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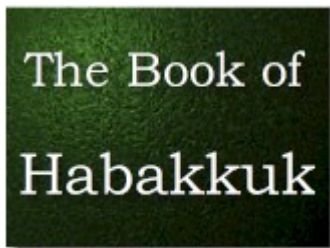
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The Book of Habakkuk

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Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, October 2013

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for October 2013](#)



Habakkuk is the first of two related prophecies of the Twelve Minor Prophets written in the post-Assyrian period. The other prophecy was by Zephaniah, Habakkuk's companion. Both were written during the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, which reached its height in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Habakkuk's prophecy was written in the last part of the 7th century or the early part of the 6th century BC. This is a very technical book.²

The prophecy of Habakkuk is three chapters long and it is packed with events that occur at the very end of the age, a time just before the Advent of Christ's Kingdom on earth. This is clear if you read the chapters together as a unit. Habakkuk was written to show people at the very end what would occur in the Middle East. Some of the nations of the Middle East are mentioned, principally the antagonist which is the Neo-Babylonian Empire known as the Chaldean people. King Nebuchadnezzar was in charge of these people. We find him mentioned frequently in the last part of the Book of Second Kings. Nebuchadnezzar and his armies destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple around the year of 586 BC.

Habakkuk wrote some 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, perhaps 30 or 35 years. He did not refer in this prophecy to that destruction. Nor did he refer to the destruction of the Temple built by Herod in the time of the apostles. Habakkuk's prophecy has to do with the time of the end. Statements in this

¹ This article by Dr. Martin was originally a tape titled "Habakkuk and Modern Times," with additions from a 1977 tape titled "Habakkuk." DWS

² This dating of Habakkuk's authorship is likely within 30 years of the true time. It is more than 600 years before Jesus. *ELM* Assyria still threatened kingdoms of the Middle East until a coalition led by Babylon conquered the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 BC. Babylon fought Egypt at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, after the death of King Josiah of Judah in battle against Pharaoh Necho. In 598 BC, Babylon attacked Judah and exiled many of its leaders. Around 587/586 BC Judah was conquered; Jerusalem and the Temple were demolished. Therefore, Habakkuk was written after 612 BC, and very likely after 605 BC, but before the destruction of the Temple, most likely prior to 598 BC. (Habakkuk 2:20 can be construed to imply this.) He was contemporary with the prophet Jeremiah who knew of Habakkuk's prophecies, as did all Judah. DWS

prophecy link up with the Book of Revelation. So Habakkuk has relevance for us, but not immediately. Its events occupy the last 7 years of history before the Advent of Jesus Christ, and the emergence of the Kingdom of God and the Millennium.

When you look at the whole of this prophecy, along with that of Zephaniah and some others, you see a consistency in those scriptures about this period known as the time of the end. The Book of Revelation describes in detail the last 7 years. It divides the 7 years into half on one side and half on the other, called 3½ years, or **“a time, times and a half a time.”** (Revelation 12:14). We find the same thing in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 12:7).

What we need to do is to connect all of the prophetic scenarios, in the Old and the New Testaments together, to get a proper chronological framework for them. Then we can begin to place these end time prophecies into their proper positions as to when events will occur.

A Warning in Habakkuk

We can come to some reasonably precise time periods for the Book of Habakkuk. But we also find in this book that although things may seem to occur very quickly, we find warnings in Habakkuk (and also in Zephaniah) about being careful with time periods. In other words, though it may look like we are knowledgeable about when events will occur, there will always be some doubt about the timing. This warning is given in the Book of Habakkuk as I point out below.

When you look at the prophecy, it is packed with information about events regarding these Chaldean invaders upon Judea, the Babylonians at the end of the age, and about a particular man who will lead the Babylonian forces. In fact, he is singled out as an individual. He seems to be very close to the man of sin, or the son of perdition, or as indicated in the Book of Revelation the beast or perhaps the antichrist prophesied in the New Testament to be on the scene at the end of the age. There are ramifications of that here in the Book of Habakkuk, ramifications which include many of the activities of the antichrist.

We find Habakkuk right at first asking God several questions. Then God, in a written vision (it is a vision but in written form), answers Habakkuk.³ After God answers, He gives additional information on the vision in the first chapter of Habakkuk.

Finally, in chapter 3 we find Habakkuk’s response to this marvelous vision and the interpretation provided by God. The response by Habakkuk is most interesting because it is exactly like David, Solomon, or anyone who wrote a Psalm. We have 150 Psalms in the Bible. But we actually have more than that because chapter 3 of the Book of Habakkuk is also a Psalm.

A Quick Analysis of Habakkuk

Having had an introduction to Habakkuk, what does this prophet have to say? In the first statement of this prophecy, we must make an interpretation because we cannot understand what it means unless we comprehend what the prophet himself could see back at that time. It starts with Habakkuk 1:1: **“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.”** He saw something with the eye that prompted him to ask God some questions. What he saw was a dialogue between himself and God.

What is meant by **“the burden”**? A burden is something you carry. You put a burden on the back of a

Table 1: Structure of the Twelve Prophets

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | <i>Assyrian Period</i> | } | Hosea |
| 2 | | | Joel |
| 3 | | | Amos |
| 4 | | | Obadiah |
| 5 | | | Jonah |
| 6 | | | Micah |
| 7 | | | Nahum |
| 8 | <i>Babylonian Period</i> | } | HABAKKUK |
| 9 | | | Zephaniah |
| 10 | <i>Post-Babylonian Period</i> | } | Haggai |
| 11 | | | Zechariah |
| 12 | | | Malachi |

³ This means Habakkuk had a vision of a written document. He read the words while in a vision. DWS

donkey. You can take up a burden and put it on your back. That is what is meant by **“the burden”** Habakkuk saw. There are similar expressions about burdens in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other places in Scripture. Later in 3:16, the knowledge that God gives to Habakkuk frightens him greatly and makes him weak.

Habakkuk was so weighed down with the knowledge of the truth in this prophecy that it became a burden to him. The only way he could release himself from that burden was to give his burden to the people. Step by step as he gave this message to them, one pound, two pounds at a time. By the time he got to the end of these three chapters, he had taken off all weight from his shoulder and he was able to rejoice (Habakkuk 3:18–19). Let the people do as they please with it, it was no longer a burden to Habakkuk.

Verses 1:2–4 are what Habakkuk said to God. He says it in the sense of an appeal, expressing himself on how he longed for the teaching of God. It seemed that God was far removed and remote from him. He starts with a question you and I are usually interested in. That question is about which is the time when things will occur. Oh God, when will you help me? Will you help me now? Will you help me tomorrow? Will you help me next week? Will you help me next year? Please God, tell me, how long will it be before you help me? How many times have we, in our prayers, asked on any particular occasion for any particular thing, we always want a time element in it. That is natural and there is nothing wrong with that.

That is how Habakkuk begins, asking God about this prophecy: **“O YHWH, how long shall I cry”** (1:2). He had been crying about problems involving Judea. The Chaldeans were rising up. The Syrians had been put down, but now the mighty empire of the Neo-Babylon was rising on the scene up north between the rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. He saw as a prophet the destruction to come upon Judea, Jerusalem, and the Temple at Jerusalem. **“How long shall I cry. And you will not hear.”** You know of my appeal **“and you will not hear.”** This is Habakkuk speaking. Jeremiah said the same thing on many occasions. Job forcefully challenged God. Others have also. You would think a prophet would not be so negative, but prophets are humans just as we are.

“... and you will not hear! Even cry out unto you of violence and you will not save! [You do not seem to answer my prayers.] **Why do you show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?”**

• **Habakkuk 1:2–3**

This is what the prophet saw in the vision shown to him. He did not see happiness and joy. He saw grievance and problems on the horizon. He saw destruction. What was he seeing?

“For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are [they] that rise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, judgment does never go forth: for the wicked does compass about the righteous therefore wrong judgment proceeds.”

• **Habakkuk 1:3–4**

That is what he says to God. He starts out with this appeal. How long will you not hear me? How long will you not save? All I see around me is violence, destruction, and the wicked man. God answers Habakkuk in verse 5, who in turn as a prophet gives it to Israel as God’s spokesman.

God’s response is also in the form of a vision. It says in Habakkuk 2:2, **“Write the vision and make it plain upon tables.”** Habakkuk was told to write it for posterity’s sake, so there would not be any mistakes or omissions, so that everyone would know it was from God. God said to Habakkuk in the vision:

“Behold you [Habakkuk] among the heathen [the nations], and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which you will not believe, though it be told you.”

• **Habakkuk 1:5**

It seems at first that the prophecy will occur in the period of Habakkuk, but it did not. It will occur in the future, and it has not yet occurred. When you put together all the prophetic information in the scripture it comes down to the period just prior to the Day of the Lord, which will be about a 7-year period broken into halves, 3½ years on one side and 3½ years on the other, as we find in Daniel and Revelation.

YHWH's Response

He starts out by saying, **"I will work a work,"** a marvelous work. It shall be a work that you will not believe possible, but I, God, will do it. Though I tell you, and you know it comes from Me, you will be surprised. You shall say, oh no, this cannot be. Well it will be. What kind of a work will He do? He says:

"I raise up the Chaldeans [a nation whose capital was Babylon] that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs."

• ***Habakkuk 1:6***

They will expand their armies into areas that are not theirs. One nation affected will be the nation of Judah. In fact, it will include the nation of Egypt too. Babylon will stretch out to control the entire Middle East. When you look at Daniel, written later, Babylon's tentacles of control embrace the entire world.

"They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves [to exercise power and authority]. 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 hastens to eat."

• ***Habakkuk 1:7-8***

This is for modern times. Back then they saw the eagle flying in the heavens. They had no type of warfare which could come from the heavens. These people will come through the air.

"They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn to them: they shall deride every stronghold [fort, citadel]; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change [suddenly], and he will pass over, and offend [his own god], imputing this his power unto his [own] god."

• ***Habakkuk 1:9-11***

"His god" is a special god that this Chaldean shall bring up at the end of the age.

Nebuchadnezzar did that very thing. Nebuchadnezzar was a type of the man of sin Habakkuk was talking about. But he was not exhaustively this person, because this prophecy has to do with the end time. Then Habakkuk, in the name of Israel, comments concerning this vision. Habakkuk says to God after hearing:

"Are you not from everlasting [ancient time] O YHWH my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O YHWH, you have ordained them for judgment."

• ***Habakkuk 1:12***

The Chaldeans are coming because you, YHWH, are in charge. That is what God is telling to Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is having a dialogue with God. He asked God a question. God answers in a vision. God tells him to write the vision down. The vision itself is about the Chaldeans who will be raised up by God to do a mighty work that most people would not believe. But God will do it. He will give them extensive powers to be able, finally, to take over the entire world. That is what it says when you go to the Book of Daniel. You must go outside of the Book of Habakkuk to see the entire future scenario.

Habakkuk then muses over this and as a spokesman for Israel, he says to God, "Alright, now I begin to understand what you mean. That you are God."

"Are you not from everlasting [from antiquity], O YHWH my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O YHWH, you have ordained them [the Chaldeans] for judgment. ..."

• ***Habakkuk 1:12***

God, you are in charge. You will bring up the Chaldeans, though they are mighty, though they are powerful, though they will exert punishment, in the end we will not all die. You will come to us. And the

end of verse 12, “... **And, O mighty God, you have established them for correction.**” The Chaldeans will be used to punish Judah and Israel. God in turn will judge and correct them.

I want to point out something in the King James Version that you must observe carefully. From verse 1:12 to verse 17 (the end of the chapter), the KJV has Habakkuk referring to the Chaldeans in the plural. The original Hebrew is not in the plural, it is in the singular. It is talking about the leader of the Chaldeans. It should be left in the singular because it refers to a particular individual who is the leader of the Chaldeans who is under discussion. Here is Habakkuk 1:12–17 with the proper pronouns, just as in the Hebrew:

“[Habakkuk says] **‘We shall not die. O YHWH, you have ordained him for judgment; and, O mighty God, you have established him for correction. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity: wherefore look you upon them that deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked [one] devours the man that is more righteous than he? And make men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?’**”

• *Habakkuk 1:12–14*

The King James says “they” but in the Hebrew it is “he”:

“**He takes up all of them with the angle [fishhook], he catches them in his net, and gather them in his drag [dragnet]: therefore he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices unto his net, and burns incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his meat plenteous. Shall he therefore empty his net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?”**

• *Habakkuk 1:15–17*

That takes us to the end of the first chapter. This man, called the Chaldean that Habakkuk is discussing with God, will take into his nets, his drags, or his hooks all the nations of the world into his authority. He will exercise authority from the evil one — and God will allow him to do so.

The apostle Paul also zeroed in on an individual called “**the wicked one**” otherwise known as “**the man of sin**” or “**the son of perdition**” in the end time. In the 13th chapter of the Book of Revelation, you find him called the Beast, a singular individual. So too the antichrist is mentioned as a singular individual. Obviously, this singular ruler will have an army that he controls and uses.

The emphasis in Habakkuk is upon the individual from verses 12 to 17. Every time you meet with the plural in the KJV, just change it to “he” referring to this man who will lead the Chaldeans. Mankind will be chastised by this one man, whose power and authority reaches out over the nations to slay. It is a worldwide affair. Not just for Judah. Habakkuk’s reaction was almost like Jonah’s. Remember how Jonah after prophesying against the Assyrians, went up a hillside, sat down, and he said, “I will see what happens.”

Habakkuk 2:1 actually belongs with the end of chapter 1 because it concludes what Habakkuk, as a spokesman for Israel, is saying to God:

“**I will stand upon my watch [he says], and set me [myself] upon the tower, and will watch to see what he [God] will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.**”

• *Habakkuk 2:1*

He tells God, I will wait and see what the complete answer will be.

He says, “**I will stand upon my watch, ...**” When nighttime comes there is the first watch. That occupies from 6 p.m. to around 9 or 10 at night. The second watch is from about 10 at night until 1 a.m. in the morning. The third watch comes from 1 a.m. to about 4 a.m. in the morning. The fourth watch, the last watch comes from 4 a.m. in the morning until daylight.

Habakkuk is saying that he will be in his watch, in the nighttime, in Jerusalem at the time, looking over all the land. God has told him the Chaldeans will take over this land. They have not done it yet. There will be one man in particular called the Chaldean King who shall do all of this. So Habakkuk says, God you told me this. I will go right up and, “**I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower.**” (Habakkuk 2:1). A tower over Jerusalem. He climbs up the tower, goes to the top, looks around 360° and watches for the

Chaldeans to come. He says he will set himself,

“... upon the tower, and will watch to see what he [God] will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”

• **Habakkuk 2:1**

Habakkuk is saying, you have said all this to me God, now I am in a high tower over Jerusalem, and I want to wait and let you tell me more about what will happen.

In verse 2, God comes to answer Habakkuk. Habakkuk is in the tower, at the end of the 7th century BC. He has already been told that sometime in the future the Chaldeans will take over all the land. He says, ‘Okay God, now tell me what shall happen.’

Chapter 2 of Habakkuk

We next come to a dialogue that starts with God speaking. He will answer Habakkuk, who is on the watchtower waiting for God's answer. God responds to the vision He gave to Habakkuk about the Chaldeans being raised up to conquer the world. In the Book of Daniel it says that they will conquer the world. In the Book of Revelation, it says they will conquer the world. This man called the antichrist will conquer the world, leading the Chaldeans and allied nations. We will understand it when we put all the relevant passages together. Look at what God answers in Habakkuk 2:2, going to verse 2:20:

“YHWH answered me, and said, ‘Write the vision, make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it.’”

• **Habakkuk 2:2**

You know what the phrase **“run that reads it”** means? It means to run through the prophecy, run to and fro within it. In the Book of Daniel at the end when the enigmatic prophecies of Daniel were given, it says they will be closed and sealed unto the end of the time (Daniel 12:4–13). But at the end of the age they will **“run to and fro”** in the prophecy which will be made known. You and I are approaching that time when the prophecy of Daniel will be made known.⁴

But God also says that those reading the written vision in Habakkuk will **“run”** in that prophecy also. When the prophecy is made known, it will be a most marvelous thing as he says in Habakkuk 1:5. You will not believe it, but it will happen. A world government will come up. This is what the Book of Daniel talks about. This is what the Book of Revelation talks about. And though it is a very small prophecy, this is what the Book of Habakkuk talks about. It talks about the last 7 years just before the second coming of Christ.

“Write the vision [I will give you], and make it plain upon the tables [writing tablets], that he may run that reads it [to understand it]. For the vision is yet for an appointed time ...”

• **Habakkuk 2:2–3**

Habakkuk thought it was on the immediate horizon. But Nebuchadnezzar was not the king involved in this prophecy, though one might understandably think that. Certain aspects of the prophecy seem to fit

⁴ This concept of “running” through God’s Word is also in the New Testament. Look at Galatians 2:2. The apostle Paul gives an illustration of this very figure of speech as late as his own time:

“I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”

He meant running through the prophecies, running through doctrine. Running meant to take the knowledge of God, to run with it, make it plain, and make it clear. Paul was saying that if he had not gone down to Jerusalem and made these things clear, he would have run in vain. Turn to Jeremiah 23, written about the same time as Habakkuk. You will see there what it means to “run” through a vision or a prophecy. Here is what Jeremiah said about false prophets: **“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied”** (Jeremiah 23:21). *ELM*

Nebuchadnezzar, and he was a type and not the end person, the person is coming in the end time, at an appointed time. In fact, it says, **“but at the end it shall speak.”** That is when the vision will speak, at the very end, the end of the age, just before the Kingdom of God emerges on earth. **“And it will not lie ...”** He is telling the truth in the vision. Notice the next three words, **“though it tarry, ...”** This is interesting.

“Though it tarry,” it will be right on time. But we will think it tarries. There will come a time when you and I, as human beings, will think everything is on schedule, but events will not happen according to our timetable. Remember what Jesus said to the apostles? He said at the end of the age things will look precisely like they should be happening. I even have a time schedule that looks pretty good, but I guarantee you one thing, whatever timetable you set will not be accurate. It will always seem to go on a little longer.

YHWH goes on to say, **“though it tarry, wait for it.”** Wait because it will occur. The next verse says, **“It will not tarry.”** You think it will tarry but it will not. It will come on time. When? At the appointed time. Who will appoint that time? God appoints the time. So the warning is, this will happen, it will be marvelous and wonderful, it will come on time, but you will think it is delayed.⁵

“... it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul [the wicked one, the Chaldean leader] which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith [God’s faith].”

• **Habakkuk 2:3–4**

This verse was quoted by the apostle Paul. In Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:38 Paul translates it **“the just shall live by faith.”** Habakkuk writes it as **“the just shall live by HIS faith”** to show that God’s faith is what you should live by and not by human faith. Going on,

“Yea also, because he transgresses by wine [he is violent, he has wine in him and thinks he is bold], he is a proud man, neither keeps [himself] at home [rampaging through areas not his own] ... but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people.”

• **Habakkuk 2:5**

No one will be left out of his authority. This is talking about world domination. Then it says,

“Shall not all these [the nations] take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him and say, ...”

• **Habakkuk 2:6**

The Parable and Proverb of the Five Woes

Here comes a proverb, a parable, which will speak against this wicked one, this man of sin, this antichrist leader of the Chaldeans, this man who controls the world. This parable and proverb is in five divisions, a parable of five woes against him and against the world. Each of the five divisions starts with the word, in English, Woe. W-O-E. There are five of them. Read them fully yourself.

- **WOE #1** is Habakkuk 2:6 (through verse 8),

“Woe to him that increases that which is not his! how long [will it last] ...?”

It will tarry. How long the nations ask? They do not know, but God has the appointed time.

- **WOE #2** is Habakkuk 2:9 (through verse 11),

“Woe to him that covets ...”

⁵ This is exactly what Jesus’ prophecies said. The earlier apostles thought that in their generation Jesus would come back. They thought, about in 40 years He would be back on earth, and then suddenly God gave a revelation to Peter, Paul, and the others to show it would be far in the future. That is how God does things. God is not hiding it from us. He says this vision will take place, and it will occur on time, but it will be on His time schedule, not yours or mine. *ELM*

- **WOE #3** is Habakkuk 2:12 (through verse 14),
“Woe to him that builds a town with blood and establishes a city by iniquity.”
- **WOE #4** is Habakkuk 2:15 (through verse 18),
“Woe to him that gives his neighbor drink [false drink] ...”
- **WOE #5** is Habakkuk 2:19,
“Woe to him that says to the wood, ‘Awake’; to the dumb stone, ‘Arise, it shall teach ...’ [in idolatry].”

The parable and proverb is in five divisions. Every one is a Woe. The nations themselves will say against the condition that this man will introduce.

He will introduce idolatry into the world, though it will not look like idolatry. He will introduce problems into the world. The nations themselves shall taunt this individual through God. They will understand — finally — that God is doing this marvelous work. But the man will do a judgment against the entire world. That is what we need to recognize. It is for an appointed time. It will be a time when people will say, how long will this take to happen?⁶

These five Woes show the extreme corruption in the earth. This man who is the leader of the Chaldeans is supposed to be bringing peace and security as far as the people are told, but he really brings in corruption. This is a great mystery to occur at the end of the age. It says the prophecy should be written down, people then can run through it, and understand it at that time. That ends the prophecy through chapter 2.

Chapter 3 of Habakkuk

In chapter 3 the dialogue between God and Habakkuk ceases. Habakkuk gives a long psalm of 19 verses in a response to the future time when this Chaldean King will control all the earth. He is the Man of Sin mentioned by Paul, and the Beast in the Book of Revelation. Then God will rescue Israel and the nations. Look at it carefully. I will introduce the scene:

Chapter 3 is a psalm composed by Habakkuk, dedicated to YHWH. In fact, this psalm by Habakkuk provides a key to help increase our understanding of all psalms in the Bible.

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth [a type of musical instrument]. O YHWH, I have heard your speech, and was afraid: O YHWH, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”

• **Habakkuk 3:1**

“In the midst of the years” refers to some unspecified period of years. What period is that? Habakkuk does not tell us. But if you go to the Books of Daniel and Revelation you will find there is a 7-year period at the end of the age. **“In the midst of the years”** of a 7 year period something will happen at the end of the age things will happen, **“make known; in wrath remember mercy.”** God will make known His mercy. But the only way you shall know when it will be, is to go to the Books of Daniel and Revelation.

⁶ Isaiah 5:25 starts a prophecy going through chapter 9, five times are mentioned. In Amos 4:6–11, five punishments are given. A sixth and final punishment is threatened: **“... prepare to meet your God, Oh Israel!”** (Amos 4:12). In the prophecies of Leviticus if the people of ancient Israel were to go contrary to God, there will be five divisions of woes. Seven-fold problems will come upon them five different times. There is also a positive side to this five-fold way of God doing things. The first five books of the Bible are the Law of God. In the Law of the New Testament, there are five books, the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. The 150 Psalms are in five divisions. Here we have a parable, a proverb, with five woes. They show extreme corruption on earth. This man of the Chaldeans who is supposed to bring in peace and security, he is really bringing in corruption. This is a great mystery which will occur at the end of the age in a written prophecy that people can **“run”** through it by reading it. *ELM*

Prophecies in Psalms

Many psalms in Scripture were meant to be prophecies. This particular Psalm in chapter 3 of Habakkuk is clearly a prophecy. It is written in meter form. It starts out discussing things just like David or other writers have done in their psalms, and the psalm of Habakkuk chapter 3 closes with an appeal to put the whole to music on stringed instruments (Habakkuk 3:19).

In ancient times many of the prophecies were to be accompanied by music, strange as that may seem, like an opera today, a kind of stage show with music. Many of the psalms were designed in that fashion. Most were to be performed in the Temple at particular times of the year in association with the festivals of God, to add material to the theme of the festival. All the psalms apparently had musical notation for the musicians and stage productions. Acting on-stage with music enhanced the various prophetic themes.⁷

As a psalm put to music with instruments, the last chapter of Habakkuk was put, no doubt, in a “minor” key as we would say, because it is a prophecy of doom. At the same time it shows at the very end that there will be redemption and God will finally redeem Israel and the entire world.

Habakkuk is rather a sophisticated prophecy of 3 chapters. It is basically a dialogue between the prophet Habakkuk and God — or Habakkuk being a spokesman for Israel and God answering. The first way that God answers is through a written vision given to Habakkuk. In response to the visionary experience, as well as God’s interpretation of Habakkuk’s vision, we have the 3rd chapter as a psalm set to music telling a story of what will happen in the future.⁸ In Habakkuk we have a combination of (1) general prophetic statements, (2) a vision, (3) plus a musical score at the end, an opera of one chapter performed in the Temple. This was one of the psalms of Israel, but it is found in the prophecy of Habakkuk.

The Key to the Psalms in Habakkuk

I want to mention something in Habakkuk which helps us understand the entire Book of Psalms. A scholar in the last part of the 19th century saw this: Professor James Thirtle. He wrote a book called *The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained* (London: Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1916). He made a major discovery that is really quite a simple thing. Look at the 3rd chapter of Habakkuk, for an object lesson of how to interpret the scripture. The psalm in Habakkuk provides a key for unlocking the meaning of most all the psalms in the Old Testament.

Look at Habakkuk 3:1 it says, **“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.”** Shigionoth means a particular type of a theme, an opera, or a musical instrument. Verse 2 starts the theme. Then notice the last verse of Habakkuk, which is also the end of the psalm: **“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.”**

That is interesting. Almost all music we have today has the directions for the performance at the beginning. You will find details of how it is to be performed. You would not think of giving the details at the end of a musical composition, but in ancient times it was different. They would give about half of the instruction at the beginning and half at the end.

So it says here, **“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.”** That is at the end of the psalm. That was a major discovery Professor Thirtle gave us. Go back to the start of Psalm 4. It says, **“To the chief musician on Neginoth,”** and the next thing says, **“A song of David.”**

The King James translators, and even people that arranged Bible much later, did not understand what was occurring here. They put **“to the chief musician”** at the beginning of Psalm 4 when it belongs at the end

⁷ See Dr. Martin’s information in his article [“Megillot in Prophecy”](#) and his discussion about the Megillot in [“Chapter 10: The Writings Division”](#) from Dr. Martin’s book *Restoring the Original Bible: The Design and Development of Scripture*. See Dr. Martin’s article [“Psalms, Music and Prophecy.”](#) DWS

⁸ That is one way people could understand things in ancient times. When one went to the Temple at a particular period and you would hear that a psalm or psalms would be read, you would be prepared for entertainment, but you would also receive information in meter form, with stringed instruments, like an opera being performed to the crowd. At the end when you leave the performance, it sticks with you, especially if the music is powerful and penetrating to your mind. ELM

of Psalm 3. Go down to Psalm 5. It says **“To the chief musician upon Nehiloth.”** That belongs to Psalm 4 and not the beginning of Psalm 5. Psalm 4 starts **“a Psalm of David.”** The musical notations are to the previous Psalm not the one that follows. Carry on all the way through the Psalms and you will find that to be the case.

Another person wrote a psalm after he was given 15 extra years of life, because he was so appreciative of his gift from God that he wrote a psalm. That was King Hezekiah of Judah. He began his psalm in Isaiah 38:9 by saying, **“The writing of Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.”** This writing is in musical score, in meter. At the end of it says, **“We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of YHWH”** (Isaiah 38:20).⁹ Hezekiah’s psalm also ends with singing accompanied by stringed instruments, just like Habakkuk 3:19.

So when you go to the Psalms, when you see it says **“to the stringed instruments”** and so forth, put that with the previous Psalm and not with the one that follows. You might say, that does not make much difference one way or another, but it does. It shows the proper connection from one psalm and another all the way through. It allows one to divide properly the Psalms and their messages in a proper way.¹⁰ So Habakkuk provides us with a key to help us understand all Psalms.

Habakkuk’s Response to God in Chapter 3

What was Habakkuk’s response? He gave us an operatic psalm set to music and dedicated to God, to be read in the Temple to God’s people. It was a prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, upon Shigionoth, which means it is a turbulent type of a psalm with much crescendo in it as you get near the end. Habakkuk says:

“O YHWH, I have heard your speech, and was afraid: O YHWH, revive your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”

• ***Habakkuk 3:2***

Habakkuk starts his psalm mentioning the middle of a set period. He wants God to remember Israel and to show mercy. In a time of wrath which we read about, **“... in the midst of the years.”** God is very interested in this period, elsewhere called **“the time of the end.”** Remember in chapter 2? There God also said it will not tarry. It will come right on time, but you will think it delays. You will say as Habakkuk did, **“how long O YHWH”** (Habakkuk 1:2, 2:6) will you put up with this? **“How long?”**

Chronology figures into it, but people at the time will wonder, “Is God going to come and rescue us, or not?” Habakkuk is writing under inspiration of God, in the middle of a set period of time asking for God’s mercy upon his people, the righteous people of Israel.

In the Book of Daniel we have at the end of the age, both in the 70 weeks prophecy, and in chapters 7 and 8, we have a period of time lasting 7 years. That period is divided in half, in the middle of which certain things happen, 3½ year on one side, 3½ years on the other. When you go to the Book of Revelation, you read the same thing. You read about 1260 days or 42 months, or you read about a “time, times, and a half a time,” all which are a 3½ year period. The end time, that period of time which the 70 weeks prophecy of the Book of Daniel talks about (which is the chief chronological prophecy in the Bible), you find that the 7 years is the very period of time at the end. Habakkuk does not say 7 years, but he is asking for help for

⁹ When you go to the book of Luke there is a psalm uttered by Mary in Luke 1:46–55. In Latin it is called the Magnificat. Philippians 2:6–11 is understood by many scholars to have stylistic elements of a psalm. Some translations typeset this passage as poetry, supposedly composed by an unknown member of the *ekklesia* and quoted because it precisely stated the apostle Paul’s views. *ELM*

¹⁰ Poetic speech is qualitatively different from prose speech. Remember, all ancient writing — all of it — was written to be spoken aloud, to be heard and appeal to the ear. Poetic speech has an additional component of meaning and requires rigorous and careful analysis, particularly with prophecies written (and therefore spoken) which pertain to our near future. In years to come Hebrew speakers who believe in Christ’s resurrection will be especially valuable to the Body of Christ. While excellent scholarly work has been done analyzing biblical poetry, a great deal more knowledge and understanding is needed. I believe God will expand our knowledge and “open” the intricacies of biblical poetry, music, and prophetic psalms. *DWS*

God's people right in the middle of the time period, "... remember mercy."

Verse 3, "**God came down from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah**" That means, just as when God came down to Mount Sinai, met with Moses, and introduced Himself to all Israel, God will come down to help His people with power and authority. Then it says "**Selah.**" That is a psalm phrase which means, "lift up the baton" indicating a pause, in other words think intently on what has just been said.

Here is what happens when this occurs in the middle of this period.

"His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light [like the sun in its strength], **he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power** [coming forth with splendor]. **Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 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** [last for the age, *olam*]. **I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction ..."**

• *Habakkuk 3:3-7*

Cushan

The first Cush, the son of Ham, back in the time of Noah was the first to settle Mesopotamia. It was called the ancient Cassite area, as indicated in ancient cuneiform tablets. The first Cush was in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and then they moved away. Half went to Africa and became the Ethiopians, the Cushites in the south. Half went east to India and became the Cushites in the east. The Hindu Cush Mountains are part of the Himalayas chain. These first ones to establish themselves in the area of Babylon were dark people by complexion. Nimrod, the first world despot, was from Ham. The ancient Chaldeans going back to Noah gave their names "Cush" or "**Cushan**" to the geography of Mesopotamia. The Chaldeans in the time of Nebuchadnezzar were different.

So there is coming a Babylon in the future.¹¹ Babylon will be revived. We are having trouble right now, with Iraq. It is a backward area at present. I have been saying that for a long time, yet not I but God saying it. There will be a revival of the city of Babylon. It will come up in Mesopotamia. It will be powerful in the years ahead of us. That is the reason I can say, the next five years, we cannot expect these prophecies to take place because the city of Babylon has not been raised up yet. The original area of the Cushan, the Cassites, in ancient Mesopotamia have not come back to glory yet. There are still events in the Middle East with Israel and Egypt that have yet to take place. But the stage is being set for this 7-year period at the end of the age that Habakkuk writes about. It is an appointed time, and it will not tarry beyond the time that God has scheduled it, though we may think it will. It will happen exactly as God says.

"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction [the land of Midian is in the same area] **... Was YHWH displeased against the rivers** [Tigris and Euphrates]? **Was your anger against the rivers? Was your wrath against the sea?"**

• *Habakkuk 3:7-8*

The rest of this passage tells how God shall destroy the land of the Chaldeans, the land of Babylon, the land of this man who becomes the man of sin, the son of perdition, or the beast. God in the end will secure peace and prosperity, but a time of great trouble will come just before that peace can arrive.

"You did walk through the sea with your horses, through the heap of great waters. When I heard, my belly trembled [at the Chaldeans deeds and God's response]; **... in the day of trouble: when he is comes up unto the people, he** [this antichrist] **will invade them with his troops."**

• *Habakkuk 3:15-16*

¹¹ See articles by Dr. Martin (1975) "[The Rebirth of Babylon](#)" and by F.E. Marsh (1925), "[Will Babylon be Rebuilt?](#)" *DWS*

He will be put down. Who will have the greatest strength? It says in verse 19:

“The YHWH God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet [fast like deer], and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”

• **Habakkuk 3:19**

Here is Habakkuk as spokesman for Israel saying that Israel in the end will secure peace. **“Yet I will rejoice in the YHWH, I will joy in the God of my salvation”** (verse 3:18). At the end of verse 19 it says, **“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.”** The opera is over with God triumphant. All this has to do with the 7 years at the end of the age that we are approaching.

Conclusion

We need to put this vision into its proper context. Look at the Book of Daniel, find out about the periods of time when the man of sin, otherwise known as the wicked one, will emerge on the scene and we will see this 7-year period when, in the middle of it, God will help His people.

In fact, when you go to the prophecy of Zephaniah, the next book of the Minor Prophets, you will find that God’s people will be saved in this very time period. In the half-period and people will be under destruction with powerful things happening (as Habakkuk says), Zephaniah says God’s people can be saved. These two are twin prophets. When you put both prophecies together, you begin to understand things as never before.

Much of this information is rather obtuse when we first read it, but it was written in language which was familiar to Habakkuk and his original audience. Though we can understand it with some difficulty in English, it is in a Hebrew idiom that was clear to people back in those days. If we analyze this book carefully, we can come to a clear understanding of its message. Remember, it is up to God to reveal these things to us. He is the one who takes the scales from our eyes and the plugs from our ears.

We are coming into the period soon when we can begin to run through these prophecies, as it says here. We will begin to see these events happen. God has put these things down as a decree, as commandments, as a method of prophecy for us today, which we at the end time will understand more and more. If you study these matters, you will know more about this prophecy 5 years from today than I do now.

God says about the prophecy, **“it will not tarry”** (Habakkuk 2:3). He says, **“Write the vision”** on tablets. Give it to the people of Israel. Give it to the people of the world. It will be a marvelous thing that will happen. It will be something that you will not believe, but it will occur, it will occur exactly as God says it will occur. Our job is to wait and watch for it. After it occurs you will say with a psalmist, with Habakkuk, that yes, **“I will rejoice in YHWH. I will joy in the God of my salvation”** (Habakkuk 3:18).

Ernest L. Martin, 1997

David Sielaff, October 2013

Addendum by David Sielaff¹²

Structuralist David Dorsey identifies the Book of Habakkuk as a 7-fold structure.¹³ He notes that the purpose of the Book of Habakkuk is to take his audience from confusion and despair to clarification and hope. He declares that God will ultimately right all wrongs. In the meantime, patience is necessary for God’s people. Initially Habakkuk complains that God does not hear the cries for help from His people

¹² Usually I include information from Cobbin’s *The Bible Remembrancer: Containing an Analysis of the Whole Bible* (1848). However, Cobbin’s introduction and outline add little to what Dr. Martin has already stated about the Book of Habakkuk. Therefore I will move on to other resources I find useful

¹³ David Dorsey, “Chapter 34: Habakkuk: The Just Shall Live by Faith,” in *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grant Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1999), pp. 306–309.

(Habakkuk 1:2). At the end, Habakkuk hears the sound of YHWH arriving to save His people (Habakkuk 3:2, 12).¹⁴

Most commentators believe that Habakkuk naturally has a six-fold outline structure of Habakkuk. As we have seen, Dr. Martin accepts a simpler 3-part structure: (1) Habakkuk 1:1–2:1, (2) 2:2–20 (3) 3:1–19. Dorsey believes a seven-fold structure is better. It has some merit because of some interesting correspondences between early elements and later elements.

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- a **Habakkuk's first complaint:** how long must I wait for your justice? (1:2–4)
 b **YHWH's first answer:** coming of the powerful army of Babylon (1:5–11)
 c **Habakkuk's second complaint:** God allows the wicked to destroy more righteous nations (1:12–17)
 d **CENTER:** wait, in the end the wicked will be punished, the righteous will live by faith (2:1–5)
 c' **YHWH's answer to second complaint:** “woes” punishing the wicked: all wrongs righted (2:6–20)
 b' **YHWH's final answer:** YHWH's more powerful army will vanquish Babylon and rescue Israel (3:1–15)
 a' **Final resolution of Habakkuk's first complaint:** I will wait for God's help; the source of my joy (16–19)¹⁵
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For Dorsey's outline, note this interesting three-fold expression of “waiting” that is used in Habakkuk:

| | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------|
| a | “How long” must we wait for salvation? (1:2). | The beginning of the outline. |
| d | God says not yet, “though it tarry, wait for it” (2:3). | The center of Dorsey's outline. |
| a' | I <u>will</u> wait, “I will joy in the God of my salvation” (3:18). | The conclusion of his outline. |

In addition, note that the “Woe Oracles” in 2:6–20 answer Habakkuk's second complaint of 1:12–17.

Intertextual Connections

James Nogalski in his analysis lists the qualification of Habakkuk's prophetic status, even though he is called a prophet twice (1:1 and 3:1)¹⁶:

“[1] he receives a ‘vision’ (2:2–5), [2] he speaks for YHWH (2:6–20), [3] recounts the appearance of God (3:2–7, 8–15), [4] and intercedes on behalf of the people (3:2).”

• **Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi*, pp. 645–646**

The rise of Babylon is the work of YHWH. He does this to punish Judah. While the coming of Babylon is terrible, even greater is the fear of YHWH coming with His army to destroy Babylon and rescue Judah. Habakkuk complains that God takes too long to fulfill His promises. When Habakkuk has a theophany (a vision of God) of YHWH's future coming (yet future to us) in chapter 3, he suddenly fully comprehends what God is doing in His punishment of Babylon.

God's enters the world scene in judgment. His coming is vividly described by Habakkuk. I am quoting from the Concordant Literal Version. (The King James Version translation of verses 3:3–7 is above):

“Eloah is coming from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Interlude [Selah] His splendor covers the heavens, And His praise, it fills the earth. The brightness is arising like the lightning; He has gleams shining from His hand, Where is the hiding of His strength. Before Him the plague is going, And the pestilence is going forth at His feet. He stands and is

¹⁴ Dorsey, “Chapter 33: Habakkuk ...,” pp. 307, 309.

¹⁵ From section “34.1 The Book of Habakkuk” in Dorsey, “Chapter 33: Habakkuk ...,” p. 308.

¹⁶ James Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011).

measuring the earth; He looks and is making the nations leap up. And the mountain ranges of long ago are scattered [indicating earthquakes]; **The eonian hills bow down** [more earth changes]; **His goings are eonian.**"

• **Habakkuk 3:3–6, Concordant Literal Version**

The adjectives **"eonian"** reflect the Hebrew and indicate that changes are being made to situations that have lasted a long time.

God is the subject of Habakkuk's psalm, but the psalm will make no sense unless you understand its reference to Deuteronomy chapter 33 (given just before Moses' death, 33:1):

"And he said, 'YHWH 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 33:2**

Temán (Habakkuk 3:6) was in the land of Edom (Obadiah 1:9) while Paran is in same area.¹⁷ Temán was also Esau's grandson (Genesis 36:11). As it was in the time of Moses and in the time of the Judges, so shall it be when YHWH comes, as described by Habakkuk. Note the references of Habakkuk 3:6 with this passage in Judges:

"YHWH, when you went out of Seir, when you marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before YHWH, even that [as] Sinai from before YHWH God of Israel."

• **Judges 5:4–5**

Isaiah 34:5–7 says that YHWH will go to war with Edom. YHWH is described as going from Edom after battle on the Day of YHWH (Isaiah 63:1–6).¹⁸ With YHWH's presence, many things change in the world, including geological changes.¹⁹ God will save Israel in the future as He saved Israel at the Exodus. Another Exodus is coming after Babylon and Edom are destroyed.

So profound and terrible is God's presence, even in vision, that Habakkuk has an intense physical reaction:

"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 comes up unto the people, he [YHWH] will invade them with his troops."

• **Habakkuk 3:16**

With this knowledge, Habakkuk now has a different "burden" than he had in verse 1:2. It is the burden of knowledge more frightening than he imagined. Even though the land will be devastated (3:17) from the Babylonian forces, Habakkuk is satisfied. He has seen YHWH come in a vision of the future. He now has a fear of YHWH and he is willing to wait on YHWH's salvation, **"Yet I will rejoice in YHWH, I will joy in the God of my salvation"** (Habakkuk 3:18).

David Sielaff

¹⁷ Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi*, p. 683. In Ezekiel 25:13 destruction is pronounced upon Edom:

"Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword."

DWS

¹⁸ Is Habakkuk merely paraphrasing Isaiah? It is doubtful. All these passages (and others that relate to the same incidents) all have different details of one prophetic sequence. Any missing element means our understanding will be incomplete. DWS

¹⁹ Habakkuk makes a direct reference to Deuteronomy 33:2. After verse 2, Moses gives prophetic blessings to the twelve tribes. Several of these prophetic blessings have not been fulfilled. They will be fully realized in the future exodus of Israel from Babylon, Edom, and other nations of a future captivity. DWS