a nation renown for excesses in alcohol. Its final defeat came after a riotous drinking party (cf Dan. 5:1ff)”* (Kachelman, p. 100).

The Bible consistently condemns the practice of drinking alcoholic beverages.

**“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”** (Proverbs 20:1).

**“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again”** (Proverbs 23:29-35).

In the New Testament, the effects are well illustrated by Herod when he made a rash vow to Herodius’ daughter when she lewdly danced before Herod and his quests (Mark 6). Further, elders and deacons are to leave such liquids alone (1 Timothy 3:3, 8).

**“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of GOD”** (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Note in the definitions given above that Baker/Carpenter state that it is not just becoming drunken that is under consideration. *“It refers to the act and process of a person’s becoming inebriated.”* Further, a study should be done regarding what medical colleges have stated about what consuming even the minutest amounts of alcohol does to the brain. Their studies show that the very first drop consumed begins to attack the control center of the brain.

*“Alcohol is involved in approximately 30% of all suicides; 50% of all homicides; 68% of manslaughters; 52% of rapes and*

*sexual assaults; 48% of robberies; 62% of assaults; 49% of violent crime*” (The Nat. Inst. On Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism, quoted by The Tennessean, Sunday, Sept. 14, 1997, p. 3f).

According to Sheriffs, (Jan-Feb '98, p. 17), in 1995-96, 17,000 deaths in fatal crashes were due to alcohol. Statistics such as these ought to be enough to convince any sane person not to touch deadly addictive alcohol. All of the above fits well with the description given by Needham regarding a figurative picture of Babylon and what it did to the nations.

*“They took advantage of the weak and exploited them like making a person drunk in order to take advantage of him; to rob, rape, enslave, and murder”* (p. 94).

Is it not interesting that if three babies die because of baby-crib accidents, that that product will be removed from the market. Yet, thousands die each year in the United States (as noted above), but alcohol is not removed. Far more baby deaths are caused each year by alcohol related incidents yet the law makers allow it to continue. Can we say **HYPOCRITES**.

**Hab. 2:16** *“Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.”*

“Thou art filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory.” (ASV)

“You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also-drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD'S right hand will be turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory.” (NKJV)

“You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourselves drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory.” (NASV)

*“Thou art filled with shame for glory:”* The word *“filled”* signifies being filled to the brim, but not yet overflowing. There seems to be the sense that Babylon's destruction is not far off. It will happen rapidly.

*“As they were increased, so they sinned against Me: therefore will I change their glory into shame”* (Hosea 4:7).

*“drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered”* The idea here seems to be becoming naked so that all one's shame is exposed. It might also be considered that one with foreskin signifies that he was not one of the covenant people of GOD. The term was often used to show contempt for the one spoken about. Goliath was called *“this uncircumcised Philistine”* (1 Samuel 17:36).

*“the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee”* MacArthur says this is a metaphor which refers to divine retribution (p. 1033). Indeed, reference to GOD's right hand usually refers to His power, to something which He has the power to perform.

*“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”*

(Matthew 7:2).

How they treated others is how they in turn would be treated.

**“and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory”** Spewing indicates the act of vomiting out. Because of Babylon’s shameful devouring of the nations, it would be like someone who sat at a table full of delicacies and ate so much that he became sick. To his shame, he would then eject what had tasted so good when consumed.

*“The picture here is of the king of Babylon lying drunk and naked in his own vomit”* (Smith, p. 456).

**Hab. 2:17** **“For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.”**

“For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.” (ASV)

“For the violence done to Lebanon will cover you, And the plunder of beasts which made them afraid, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.” (NKJV)

“For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.” (NASV)

**“violence”** — chamas — *“violence; by implication wrong; by metonymy unjust gain: cruel, violence, violent, wrong”* (Strong); *“Violence, wrong, cruelty, injustice”* (BDB); *“a masculine noun meaning violence, wrong. It implies cruelty, damage, and injustice”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 351).

**“spoil”** — shod shod — *“ravage: spoil, wasting”* (Strong); *“havoc, violence, destruction, devastation, ruin”* (BDB); *“a masculine noun meaning violence, destruction, desolation, robbery, spoil, wasting”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 1104).

**“afraid”** — chathath — *“a primitive root; properly to prostrate; hence to break (down) either (literally) by (violence) or (figuratively) by confusion and fear...terrify”* (Strong); *“to be shattered, be dismayed, be broken, be abolished, be afraid”* (BDB); *“a verb meaning to be shattered, to be dismayed, to dismay, to shatter, to scare”* (Baker/Carpenter, p. 394).

**“For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee”** Lebanon was known for its great cedar trees. Was Babylon’s guilt that it had stripped Lebanon of these for building materials? Could this possibly have reference to the Temple, which had been built with these cedars? Or does it simply refer to the unjust gains that Babylon obtained through violence, as the original word implies? Both the ASV and NKJV read *“the violence done to Lebanon.”*

*“This is an extraordinary example of foresight, for Nebuchadnezzar, who had not yet come to power in Habakkuk’s day, was fascinated by the great cedars of*

*Lebanon and felled many of the magnificent trees. He shipped the beautiful wood to Babylon for his numerous building projects” (Pusey).*

“That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased... Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us” (Isaiah 14:4, 8).

“and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid” Invading armies need to eat, and it appears that, among other things, Babylon may have stripped the land of wild animals.

*“Just as men threatened repeatedly by the incursion of wild beasts become driven by fear to destroy the beasts, so Babylon’s neighbors, subjected repeatedly to the brutalities of Babylon will one day be driven to destroy him” (Gill, p. 190).*

“because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein” The worst of the charges against Babylon was the shedding of so much blood in an unjust and cruel manner. No one had been safe from the destruction which it wrought on the land, cities and their populations.

All of this keeps pointing to the fact that Babylon would be treated as it had treated others. Many commentators think this verse is talking about Jerusalem and the cities and people of Judah.

**Hab. 2:18** “What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?”

“What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?” (ASV)

“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, The molded image, a teacher of lies, That the maker of its mold should trust in it, To make mute idols?” (NKJV)

“What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols.” (NASV)

“What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it” The idea is what profit is there making the image? There is a profit, in that if the maker sells it to someone, he gets a little money or goods. But that is not the point of the question. The question does not deal with the material — it deals with spiritual blessings. There is no spiritual profit from making such.

A “graven image” is that which has been carved out of wood, stone, metal or some other material. A “molten image” is molten metal that has been poured into a mold. When it is taken from the mold, it is then polished, and other things are done to it to “beautify” it.

One of the great sins of the Babylonians was a sin of which many nations and people are guilty. Primarily when one thinks of an idol,

he considers some object before which one literally bows down or to which one prays. But an idol in anyone's heart is anything he places before service to GOD. One should ask himself, "What is the most important thing in my life?" Whatever that is, that is one's GOD, whether it be the GOD of Heaven or anything else!

**What does an idol do?** It teaches lies. The idol itself is nothing but a lie. It says that there is a god other than the only GOD of Heaven and earth; therefore, it tells the biggest lie of all. Further, those who act as its priests lie because they say they have a message from their god — but their god cannot speak.

**"the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd"** (Ezekiel 10:2).

**"concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other GOD but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)"** (1 Corinthians 8:4-5, emphasis mine, RK).

*"Since in reality God is invisible, omnipresent, and articulate he cannot be represented by an image which is visible, stationary, and dumb"* (Smith, p. 457).

**"the maker of his work trusteth therein"** Again, a question is asked, **In what does one trust? Is it in his bank account, 401K, property, et cetera?** What one trusts in is again his GOD. Imagine that something one made, or material objects, or mental thing is considered to be one's god. **Can it save one from eternal destruction? Can it talk with him and give him advice about the future? Can it predict the future?** Trusting in that which is material or even in ideas (honor, fame, power, etc.) is worthless. **Why? "to make dumb idols"** If the dumb idol could not help its maker, then it certainly could not help anyone else. **Who was superior — the thing made or the one who made it?**

**"dumb"** — *illem* — **"speechless: dumb (man)"** (Strong); **"mute, silent, dumb, unable to speak"** (BDB); **"an adjective meaning mute, unable to speak, dumb"** (Baker/Carpenter, p. 62).

Some have asked over the years, **"How can one trust and worship GOD — He does not speak to one today?"** O, but He does. Notice a passage in Hebrews 11:4.

**"By faith Abel offered unto GOD a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, GOD testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."**

**Have you heard the voice of Abel?** But you have heard him speak through the pages of the Bible — GOD's word. GOD speaks to man today through the medium of His written word.

**"All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in**

righteousness: That the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“inspiration” — theopneustos — “divinely breathed in” (Strong); “*inspired by God, the contents of the scriptures*” (BDB)

The Scriptures come from the very mouth of GOD. He spoke them through His Son and the Spirit, and had them recorded by men specifically chosen to copy down accurately what was said. And that Bible is able to provide everything one needs to enjoy the blessings of GOD.

All that the idols had ever done or will ever do for man is to cause GOD’s anger to come upon him. The gods which Babylon had created could not save it in the day of destruction, nor can any god imagined in any time save anyone ever.

“they served their idols: which were a snare unto them” (Psalm 106:36).

*“Christian America’ woke one day a few years ago to hear on television and read in major publications that ‘God Is Dead!’ Perhaps there was more truth to the pronouncement than we realized. The gods of Roman and Protestant institutionalism... the god of economic materialism...the god of permissiveness and pleasure...the whole American pantheon is dead” (Gill, p. 191).*

**Hab. 2:19** “Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.”

“Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.” (ASV)

“Woe to him who says to wood, Awake! To silent stone, Arise! It shall teach! Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it there is no breath at all.” (NKJV)

“Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, Awake! To a mute stone, Arise! And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it.” (NASV)

One might begin here by considering the parallel mocking of handmade gods by Elijah in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:27.

“it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.”

The people of Babylon were placing their confidence, their trust, in that which had no life in itself. They had made them with their own hands. Man has actually never been able to actually create life. Yet, these inanimate objects were supposed to teach them and defend them. How foolish! There was no life in these objects. In essence, that which had been created by GOD (man) was worshiping what he

himself had created (carved images). The lowest animal which GOD had created was greater than the dead idols man made.

Speaking of idols, Lightfoot wrote the following pertinent words.

*“Behind them lurk evil spirits who divert the praise and prayers of the worshipers to Satan”* (p. 216).

Man must come to understand that if he does not worship GOD — then he worships Satan!

**Hab. 2:20** *“But the LORD is in His holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

“But Jehovah is in His holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.” (ASV)

“But the LORD is in His holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” (NKJV)

“But the Lord in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.” (NASV)

GOD’s holy Temple is of course Heaven.

*“The LORD is in His holy Temple, the LORD’S throne is in heaven”* (Psalm 11:4).

The idols were spoken of as being silent — they could not respond to those who spoke to them. In contrast, GOD is alive, He does speak, and He commands the earth (and all in it) to keep silent before Him.

*“Let all hear his commands with the deepest respect, obey them with the promptest diligence, and worship him with the most profound reverence”* (Clarke, p. 746).

*“let all the earth keep silence before Him”* This phrase seems to carry a number of thoughts, the chief of which is a trusting submission to GOD and His will. Listen to Him.

*“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against GOD? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus”* (Romans 9:20)?

Instead of spending so much time speaking and devising one’s own thoughts, listen to His counsel. **GOD is in control — trust Him!**

*“Silence’ has been defined as ‘a fitting response to (the Lord’s) holiness and majesty, and a token of one’s respect for his being — dependency upon his grace and submission to his will”* (Baker, quoted by Roper, p. 327).

In his commentary of Habakkuk, Gill offers a summary of the five **“Woes”** which are pronounced in chapter two. They are presented below for consideration by the reader of this work.

*“(v. 6) Woe to him who increases his possession of that which is not his.*

*(v. 9) Woe to him that gets evil gain in order to set himself above others.*

*(v. 12) Woe to him who builds his great cities on the suffering of downtrodden people.*

*(v. 14) Woe to him who involves others in his sin in order to exploit them.*

(v. 19) *Woe to those who worship dead gods*" (p. 191).

## **Habakkuk Chapter Three**

**Hab. 3:1** “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.”

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth.” (ASV)

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.” (NKJV)

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.” (NASV)

Habakkuk identified himself in this chapter as being a prophet as he did in chapter one. He also stated that what was next said was a prayer. GOD had revealed His plans to punish both Judah and Babylon for their wickedness. It had startled Habakkuk when GOD revealed that He was going to punish Judah by the hands of the Babylonians. He could not understand how GOD could use a nation far worse than Judah to punish her for her sins. But when GOD revealed His total plan to Habakkuk, then he spoke a prayer (sang a prayer) of praise to GOD. Habakkuk now understood that GOD would not allow evil to go unpunished, but that He would punish evil doers in His own way and in His own time. This prayer is formed in a song of praise, as seems to be verified by the musical pause “**Selah**,” which is found in verses three, nine, and thirteen.

The word “**Shigionoth**” is of uncertain origin. Most commentators think it refers to the way musical notes were sung — a poetic meter. Jamison says it was sung “*after the manner of the elegies, or mournful odes*” (p. 831). Others believe, as does Young, that it refers to those in error.

**Hab. 3:2** “O LORD, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”

“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.” (ASV)

“O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.” (NKJV)

“Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” (NASV)

“**O LORD, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid**” Hearing GOD’s plans (chapters 1 & 2) caused great fear within Habakkuk. Indeed there was reason to fear GOD’s great wrath. Look at what GOD had done to Egypt, when He led His people from the land of Egypt. Or consider a whole generation dying in the wilderness because of its disobedience. Or the more recent events, where Northern Israel was taken away into Assyrian captivity. In the present text, the felt fear was not an abject fear, but rather dealt more with the aspect of awe for so great a Creator.

“*And was afraid, not ‘fearful’ but afraid in awe, as a creature,*”

*and amazed at the surpassing wonderfulness of the work of God” (Pusey, p. 205).*

*“We have heard with our ears, O GOD, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old” (Psalm 44:1).*

*“Jehovah is displayed in so terrible a manner, that his judgment not only inspires with joy at the destruction of the foe, but fills with alarm at the omnipotence of the Judge of the world” (Keil, p. 92).*

*“O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known”* This writer believes that the revival of GOD’s work dealt with choosing a people through whom His Son would come. He had nurtured and disciplined them to become a separated people for the purpose of honoring and glorifying Himself. Everything GOD did centered around the coming of His Son for the salvation of man. But in between that time, there would be much suffering by the righteous because of the evil which surrounded them. *“in wrath remember mercy”* When GOD poured out His wrath on Judah through the Babylonians, mercy would be needed. If not for GOD’s mercy, all of creation would soon cease to exist during the time before His Son came. There would be many who would come to believe that GOD had abandoned them, that He no longer cared about them, though that remnant was remaining faithful to Him.

*“O GOD, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name for ever? Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, even Thy right hand? pluck it out of Thy bosom” (Psalm 74:11).*

*“Remember, O LORD, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old” (Psalm 25:6).*

This reminds one of the human condition in all time, for many a man has come to the false conclusion that GOD has abandoned him. Note what Peter said about this.

*“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” ( 2 Peter 3:3-4).*

In that text, Peter stirred up their remembrance of what the prophets had written. He reminded them of the events of the flood. GOD does not forget His promises, as men often do. He promised a day when His Son would come for His own and would punish those who refused Him. **It will happen as promised!**

Habakkuk knew that Judah deserved the judgment which was coming, but when it came, he pleaded that GOD would be merciful. When the reckoning came through Babylon, GOD’s mercy was indeed shown through His preservation of a remnant. One should

remind himself that the time of judgment is coming for all who have ever lived. Man should fervently be pleading with GOD for His mercy when that time does come, for the truth is that all men require it for their salvation.

**Hab. 3:3** “GOD came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.”

“GOD came from Teman, And the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of His praise.” (ASV)

“GOD came from Teman, The Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of His praise.” (NKJV)

“GOD comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise.” (NASV)

“**Teman**” — teyman teman — “*the name of two (Edomites) and of the region and descendants of one of them: (south) Teman*” (Strong); “*Teman = ‘south;’ son of Eliphaz, grandson of Esau, and one of the dukes of Edom...the region occupied by the descendants of Eliphaz, located east of Idumea*” (BDB).

“*Mount Paran was located in the Sinai peninsula*” (MacArthur, p. 1034).

“**Selah**” — selah — “*suspension (of music), i.e., pause*” (Strong); “*to lift up, exalt; a technical musical term probably showing accentuation, pause, interruption*” (BDB); “*a verb, possibly a fixed imperative form. Its exact meaning is uncertain. It is used over seventy times in Psalms. It may give musical instructions or indicate a pause for various reasons*” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 779); “*It is not known exactly what it means, but probably some kind of pause, change of tempo, period of silence, or something similar*” (Coffman, p. 104).

Teman and Paran seem to be used to designate borders. If this observation is correct, then it would indicate the entire area south of Judah. **Was GOD’s glory shown in this area? Was His mighty power demonstrated there?** For the Bible student, the answer is absolutely yes, as he recalls the great care for His people that He exercised in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Remember the scene at Sinai, when GOD delivered His law to His people. His mighty works were revealed time and time again, and Rahab spoke of them..

“**I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in**

any man, because of you: for the LORD your GOD, He is GOD in Heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Joshua 2:9-11).

“this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of GOD blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them” (Deuteronomy 33:1-2).

The “glory” seen in GOD would seem to refer to His mighty ability to save His people. Not only the Israelites in the wilderness, and later from Babylon, but also in the age to come — the Christian dispensation.

**Hab. 3:4** “And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power.”

“And His brightness was as the light; He had rays coming forth from His hand; And there was the hiding of His power.” (ASV)

“His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, And there His power was hidden.” (NKJV)

“His radiance is like sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.” (NASV)

“being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

If one were to stare at the sun without eye protection, he would be blinded. Here GOD’s glory is described as a light, a brilliant light, a pure light. This light is so bright that it hides the image behind it. If one is driving at night and an approaching vehicle has its high beams on, it can temporarily blind one as to the details behind that light. So is the brightness of GOD’s glory, so that man cannot see the power of GOD.

“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” (Isaiah 60:19).

“This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that GOD is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

*“The rays (“horns”) emanated from God as they do from the sun. People often illustrate a sunrise by drawing a circle surrounded by lines, cones, or horns, a rather crude but nevertheless effective way of depicting radiance” (Cook, p. 1,518).*

When Moses came down from Sinai, the “skin of his face shone” [Literally, “his face sent out rays of light” (Exodus 34:29)]. Look at how the apostle Paul described the dwelling place of GOD.

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting” (1 Timothy 6:16).

The word “horns” is often used in the Scripture to designate power. GOD’s glory is so bright that it hides His power.

“His Majesty could not be seen, nor any kind of image, because of the insufferable splendour” (Clarke, p. 747).

To be able to see GOD in all His splendor and glory is such that if a human being did see it, he would die.

“Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20).

GOD’s hand radiating light hid His power like a shield before Him.

“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” (Gill, p. 195).

Note where the power came from — GOD’s hand. Note the symbolism of 2 Samuel 22:3.

“The GOD of my rock; in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn (strength – power; RK) of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; Thou savest me from violence.”

**Hab. 3:5** “Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet.”

“Before Him went the pestilence, And fiery bolts went forth at His feet.” (ASV)

“Before Him went pestilence, And fever followed at His feet.” (NKJV)

“Before Him goes pestilence, and plague comes after Him.” (NASV)

“pestilence” — deber — “(in the sense of destroying); a pestilence: plague” (Strong); “pestilence, plague; murrain, cattle disease, cattle-plague” (BDB); “a noun meaning plague or pestilence. This plague is a dreaded disease similar to the bubonic plague in the Middle Ages” (Baker/Carpenter, p. 223).

“Before Him went the pestilence” This probably deals with the thought of GOD’s divine judgment as part of His magnificent glory. Moses asked Pharaoh for the Israelites to be permitted to go three days’ journey into the wilderness to worship GOD. Notice what Moses said.

“The GOD of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our GOD; lest He fall upon us with deber, or with the sword” (Exodus 5:3, emphasis mine, RK).

Later, when Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, this same plague was sent upon Egypt.

“Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in

the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous deber” (Exodus 9:3).

One might also remember the plague which came upon the Philistines when they denigrated Him.

“it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and He smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. Therefore they sent the ark of GOD to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of GOD came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the GOD of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the GOD of Israel, and let it go again to His own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of GOD was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to Heaven” (1 Samuel 5:9-12).

Part of the sovereign power that GOD showed to man was His right to judge and punish those who fought against Him. This was another ray of hope held out to the people of Judah by Habakkuk. GOD was able to deliver them and to punish those who abused them.

“burning coals went forth at his feet”

“burning coals” — resheph — “*flame, fire-bolt, spark*” (BDB).

Some translations interpret this as a “*fever,*” “*flame,*” or “*fiery bolts,*” (see above). GOD reassured Moses that the people of the promised land would be destroyed and would flee before the children of Israel.

“I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee” (Exodus 23:27).

“As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of GOD” (Psalm 68:2).

But it would not only be the people of the land which would be destroyed. The wicked, unrepentant people among the Israelites would also suffer GOD’s righteous judgment, no matter what rank they might hold.

“Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Leviticus 10:1-2).

For the wicked, the judgment day is described as “a furnace of fire,” where the lost will suffer with “wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

“The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire:

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:41-43).

One of the lessons which should be learned here is that GOD is capable of bringing whatever corrective action is needed to purify His people. Man needs to understand that the “weapons” of GOD cannot be exhausted — he cannot fight against GOD and have any hope of winning a war with Him.

**Hab. 3:6** “He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting.”

“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.” (ASV)

“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.” (NKJV)

“He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, the ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting.” (NASV)

“He stood, and measured the earth” The word “measured” is a primitive root which means “to shake” (Strong, BDB). GOD is able to scatter His enemies like an overpowering army from which one tries to escape in every direction. He is greater than a mighty general who stops and surveys the battlefield before unleashing his unbeatable army. When Israel entered the land of Canaan, its enemies were driven before Him. He had created everything and could take a mountain and scatter it to the four corners of the earth with no effort, with just a whisper. Nations tend to look at themselves as indestructible, like the mountains which appear to have always been there and would last forever. But they only deceive themselves, as history has demonstrated over and over.

A contrast is clearly seen here between the temporal and the eternal. This world, the nations, — they do not last forever. But GOD is eternal, never ending. His justice and mercy rule forever.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art GOD” (Psalm 90:2).

“As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them” (Psalm 103:15-18).

“As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the

righteous is an everlasting foundation” (Proverbs 10:25).

A good example of how the enemy would react to GOD and his people is seen in Exodus 15:15-16.

“Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased.”

One is reminded here not to forget that this is a prayer of thanksgiving and the glorification of GOD as the One Who has saved His people in the past and can do so again. He is glorified because of His power to overcome all enemies and deliver His people. This is a stark warning to all who, like the Babylonians, worship that which has been created over the One Who created everything.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible GOD into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore GOD also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of GOD into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever” (Romans 1:22-25).

Note the beautiful words of the poet Fragm, as quoted by Clarke, (p. 748) as he described the power of GOD.

*“Confound not God with man; nor madly deem  
His form is mortal, and of flesh like thine.  
Thou know’st him not. Sometimes like fire he glows  
In wrath severe; sometimes as water flows;  
In brooding darkness now his power conceals  
And then in brutes that mighty power reveals.  
In clouds tempestuous we the Godhead find;  
He mounts the storm, and rides the winged wind;  
In vivid lightnings flashes from on high;  
In rattling thunders rends the lowering sky;  
Fountains and rivers, seas and floods obey,  
The oceans deep abyss yields to his sway;  
The mountains tremble, and the hills sink down,  
Crumbled to dust by the Almighty’s frown.  
When God unfolds the terrors of his eye,  
All things with horror quake, and in confusion lie”*  
(All emphasis done by the original author.)

**Hab. 3:7** “I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.”

“I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.” (ASV)

“I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian trembled.” (NKJV)

"I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, the tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling." (NASV)

**"Cushan"** — kushan — *"a region of Arabia"* (Strong); *"their blackness; a place in Arabia or Mesopotamia; site unknown"* (BDB).

**"Midian"** — midyan — *"a son of Abraham; also his country and his descendants: Midianite"* (Strong); *"strife, a son of Abraham by Keturah and progenitor of the tribe of Midianites or Arabians"* (BDB).

**"the tents of Cushan"** This refers to those who dwelt in their tents, including those who would ally with them. By prophetic vision, Habakkuk saw them **"afflicted."**

**"afflicted"** — aven — *"from an unused root perhaps meaning properly to pant, exert (oneself) usually in vain"* (BDB).

Some believe this might have been talking about Cushan-Rishathaim, who allied himself with Midian and other enemies of GOD's people. Some believe that Cushan refers to the Ethiopians.

With regard to Midian, there is a long history of its opposition to GOD's people. This began as Israel was preparing to enter the land of Canaan from the east bank. There Midian seduced GOD's people through lust to participate in idolatry. Later during the time of the Judges, specifically the time of Gideon, Israel was faced by invaders in their tents.

**"they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it"** (Judges 6:4-5).

In this context, **"curtains"** and **"tents"** seem to indicate the places where the people of Cushan and Midian took shelter, or the place they took shelter from storms. But these places would not protect them from GOD's wrath — nothing could protect them from His wrath for how they had treated His people. If the mountains scattered and the hills bowed before the power of GOD, **What chance did these people have taking shelter in tents?** GOD had taken care of His people then. He can and will take care of them during the times Habakkuk saw coming.

**Hab. 3:8 "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?"**

"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?" (ASV)

"O LORD, were You displeased with the rivers, Was Your anger against the rivers, Was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, Your

chariots of salvation?” (NKJV)

“Did the Lord rage against the rivers, or was Your anger against the rivers, or was Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation?” (NASV)

Rhetorical questions are now put forth — as one writer put it, thought questions. GOD was not angry with the rivers or sea (nature). (Most believe that “rivers” stands for the Jordan River and that “sea” stands for the Red Sea.) This could have to do with when He parted them for His people to cross. This was not done out of anger but out of love and as a favor for them. In both cases, victory was gained by GOD’s people over their enemies. Not by their own power, but by the almighty power of GOD through His armies, as symbolized by the “horses” and “chariots.”

It would seem to this writer that the rivers and sea stand for the enemies of GOD’s people. If this is correct, then the same message is seen as above: GOD conquered them (horses and chariots). Just as GOD smote the Nile River, the Jordan River, and the Red Sea; He smote all of the enemies of Israel in order to deliver His people. *Could this also refer to the way GOD used Cyrus, when he diverted the Euphrates long enough to make it shallow enough for his army to enter Babylon through the river bed?* (One should read the account of Herodius as to how Babylon was conquered.) Again, this is imagery to encourage GOD’s people in the judgment that was coming upon their nation. GOD would deliver the remnant. All of nature is at GOD’s disposal to accomplish His purpose of salvation.

One of the other things which this writer believes should be considered is that GOD’s people are an army. His people are soldiers in His army to fight the battles against the foes of darkness.

*“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:1-5).

Christians belong to the mightiest army which has ever existed, an army which cannot be defeated as long as it remains faithful to Christ. The world may think at times that the church has been defeated, that GOD has been vanquished — but GOD wins! **What an encouragement this realization should be to His people.**

**Hab. 3:9** *“Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.”*

*“Thy bow was made quite bare; The oaths to the tribes were a sure word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.”* (ASV)

“Your bow was made quite ready; Oaths were sworn over Your arrows. Selah You divided the earth with rivers.” (NKJV)

“Your bow was made bare, the rods of chastisement were sworn. You cleaved the earth with rivers.” (NASV)

**“Thy bow was made quite naked”** The imagery seems to be of a bow taken out of a case in order to ready it for use. This would seem to point to GOD’s being ready to take vengeance on His enemies, His people’s enemies. It is made ready. This may have reference to the time when the Israelites actually were preparing to enter the promised land. If so, it was an assurance that GOD would fight with them and the victory would be won. Considering the purpose of this song to encourage Judah in the trials it was soon to face, this would be a comforting thought. When GOD chose the time, He would uncase His weapons and fight, thus guaranteeing the victory.

*“Thy bow was made quite naked, i.e., was drawn forth from its cover, in which bows usually were cased when not in use”* (JFB, p. 634).

Note another passage in Psalm 7:12, which echoes the sentiment here. **“He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.”** (The idea of bending the bow to make it ready is a foreign concept to many archers today because of compound bows. When this writer was growing up his family was very active in archery. In those days, when one prepared his bow to shoot, he had to bend it in order to get the string on it. The bow was never put away without unstringing it. So each time it was to be used, it had to be bent and strung.)

**“according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word”** This phrase seems to be the covenant GOD had with His people. A homeland had been promised to them, beginning with the promises to Abraham and on down through time. This land would be theirs as long as they were obedient to GOD. Next is seen the pause (**“Selah”**) in order to contemplate what had been said.

**“Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers”** GOD’s cleaving the earth for rivers shows His mighty creative power. It could also have reference not only back to creation, but in keeping with the theme of this chapter, the ability of GOD to take care of His people by creating a path specifically to save them.

**“Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink”** (Numbers 20:8).

This was at Kadesh, and, friends, this was not a little creek. One cannot have enough water for over two million people in a creek, and do not forget about the needs of the animals they had with them. One might also remember what happened at Rephidim in Exodus 17:6.

**“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”**

Again, this would have required a river of water to slack the thirst of all.

**Hab. 3:10** “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.”

“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.” (ASV)

“The mountains saw You and trembled; The overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice, And lifted its hands on high.” (NKJV)

“The mountains saw You and quaked; the downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, it lifted high its hands.” (NASV)

One wonders if this may refer to the fact that nature recognizes its Creator, His ownership, and thus yields to His commands. Or does it refer to rulers who saw the effects of His power on the nations and trembled, as did the people of Jericho and their rulers, because they knew that GOD fought for His people and that no one had been able to defeat Him?

*“This is an affirmation of God’s creative power and his rulership over his creation. God has used the forces of nature to enforce his will upon various occasions”* (Needham, p. 100).

**Hab. 3:11** “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.”

“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.” (ASV)

“The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; At the light of Your arrows they went, At the shining of Your glittering spear.” (NKJV)

“Sun and moon stood in their places; they went away at the light of Your arrows, at the radiance of Your gleaming spear.” (NASV)

The sun and moon serve GOD in the habitation in which GOD placed them. This reminds one of their obedience, seen in Joshua 10:12-13, when GOD helped the Israelites defeat the Amorites.

**“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.”**

**Hab. 3:12** “Thou didst march through the land in indignation, Thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.”

“Thou didst march though the land in indignation; Thou didst thresh the nations in anger.” (ASV)

“You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger.” (NKJV)

“In indignation You marched through the earth; in anger You trampled the nations.” (NASV)

GOD led His people as a conquering king, a truly invincible king. The term “thresh” is an agricultural term and indicates the separation of the grain from the stalk and — still later — in the process of the grain’s being separated from the chaff. The chaff and the stalk would then be worthless, except for cooking fires and heat — in essence, they were destroyed. In the conquest of Canaan, it was GOD Who was leading the people to victory. It was GOD who was destroying their enemies — the One Whose judgments could not be stopped. GOD is always able to overcome His enemies.

**Hab. 3:13** “Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.”

“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. Selah.” (ASV)

“You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, By laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah” (NKJV)

“You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil to lay him open from thigh to neck.” (NASV)

GOD’s power was shown for the purpose of saving His people. GOD’s power was evidenced with regard to His Anointed One in giving Him power over death. Anytime GOD’s people have faced possible destruction, GOD has intervened, fought their battles, and given them victory. He will continue to do so.

“Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked” World leaders who have stood against GOD have been decapitated. This also reminds one of the prophecy given with regard to Satan.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The bruising of the heel is an inconvenience. It is an annoyance, a slight pain. But the bruising of the head is a death blow. Satan is indeed the author of death in this world. Death is an enemy to GOD’s people, to all of mankind. But in the end it shall be conquered.

“He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

**Hab. 3:14** “Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing

**was as to devour the poor secretly.”**

“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.” (ASV)

“You thrust through with his own arrows The head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.” (NKJV)

“You pierced with his own spears the head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret.” (NASV)

**“Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages”**

This seems to be an allusion to the plans of GOD's enemies being turned upon themselves. This was true of the Amorites and their confederates, when they turned on each other during the time of Gideon. Another example of this might be the Egyptians, who planned to destroy Israel at the Red Sea, yet they were the ones destroyed. All of the plans of the enemies of GOD's people will be destroyed, so that He and they will be victorious.

*“Pharaoh perished in the very Red Sea to which he had driven the children of Israel. Daniel's accusers perished in the den of lions where they had contrived to throw Daniel. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had erected upon which to hang Mordecai”* (Barnes, p. 218).

**“The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken”** (Psalm 9:15).

**“their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly”** The word “poor” in this passage seems to refer to helplessness. The mighty Egyptians looked at GOD's people as being helpless and easy prey. Often the enemies of GOD's people view them in the same way, helpless against their plots and schemes.

**Hab. 3:15 “Thou didst walk through the sea with Thine horses, through the heap of great waters.”**

“Thou didst tread the sea with Thy horses, The heap of mighty waters.” (ASV)

“You walked through the sea with Your horses, Through the heap of great waters.” (NKJV)

“You trampled on the sea which Your horses, on the surge of many waters.” (NASV)

If this is speaking of the Israelites' journey through the Red Sea, it speaks of GOD's leading the way. That which would be the salvation of His people would be the destruction of those who would destroy them. Again, if this is dealing with that time, it shows GOD's sovereignty and power over nature and all human forces that might be gathered against Him and His people. When one looks at this

particular event, he sees GOD opening the Sea for His people, while holding back the forces of Egypt with His cloud. When His people were safely across the Sea, then GOD opened the door for the Egyptians to follow. GOD set the trap and then closed the door by causing the heaps of water to crash upon and destroy their foe. Habakkuk ended his prayer here.

**Hab. 3:16** “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.”

“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.” (ASV)

“When 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. When He comes up to the people, he will invade them with his troops.” (NKJV)

“I heard and my inwards parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.” (NASV)

When GOD told Habakkuk that Judah would be overrun by her enemies, it caused him violent sensations throughout his body. He trembled in astonishment at GOD’s word and probably also at how bad things had gotten among the people in their sins. One’s bones allow him to stand upright, but Habakkuk’s bones seemed to have betrayed him, as if they had lost all strength. Fear for the people of Judah coursed through him, because he knew that GOD would keep His word. He knew they must suffer the punishment they deserved.

Yet, in all of his fear and acceptance of what must be done and would be done, Habakkuk saw the mercy of GOD. He knew that when Nebuchadnezzar came upon the land, that people who feared GOD as he did would eventually overcome through their faith, their trust, in GOD. After Habakkuk trembled, the ASV reads, *“because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble.”* It was in GOD’s hands and he knew that GOD would deal with Judah, as well as with Babylon, in a just manner. He knew that GOD would show mercy to His people when their punishment succeeded in turning them back to Him.

*“The knowledge, however, that Yahweh would ultimately crush Satan and all his hosts enabled Habakkuk and all other believers to maintain their faith even in the face of temporary triumphs of the enemy. Deliverance was certain, but it would come only after judgment”* (Smith, p. 467).

When he had first heard GOD’s word, it caused him to be astonished and tremble at what would come. He knew and expressed the idea in his prayer that there was no force or power which could stop GOD. But notice what happened next. He could rest because he knew that,

in the end, everything was going to be all right — it would be done GOD’s way and for His righteous purposes.

Another thought this writer would like to express comes to mind. Note that it was when Habakkuk heard the voice of GOD that he trembled. **What caused him to tremble? Was it just hearing GOD speak? Or was it because of what GOD said?** GOD had revealed to Habakkuk that there was going to be a day of judgment, and this caused His **faithful prophet** to tremble in fear for those upon whom it would come. GOD has promised an ultimate judgment day in which all who have opposed Him, all who have disobeyed Him, will be cast into eternal Hell. **Do GOD’s people today tremble for the souls who will suffer, as this writer believes Habakkuk was doing?**

**Hab. 3:17-18 “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD of my salvation.”**

“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.” (ASV)

“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; 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—Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the GOD of my salvation.” (NKJV)

“Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the GOD of my salvation.” (NASV)

The picture being painted in verse seventeen is the utter failure of the crops to produce and the destruction of the animals. Everything named was valuable to the Israelites in order to live — these were not luxury items. **How could these things fail?** There are several possibilities. Famine would cause these things not to produce and would result in the death of many of the animals. War would accomplish this as well, through the conquering armies taking everything for themselves. Earlier in this book, Habakkuk described the greediness of the conquering Babylonians. This devastation would continue after the the initial conquest. Many would die in battle, many would die simply because of the brutality of the conquerer, and many would be carried away into captivity. **How could the fields be cultivated and the vineyards cared for when the laborers had been removed?**

In the midst of the devastation Habakkuk described, one sees a great man of faith. Habakkuk understood that joy and happiness do not come from the circumstances around one. **“He realized that inner peace did not depend on outward prosperity”** (Cook, p. 1521). Truly,

the man of GOD knows that true joy is found only in the one who puts his complete trust in GOD — not on the things or the circumstances which surround him. **“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”** (Job 13:15). No matter what happens in this world, one must have the same attitude that Jesus had in the Garden of Gethsemane — **“nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt”** (Matthew 26:39).

*“Habakkuk’s love of God and loyalty to his Creator did not depend on God’s answering his prayer in the manner Habakkuk had hoped”* (Coffman, p. 113).

This faith and trust in GOD is to exist in one whether the times are good or bad. This is the kind of faith which will lead to one’s salvation.

*“Stripped of all else, he could never be deprived of his covenant God”* (Baker, quoted by Needham, p. 340).

**Hab. 3:19** **“The LORD GOD is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.”**

“Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, And will make me to walk upon my high places.” (ASV)

“The LORD GOD is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.” (NKJV)

“The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds feet, and makes me walk on my high places.” (NASV)

**“The LORD GOD is my strength”** *“Security and hope are not based on temporal blessings but on the Lord Himself”* (MacArthur, p. 1035). Nothing in this world is a sure thing. Nothing can be guaranteed, not the riches held for a short time, not power usually gained through dishonesty and corruption. Only those who are spiritual know without doubt that there is security and hope in the strength provided by GOD. It is strength of conviction that GOD always provides the best of everything, and faith in Him provides eternal hope and security.

*“In fruitful fields and flocks men had been taught to look for the presence and blessing of God; but here is a man who can dispense with all that, who can believe where he cannot see, who loves God, not for his gifts, but for himself, who can dispense with them all if he has but him”* (McFadyen, p. 808).

**“He will make my feet like hinds' feet”** The feet of the **“hind”** (deer) are sure and steady as it travels through the meadows, forest and up the mountains. Habakkuk was basically saying that he had the ability to traverse the trials of this life because GOD was his strength. Through His strength, he could traverse the dangers of the hunted and overcome all obstacles which were faced. **Why?** Because he saw by faith the eternal home that GOD offered. He knew that faithfulness, guaranteed by GOD, would be his.

**“and He will make me to walk upon mine high places”** Habakkuk

could ascend to the heights because of the confidence he had in GOD's promises. He would not just get through all of this. He would be victorious. GOD was on His throne! Israel would be restored to the land, and one day the Anointed One would come, bringing victory to the faithful.

### **Post Script**

**"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).**

Involved in this passage is a basic thought which is essential for all believers to adopt. **"The just shall live by faith"** It is so essential that this phrase is found three times in the New Testament.

**"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17).**

**"that no man is justified by the law in the sight of GOD, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).**

**"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).**

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the King James Version.

ASV — American Standard Version (1901)

NKJV — New King James Version

NASV — New American Standard Version