

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
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## Habakkuk 1:1-11

### (Installment 1)

Habakkuk, one of the minor prophets, was used of God in bringing a marvelous revelation to His people. With some people the Book of Habakkuk is a favorite.

As to the time when the prophet lived and engaged in his ministry, no one can say exactly, since the prophet does not give any chronological data bearing on this point. The only clue as to the time of the book is to be gathered from chapter 1, verses 5 and 6: "Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6 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." In this passage God said to the people of Israel that He was working a work in their day, though they did not recognize this fact. The work to which He referred was the raising up of the Chaldeans to be God's instrument in punishing the people of Israel for their sins. From profane history we know when the Assyrian Empire was overthrown and the Neo-Babylonian Empire was brought back to life by Nabopolaseer and his son Nebuchadnezzar.

Some have thought that possibly Habakkuk engaged in his ministry during the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah. Others think that he lived during the reign of Josiah or Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, kings of Judah. Some scholars have pointed out a similarity between certain statements of Jeremiah and Habakkuk. These messages seem to indicate that there was a very close connection between these two prophets.

### The Burden of Habakkuk

"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see" (Hab. 1:1). The prophet speaks of the message which he delivers in his book as a burden which he has seen. The word in the Hebrew rendered *burden*, is derived from the verb *nasa'* נָשָׂא which means to raise, or lift up. This word came to carry the idea of lifting up something very heavy. From the idea of lifting a heavy material object, the transition is easy to the thought of a message foreboding calamity and disaster. Hence, the prophet called his message a burden.

Habakkuk said that he had seen this burden. He did not imagine or compose this message. It was given to him by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah likewise spoke of his having seen a vision of Judah and Jerusalem, which he had received from the Lord. Such statements are equivalent to affirmations of absolute inspiration.

### Habakkuk's First Complaint

"O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save. 3 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. Therefore the law is slacked, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore justice goeth forth perverted" (Hab. 1:2-4).

The prophet begins his complaint by asking, "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save." Like many good people today, Habakkuk complains about the Lord's not answering his prayer immediately. Someone has said that God answers every prayer that comes from a sincere heart. Sometimes it is "Yes"; at other times it is "No"; and under other circumstances it is "wait." David, in Psalm 13, seemed to think that God had forgotten his prayer:

- 1 "How long, O Jehovah, wilt thou forget me forever?  
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
- 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Ps. 13:1,2)

Then he prayed to the Lord:

- 3 "Consider and answer me, O my God:  
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
- 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;  
Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved" (Ps. 13:3,4).

In Psalm 88 the writer cannot see why God does not answer his prayer.

The situation about which Habakkuk cries out to God and implores Him to change is the violence which he observes on every hand. God hates violence and injustice. The prophet thinks that, since he is praying for the removal of things obnoxious to God, He certainly will remove them at once.

Habakkuk continues his complaint by asking, "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and look upon perverseness?" "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, Keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). The Lord sees and knows everything, even the motives that prompt every thought of each individual. According to Habakkuk's question, the Lord shows the prophet the iniquity prevalent on every hand and enables him to see the significance of it all. The Lord shuts the eyes of those who do not want truth, but opens the eyes of those who want it. God especially opens Habakkuk's eyes to see the evil in order that he might pray for the correction of the situation.

The prophet continues his complaint by telling the Lord that destruction and violence are constantly before him, that there is strife on every hand, and that contention is rising up—awful moral and spiritual degeneration. He concludes his complaint by saying that there is no justice, that the wicked compass the righteous, and that justice goes forth perverted.

Habakkuk certainly lived in evil times. He was a bold, courageous servant of God to speak and pray as he did. He reminds one of Isaiah, the statesman prophet, who in no uncertain terms denounced the entire nation for their sins. See Isaiah, chapter 1. Amos the prophet was likewise bold and courageous in the denunciation of the people of his day and time. See Amos 5:6-24 and 8:4-10. In this connection one should read the denunciation of sinners by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-12). He should likewise read the scathing rebuke by the Lord Jesus administered to the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. (Matt. Chapter 23).

### God's Answer to the Prophet's Complaint

"Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6 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. 7 They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves, 8 Their horses 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. 9 They come all of them for violence; and the set of their faces is forwards; and they gather captives as the sand. 10 Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him; he derideth every stronghold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it. 11 Then shall he sweep by *as* a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, *even* he whose might is his god" (Hab. 1:5-11).

Let us bear in mind that the verses above are God's answer to the prophet's complaint. To Habakkuk it seemed that God was indifferent toward the rising tide of wickedness and sin among His Chosen People.

### A Call to the Nations

The Lord proceeded to show the prophet that He was not indifferent to the terrifying conditions, but that He was providentially preparing to meet the challenge—at the proper time. He introduced his message to the prophet by calling upon the heathen nations round about, saying, "Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you."

The Lord knew that, though the nations could see what was transpiring before their eyes, they would not understand the situation. Moreover, He informed the nations that He was working a work in their day which they would not believe, though it should be told them.

### God the Sovereign of the Universe

Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the God of creation. Everything throughout the entire universe is under His control. He is the undisputed sovereign who is working all things together for the good of those who love Him, even those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). He rules all things as He steers the course of history according to His eternal plan. Moreover, He overrules the free choices and actions of His creatures and makes everything contribute to the advancement of His eternal purpose.

The Apostle Paul, in his speech at Mars Hill, gave us in panoramic form God's creative activity and plan of the ages: "The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each of us: 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own

poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:24-28). On God's eternal blueprint, figuratively speaking, the time and circumstances of the rise and the fall of every nation is indicated. The Lord told Habakkuk that the work He was performing was His bringing back to life the old Babylonian Empire, which had gone down before the victorious Assyrians.

### The Chaldean Nation

"They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves" (Hab. 1:6,7). The Chaldeans, as well as the Assyrians, were some of the cruelest and most heartless peoples of antiquity. Habakkuk called them a bitter and a hasty nation. They had no hesitation to march into the territory of a nation with which they were at peace, for the sake of plunder. To them might was right.

### The Invincible Army of the Chaldeans

The description of the Chaldean army appears in verses 8-11. The prophet, in delivering the Lord's message, seems to be using hyperboles throughout the description; their horses are swifter than leopards; they are more fierce than the evening wolves—a seeming exaggeration. Their horsemen march proudly on; they fly as an eagle that hastens to devour. In their onward march they take captives as the sand—certainly an exaggeration indicating very many. As they go forth, they scoff at kings and deride princes. They likewise deride strongholds; they go marching invincibly onward.

The entire description of this fighting machine seems to go far beyond the reality of Habakkuk's day. Would the God of truth, who always speaks rightly and soberly use such exaggerations as are seen in this description? This interpretation is altogether conceivable, but there is another explanation which seems to me to accord with all the facts.

The key to the entire situation seems to be found in the statement of verse 11: "Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, *even* he whose might is his god." The leader of this army sweeps by as a wind and passes onward, but he is guilty, "*even* he whose might is his god." Though Nebuchadnezzar was proud and boasted of great Babylon which he had built, there is no indication in the Biblical record that he actually worshipped might as his god.

### The Law of Double Reference

There is a law which obtains throughout the Bible, known by Biblical students as the law of double reference. According to this principle, the inspired writers at times spoke of something close at hand and then blended the description with a situation more remote. May not the description of the Chaldean army be an illustration of this law? The prophet at first saw the well disciplined, trained, and equipped Chaldean army in the immediate future, but in the distant future—the Tribulation—he saw a mightier and better equipped army, the modern mechanized war machine, of him "whose might is his god"—the Antichrist. This interpretation seems to be favored by the statement, "For the vision is yet for the appointed time" (Hab. 2:3). The vision is for the appointed time—the time of the end of the age.

The interpretation just given seems to be favored by the fact that the Apostle Paul understood verse 5 to be a case of double reference. He knew from the facts of the context of this verse that the writer referred to the literal Neo-Babylonian Empire. Paul also sees in this verse the working of God in the first century of the present dispensation in sending Christ to purchase redemption for the human family. In his message in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, he proclaimed the Gospel and warned his audience not to reject Christ and the gospel. In order to enforce this warning, he quoted verse 5 of Habakkuk, chapter 1. Hence, in the days of Habakkuk and in the first century God was working—but in two different spheres.

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
 Installment 2  
 Habakkuk 1:12-17

Habakkuk's Second Complaint

As seen in the first installment of this series of studies, Habakkuk the Prophet complains to the Lord of the evils current in his days. He could not understand why a holy God could countenance base corruption and vice in His Chosen People (Hab. 1:1-4). The Lord replied to the Prophet, showing him that He was cognizant of what the prophet had seen and that He was prepared to deal with the situation at the proper time (Hab. 1:5-11). As a matter of fact, He had already raised up the Chaldeans and was preparing that cruel nation to be His battle-ax, as Jeremiah stated. God is never late; He is always on time in dealing with every situation.

To this explanation of the Lord, Habakkuk made a second complaint, which is found in the following quotation:

"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. 13 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; 14 and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? 15 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. 16 Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous. 17 Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?" (Hab. 1:12-17)

Jehovah, the Everlasting God

Habakkuk began his second complaint by asking the Lord, "Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One?" The Prophet was not asking for information; but by the use of a rhetorical question, he affirmed his conviction relative to the everlasting nature of God. The Scriptures nowhere attempt to prove the existence of God: They assume His existence as a self-evident proposition.

Hence the writer of Genesis declared, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Moses said in addressing the tribes of Israel:

"There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun,  
 Who rideth upon the heavens for thy help,  
 And in his excellency on the skies.

27 The eternal God is *thy* dwelling-place,  
 And underneath are the everlasting arms:  
 And he thrust out the enemy from before thee,  
 And said, Destroy" (Deut. 33:26,27).

God inhabits eternity: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15). Universal space and time are thought of as a residence in which God lives—"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

Habakkuk, addressing the Lord, said, "O Jehovah my God, my Holy One." The word *Jehovah* comes from the verb which, in the simple stem form (*qal.*), means primarily "to become" or "to come to pass." The noun *Jehovah*, comes from the hiphil verb stem form—which adds the idea of causation to the inherent meaning—third person, singular number, masculine gender—and means "he who causes to become." This form, being a transitive verb, takes an object. In discussing the Lord's relationship to the material universe, the Hebrew Prophet would say that the Lord caused the material universe to come into existence: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Expressed in current philosophical terms, the word *Jehovah* means "the uncaused cause of everything" in the universe.

#### Jehovah God, the Holy One

Frequently in the Scriptures the term *Holy One* occurs. This name in the Hebrew text, as a rule, is in the singular number—Holy One. Thus Jehovah is the Holy One. In Proverbs 9:10, we have this statement, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." The word in the original translated "Holy One" is in the plural number—"Holy Ones." Who are referred to by the use of this word in the plural number? Can it be that this term includes God and the celestial beings? God never puts Himself on an equality with any of His creatures, regardless of the dignity bestowed upon them:

5 "And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah;  
 Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.  
 6 For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah?  
 Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto Jehovah,  
 7 A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,  
 And to be feared above all them that are round about him?" (Ps. 89:5,6,7)

Since the term *Holy Ones* of Proverbs 9:10 (in the plural number) cannot include created beings associated with God, who are they? The clue to the answer to this question is found by noting that Proverbs 9:10 is an example of Hebrew parallelism. In line one Jehovah is mentioned, and in the second line the Holy Ones are mentioned. Since in Hebrew parallelism the second line is a reproduction of the thought in the first line, or a modification of it, Holy Ones is a repetition of Jehovah in line one. Thus Jehovah, in this instance, is not a single individual but is a plurality of divine personalities. Who are these divine personalities? When this passage is studied in the light of related ones, it is seen that they are Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the



Son, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is in perfect alignment with Deuteronomy 6:4, Israel's great confession of faith: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a unity."

The term *Holy Ones* appears also in the following Scripture:

- 1 "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh; the oracle.  
The man saith unto Ithiel, unto Ithiel and Ucal:
- 2 Surely I am more brutish than any man,  
And have not the understanding of a man;
- 3 And I have not learned wisdom,  
Neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One.
- 4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended?  
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?  
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?  
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?  
What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou knowest?" (Prov. 30:1-4).

In verse 2, one man says to another, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I have not learned wisdom, neither have I the knowledge of the Holy Ones." The speaker is overwhelmed with his ignorance concerning the Holy Ones. Hence, he says that he is more brutish than any man. He has no understanding; he has not learned wisdom; nor has he any knowledge of the Holy Ones. Having confessed his brutishness and ignorance of the Holy Ones, he proceeds to ask some questions concerning God the Father and God the Son. By the development of the passage, one is logically driven to the conclusion that the Holy Ones are Jehovah the Father and Jehovah the Son, who are mentioned, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit. Without a doubt the Holy Ones of this passage are the Holy Trinity.

#### Israel, as a Nation Shall Not Die

"Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One? We shall not die" (Hab. 1:12). The people of Israel, as a nation, shall never die. This people is the nation of destiny. When Abraham and Sarah were past the age of parenthood, God performed a biological miracle upon their bodies which made possible the birth of Isaac. Referring to this miracle, Isaiah spoke of it as a miracle of creation (Isa. 43:1). God created His Chosen People and placed them in the center of His plan of blessing the world spiritually, and, eventually, in the Millennium, of bringing all nations to a saving knowledge of Himself.

When Israel was in Egypt, the population of the Hebrews increased very rapidly. Pharaoh tried to prevent this increase, but, he was unsuccessful. During the days of the Judges, various ones of the neighboring nations invaded the territory of Israel. These wars reduced the population and impoverished the country. When Assyria was the dominant nation in the Middle East, she sent her armies against Israel and did irreparable damage to the population and to the country. The same thing was true at the time of the Babylonian captivity. In the days of Rome the country was invaded; thousands of Hebrews perished on the battlefield. The government was overthrown, and those who survived were sold into slavery and were

scattered among the nations. During the Christian centuries, attack after attack has been launched against the people of Israel—decreasing the population—especially in eastern and central Europe. All are acquainted with the pogroms in Russia against the Jews. No one can forget the Spanish Inquisition. Hitler launched a campaign of extermination against the Jews on a scale never known before, liquidating, according to reports, six million Jews. There is to be as great a slaughter of the Jews in the future, according to Zechariah, chapter 13. Some of the prophets, in vision, saw the slaughtering of the Jews; yet they declared that Israel should not die, but would live and declare the works of the Lord: "I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of Jehovah" (Ps. 118:17). We believe, therefore, that the remnant of Israel will survive the ordeals of the Tribulation and will declare the works of God.

#### The Chaldean Ordained for Judgment

"O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction" (Hab. 1:12b). God rules everything throughout the universe. He allows His creatures freedom of choice; yet He overrules their free actions and makes them contribute to His plan of the ages. God is the one "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will ..." (Eph. 1:11). As an illustration of this principle, read Isaiah 10:5-8: "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! 6 I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. 8 For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings?" Sennacherib, an Assyrian king, was the rod of God's anger which He used in punishing Israel. God also spoke of the Babylonians as His battle-ax. God uses men and means in forwarding His plan of the ages.

#### God Does Not Look Favorably Upon Sin

"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; 14 and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?" (Hab. 1:13,14). The prophet by inspiration states that God does not behold evil and cannot look upon perverseness; nevertheless the writer of Proverbs 15:3 declares: "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good." There is no contradiction in these Scriptures. The eyes of Jehovah see and observe even the most minute things—of evil and of good. God is, as the theologians state, omniscient. He knows everything. We must interpret Habakkuk's statement that God does not behold evil in the light of all of the facts. He beholds the evil, but not favorably—not in the sense that He condones evil.

"Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil ..." Corrupt, wicked men delight to look upon that which is evil and degrading. In fact, the very imaginations of their thoughts are often evil. They take pleasure and delight in looking upon the obscene. It is not so with God. He is the very embodiment of holiness. His entire being revolts at wickedness in any form or shape.

Since God is holy and does not delight in wickedness and perverseness, Habakkuk could not understand how God could and would use the cruel Chaldean nation to punish His own Chosen People. The prophet,

therefore, asked the Lord how He could use a nation of reprobates who had sunk into, the depths of sin in punishing his own people who were living on a much higher spiritual and moral plane. Speaking popularly I would say that God uses a dirty and unprincipled man to do a dirty job. Christ was pure and holy, without sin. He had to be betrayed and crucified—a dastardly crime. He therefore used Judas, a traitor and a reprobate, and some unprincipled and prejudiced Jewish leaders to perpetrate the diabolical act of crucifying the holy Son of God. The Lord works, however, all things together for the good of those who love Him. He is working all things according to the counsel of His will. We cannot see and understand fully the divine actions, but we have sufficient knowledge of the ways of the Lord to know that the God of the universe does all things right.

#### The Chaldeans Catching Men as Fishes

Just as good and experienced fishermen often make great hauls of fish, so, declares Habakkuk, the Chaldeans are catching men in great numbers in their military operations. They do not know the first meaning of pity and mercy.

#### Heathen Practices of Sacrificing to Nets

"Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because of them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous" (Hab. 1:16). Heathen idolaters constantly do absurd and ridiculous things. The prophet calls attention to the fact that in his day fishermen would make sacrifices to their nets when they made especially successful catches. In other words, they rendered worship and thanksgiving to the material net—as if it were a god. Pagan people, though intellectually brilliant, often, as Isaiah states, cultivate trees for the purpose of making gods out of them. They take part of a tree and make a god before which they bow down and worship. With part of the tree they warm themselves, and with the rest of it they bake their bread. Their eyes are blinded by Satan, the god of this world. It is impossible for one who is blinded by Satan to see reality as it is.

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
Installment 3

Habakkuk 2:1-3

When the Lord opened Habakkuk's eyes to see the deplorable, spiritual, and moral condition which existed in Israel in his day, the Prophet complained to the Lord concerning the great depths to which the Chosen People had fallen. Thinking that the Lord ought to rectify the condition at once, he therefore, prayed to the Lord concerning the situation.

The Lord showed the Prophet that He was not oblivious to the conditions which existed; He moreover showed the Prophet that He was working in the world at that time in order to deal with the situation at the proper time. Thus, He called the Prophet's attention to the fact that He was raising up the Neo-Babylonian Empire to deal with that situation.

Habakkuk could not see how a holy God could use such reprobates as Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in punishing His people, who, though sinful, were not living on the low level on which the Babylonians lived. He, therefore, complained the second time before the Lord.

Habakkuk Waiting for a Reply from the Lord

"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" (Hab. 2:1). Habakkuk spoke of himself as if he were a sentry on guard duty. Isaiah likewise used the same figure. As a sentry reports what he sees and learns while on duty, thus Habakkuk wanted to learn from the Lord what was coming to pass so that he could report to the people.

He wanted to know what God would speak to him—a very definite desire. Each minister and Christian worker should have this same holy longing. God is endeavoring to speak to His people today through the Bible—all sixty-six books of it. The Lord gave us the Scriptures for a definite, specific purpose—that we might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour:

"Every scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: 17 that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16,17).

Whenever a person has a longing to know what is the will of God and asks the Lord for light and understanding, God gives it to him. A very beautiful example of this principle is found in Psalm 85. In the first verses, the Psalmist was given the vision of Israel when he is restored to fellowship with God. The vision of this future blessed state caused the Psalmist to pray the petition found in verses 4 to 7:

- 4 "Turn us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

- 5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?  
 Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
- 6 Wilt thou not quicken us again,  
 That thy people may rejoice in thee?
- 7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah,  
 And grant us thy salvation,"

Like Habakkuk, the Psalmist waited to learn what God would reply. He, therefore, said,

"I will hear what God Jehovah will speak;  
 For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:  
 But let them not turn again to folly" (Psa. 85:8).

God wants to speak peace and encouragement to His people all the time; and, when He does, He warns them not to return again to folly.

The Psalmist said he would hear what Jehovah said in answer to his prayer. The Lord's reply was a wonderful one, opening up the vistas of the future:

- 9 "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him,  
 That glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together;  
 Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth springeth out of the earth:  
 And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.
- 12 Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good;  
 And our land shall yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him,  
 And shall make his footsteps a way *to walk in*" (Psa. 85:9-13).

Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 70. Some of the Apostles asked Him several questions regarding the future. Jesus, therefore, met, the desiring, seeking hearts of the apostles, in that He gave the marvelous Olivet Discourse found in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25.

When the disciples realized that prayer is a great power in the life of the believer, they asked Him to teach them to pray. Then He taught them in a simple, straightforward manner how to pray, (Luke 11:1-4).

#### Jehovah's Reply

The Lord met the Prophet's expectation and gave a very definite answer to the request. "And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. 3 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" (Hab. 2:2,3).

In this reply the Lord insisted on the Prophet's writing the message on tablets. These instructions remind one of what Jehovah said to Isaiah. The Lord had given definite instructions that Israel should not enter into an alliance with Egypt for military aid against Assyria. The pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem ignored what the Lord had said to Isaiah the Prophet and entered into an alliance with Egypt. In order to effect this alliance, the authorities in Jerusalem had robbed the temple and the government treasuries of all funds. The entire affair was kept from Isaiah, who insisted on trusting God alone in the present emergency. God revealed to Isaiah their willful disobedience. He, therefore, said to the Prophet: "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever" (Isa. 30:8).

The Prophet was to write his message on clay tablets and to put them in some public place so that all the people could know about what was being done, and the situation that was confronting the nation. Isaiah, moreover, was to write it in a book—the book of Isaiah—and preserve this knowledge forever and ever.

Habakkuk was to write the vision which was shown him, and which is found in Habakkuk 1:5-11. He, likewise, was to write the vision on clay tablets and put them in a public place, in order that "he may run that readeth it."

God has given us His Holy revelation, the sixty-six books of the Bible, that we may know His will and do it. Everyone who studies the Bible should pray the petition found in Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold Wondrous things out of thy law."

Anyone who wills to do the will of God can come to God in prayer, asking that his spiritual eyes be opened to behold the wonderful things in the Word. God will never disappoint the seeking, earnest heart. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.

The Prophet Habakkuk was to put the message in writing in order to preserve it, "for the vision is yet for the appointed time." As stated above, the vision here mentioned is that which is recorded in chapter 1, verses 5-11. An examination of this vision shows that it is the description of the rapid movements and the irresistible force of the Chaldean army and Nebuchadnezzar whom God would use in punishing Israel. At the same time, the description of the army and its swift movements shows that the prediction goes far beyond a vision of the ancient Chaldean army. The Babylonian horses were not swifter than leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves. Their horsemen could not fly as an eagle. Moreover, there is no evidence that Nebuchadnezzar worshipped his might as his god—he was an idolater. Since the description goes far beyond the realities of the ancient Babylonian army, it is certain that this vision blends the description of the Babylonian army with a prediction of another army of the future, which will be a mechanized force of modern warfare, and which will answer to the description of the passage.

This vision which Habakkuk was to write is for "the appointed time." What is meant by the "appointed time?" Light on this question is probably found in Daniel 8:17,19, which speaks about the time of the end. While this interpretation is probably correct, one cannot, afford to be dogmatic in regard to it.

The vision "hasteth toward the end." The nearer one comes to the concluding days of this dispensation,

the more rapid do events take place. The vision is therefore, said to hasten toward the end, the end of the age.

The vision is certain of fulfillment because it "shall not lie." God watches over His Word to perform it—to fulfill every promise and to carry out every threat (Jer. 1:10,11). No word from God is without power (Luke 1:37).

"Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay." Though things may appear to slow down developments and events, the vision is going to be fulfilled as given. A temporary slowing down of events will not prevent the fulfillment of the vision.

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
Installment 4

Habakkuk 2:3-5

As has been shown before, the conditions in Israel in the days of Habakkuk were appalling. The Lord opened the prophet's eyes and gave him spiritual discernment so that he could see things as they were. Being overwhelmed by the revelations just made to Habakkuk, he complained bitterly concerning the deplorable situation. He concluded that the Lord should take an active part in correcting the evils and in establishing the country upon a basis of right and righteousness.

In reply to the prophet's complaint, the Lord showed that He was already taking measures to correct the evil. Babylon was rising out of the grave of the forgotten past and was assuming a most important role among the nations of that time. The Lord gave Habakkuk a vision of the military might and power of the Chaldean nation, which, like a cyclone, would sweep from nation to nation leaving death and wreckage in its path.

But Habakkuk could not understand why God would use the pagan Chaldeans and their arrogant king, Nebuchadnezzar, who were heartless, cruel, and wicked, in punishing His Chosen People, Israel, who, though far from being what they should have been, were living on a much higher plane.

Habakkuk, therefore, made a second complaint to the Lord, and awaited His reply. Then the Lord instructed him, saying, "... Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. 3 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" (Hab. 2:2,3). The vision which he was to write is the one shown in chapter one, verses 5 through 11. In this vision one sees the triumphant Chaldean army marching from one victory to another. An examination of these verses shows that the description goes far beyond that of any army that the Chaldeans could or did put into the field of battle.

How does one explain this literary phenomenon? This passage is an example of the law of double reference, or double, or manifold fulfillment of prophecy. This principle may be illustrated by one's looking at a mountain range from a position on a level plain. As he looks at the range, he sees the high and mighty mountains whose lofty peaks seem to pierce the blue. In the foreground, however, there are low-lying foothills. Thus the observer, from his standpoint, can focus his eye on the low-lying range, or on those higher mountains in the background. Or, if he chooses, he may glance rapidly at one and then at the other, and blend his descriptions into a single picture. But from his position he cannot see the valley between the two ranges. If, however, he climbs to the top of the low-lying range, he can see the vast valley which separates it from the higher mountains. In this illustration the foothill mountains would represent the Chaldean army and activities; the mighty and more distant mountains, the mechanized hosts of the world ruler of the end time.

Habakkuk was commanded to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets ... for the vision is yet for the appointed time. ..." As seen above, the vision that Habakkuk saw was the one found in chapter 1,



verses 5-11, which blends the prediction concerning the Chaldean army with the mighty hosts of Antichrist of the end time. But this statement does not include all who are seen in the vision. This fact is proved by an examination of Habakkuk 2:3,4, which is quoted in Hebrews 10:37,38, interpreted, and applied to the local situation of the Hebrews to whom the Book of Hebrews was written. The writer of Hebrews changes the wording somewhat and instead of talking about the vision of Habakkuk he speaks of the Messiah and His Coming. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews urged them, saying, "For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise,

37 For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry,

38 But my righteous one shall live by faith:

And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him"

39 But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:36-39). In the light of the original passage of Habakkuk and the quotation in Hebrews 10:37,38, it is clear that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us in the following translation "for yet a very little while, he that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry" a free translation and interpretation of the words: "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay."

That the prophets did not always mention every one and everything seen in a vision is clear from these passages. According to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Habakkuk saw the Second Coming of Christ in this vision, though he did not mention that fact. This principle is also illustrated by Isaiah 40:1-5: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

"3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: 5 and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." One sees from this Scripture that Isaiah is talking about the Second Coming of Christ and the forerunner who will announce His coming, who is Elijah the prophet (Mal. 4:5,6).

When John the Baptist electrified the people of the land with his announcement that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the Jerusalem authorities sent a delegation to inquire concerning who John was. When they asked him who he was, he confessed, "I am not the Christ." Then they asked him if he were Elijah. To this question he replied in the negative. Wanting a definite statement from John, they then asked, "Art thou the prophet?" To this question he answered that he was not. Finally they asked him, "Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" John then identified himself by saying, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said by Isaiah the prophet." As stated above, Elijah is to be the forerunner of the Messiah at His Second Coming. The language used by John in identifying himself is, as one sees, a prediction of Elijah's announcing Christ's Second Coming. Nevertheless, John said that Isaiah spoke of him in this prediction. Since John claims that in this vision, Isaiah the Prophet saw him and foretold his ministry, one may be

certain that Isaiah saw the two Comings of the one Messiah, each being introduced by a forerunner. Though Isaiah saw in one vision both Comings and the two heralds announcing these Comings, he mentioned only the second. A study of both John the Baptist and Elijah shows that they were very much alike. John's speaking of himself in terms of Elijah, the herald of the Messiah at His Second Coming, is equivalent to his affirming that he himself was the herald of Messiah's First Coming.

"Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him." To whom does this language apply? The one, or ones, who were seen in the vision, chapter 1, verses 5-11. As has already been seen, this passage is an example of the law of double reference or manifold fulfillment of prophecy. The one seen by Habakkuk immediately in the foreground of the vision was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This picture blends with the great ruler of the end time, namely, the Antichrist. Pride is the one thing that God hates above all other attitudes or actions. Every possible sin may be caused by pride. The anointed cherub, of whom we read in Ezekiel 28:11-19, was created pure, good, and holy; but he became proud and sought to exalt himself above God. When he attempted to match swords with the Almighty, of course, he was hurled from his high position in the kingdom of God. Pride always goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. "The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name; He worketh in the arrogance of pride" (Prov. 21:24). Nebuchadnezzar certainly was proud, strutting and boasting about his accomplishments, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). While the words were still in his mouth, there fell a Voice from heaven saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee: 32 and thou shalt be driven from men; and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen; and seven times shall pass over thee; until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*" (Dan. 4:31b-33).

The Antichrist will be puffed up with pride and conceit and act in a manner similar to Nebuchadnezzar but making far greater claims. Concerning his boasting and exalting himself, Daniel gives us this information: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whosoever acknowledgeth *him* he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price" (Dan. 11:36-39).

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the same one called him the man of sin and the son of perdition, who "opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (II Thes. 2:4). When this lawless one is at the height of his pride and arrogance, the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed from Heaven. With the breath of His mouth He will slay and, by the manifestation of His coming He will bring to nought the Antichrist (II Thes. 2:8). Pride and self-sufficiency never pay.

"But the righteous shall live by his faith." Proud and arrogant rulers seem to vent their spleen against the humble, non-resistant, and righteous ones. Although there were no just grounds for Nebuchadnezzar's casting the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, nevertheless, he did so. But God protected and delivered them. Under the reign of the Antichrist, while the world-wide revival is being conducted, he will persecute the righteous and will martyr untold numbers, as is seen in Revelation, chapter 7.

What is the force of the word *righteous* in Habakkuk 2:4? Primarily, it means one who is living right—according to the ethical and moral standards of the day in which he lives. Those who accept the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ and are justified by faith are also called righteous. One must look at the facts of each context to determine the significance of the term in each instance. In Habakkuk 2:4 both of these meanings are probably blended into one. Literally rendered the statement, "The righteous shall live by faith" is correctly translated "the righteous shall live in his faithfulness." If we accept this literal translation, the dominant thought of the promise is that by one's living up to the light and knowledge which he has, he will live and pass through the fiery trials of persecution, being preserved by the overruling providence of God.

The Apostle Paul quotes this passage in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, and interprets it to prove that people are saved by the grace of God through faith. The righteousness of God is counted to the one who has faith.

In Hebrews 10:37,38, the inspired writer quotes this passage, promising that the one who continues in his faithfulness shall live or survive the persecution. On the other hand, if he shrinks back God will have no pleasure in him. Jesus had the same thought in mind when He said, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

Knowing that monarchs drink wine to excess and become intoxicated by it, Habakkuk declares, "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" (Hab. 2:5). The Prophet thinks of Nebuchadnezzar and his being under the influence of wine. In this condition the monarch is a treacherous person; he is arrogant and haughty; he is not satisfied to stay within the boundaries of his own realm, but ruthlessly invades the territory of others for the purpose of loot and plunder. He is like Sheol and death. He is never satisfied.

What Habakkuk says in this verse concerning Nebuchadnezzar and his wars of aggression will also be true of the Antichrist, who in the end time will heap "unto him all peoples." The Antichrist is never satisfied until he has seized world dominion and crushed under foot the humble and lowly—but he meets his Waterloo at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory.

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
Installment 5

Habakkuk 2:5-20

In the former study we saw, in the vision which God granted Habakkuk, that there is a blending of the picture of Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean king, with that of the Antichrist of the end time. In chapter 2, verses 5-20 Habakkuk is engrossed with the actions of Nebuchadnezzar; and, now and then suddenly he, so to speak, lifts his eyes and speaks about the world ruler of the end time. In thus treating the subject, the Prophet follows what is known by Bible students as the law of double reference, or the law of double or manifold fulfillment of prophecy. An illustration of this law is found in Daniel 8:15-27. Daniel spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to force heathenism on the Jews, and blended the prophecy concerning him with a prediction concerning the world ruler of the end time.

"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" (Hab. 2:5). In this verse wine is personified and thought of as a person who will not stay at home, but will go where those things are that will satisfy him. In thus speaking, the prophet had Nebuchadnezzar in mind. It was very fitting that he should speak of Nebuchadnezzar in terms of the effects that wine has upon the drinker who takes it in excess. According to abundant evidence, the Babylonians were heavy drinkers of wine. Nebuchadnezzar, like a man who is intoxicated, continually launched expeditions against neighboring countries for the purpose of loot and pillage. With him might was right. He, therefore, overran smaller nations, pillaging their countries and annexing their territories to his own. The prophet, therefore, said that he would not stay at home but enlarged "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." In this verse both Sheol and death are personified and are spoken of as never being satisfied. Death is never satisfied unless mowing someone down, and Sheol is following him and gathering the slain unto the nether parts of the earth.

Everything that is said in verse 5 was applicable to Nebuchadnezzar—except the statement that he "heapeth unto him all peoples." In no sense did Nebuchadnezzar conquer the world. This language cannot simply be explained as a hyperbole—an exaggeration; for the simple reason that, as seen above, the pictures of Nebuchadnezzar and of the Antichrist of the end time blend into a single portrait. From these passages of Scripture we learn that the Antichrist will actually subdue all nations and subject to himself all peoples. This statement, therefore, must be understood as referring also to the world ruler of the end time.

When the Antichrist is overthrown and slain by the personal coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of the Tribulation (II Thes. 2:7,8), the remnant of those who have been trodden down by the Antichrist will "take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, ..." Their thus speaking concerning him will be with a sigh of great relief. This prediction reminds one of the parable which will be spoken regarding the king of Babylon at the end time, as found in Isaiah 14:3-27. When Habakkuk 2:5-20 is studied in connection with Isaiah 14:3-27 and related passages, one comes to the conclusion that both prophecies are spoken of the same individual, the world ruler of the end time.

Habakkuk pronounced five woes against Nebuchadnezzar and the Antichrist. Isaiah, in chapter 5, pronounced six woes against Israel, for whom God had provided everything that was necessary for life and godliness—under the law dispensation. What Nebuchadnezzar did on a small scale, yet with a ruthless hand, the Antichrist will do on a world-wide scale, without mercy.

### I. First Woe

"Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! 7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? 8 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" (Hab. 2:6b-8).

The first woe is against him who increases his own holdings by seizing the goods of others. Nebuchadnezzar committed this crime. So will the Antichrist (v. 6). When the oppressor of the peoples dies, the down-trodden rise up against his memory and his associates (v. 7). According to verse 8, the remnant of the peoples plunder their oppressors. This verse especially applies to the Antichrist, whose hands will drip with the blood of countless numbers of innocent, helpless victims. The world will then certainly have its real blood bath. For the wickedness done to the country, to the city, and to all that dwell therein, the last ruler will be punished.

### II. Second Woe

"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! 10 Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. 11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it" (Hab. 2:9-11).

The second woe is pronounced against one who gets evil gain for his house, "that he may set his nest on high" like the eagle, "that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!" The Lord sees and knows everything. God saw the injustices and wicked acts of Nebuchadnezzar in his plundering helpless people in order that he might have revenues to build Babylon. The eagle thinks that it is secure and safe by building its nest on an inaccessible height of a lofty mountain. Nebuchadnezzar thought he was safe and secure in Babylon, of which he boasted: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). His security was in his own thinking.

According to verse 11, some of the materials of which he built Babylon and of which he robbed the oppressed "cry out" for vengeance against the bloody oppressor: "For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." The stones and beams, of course, are personified and are thought of as crying out and bearing witness against this bloody tyrant.

The language of verse 11 is echoed in Luke 19:40. As Jesus was entering Jerusalem on what is called Palm Sunday, the multitudes and the disciples were praising God, saying, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38). Then some of the Pharisees

objected and insisted that Jesus rebuke them. In replying to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "If these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out."

### III. Third Woe

"Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? 14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:12-14).

Habakkuk pronounced a woe against Nebuchadnezzar for building up Babylon with blood—with blood money. This accusation reminds one of the prophecy of Micah 3:10: "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity." Building a city with blood has the same significance in Micah as in Habakkuk.

The Antichrist of the end time will build Babylon with blood money—with revenues which he will ruthlessly extort from the peoples of the world.

The building campaign of Nebuchadnezzar came to naught because Babylon was evidently destroyed. The great building campaign of the Antichrist will be for naught, for Habakkuk declared, "Behold, is it not for Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity?" This prediction reminds one of the prophecy made by the Apostle Peter concerning the destruction of the civilization of the world in the end time; "For this they willfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (II Pet. 3:5-7).

After the destruction of the civilization built up by men, Christ will inaugurate His reign of righteousness over the earth. Then "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). The era mentioned by Habakkuk in this passage is the one of which the prophets and psalmists constantly spoke and sang—earth's golden era. For example, see Isaiah 11:6-9; "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."

In the cosmogonies of the ancient nations, their poets and historians put their golden eras in the dim distant past. The Hebrew prophets and psalmists speak of Paradise and its loss in the past, but they glowingly foretell the great golden era in which the glory of God shall encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The glory of God in this era will be manifested in Jerusalem, the capital of the world. At that time the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God—as the waters cover the sea.

#### IV. Fourth Woe

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, *to thee* that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! 16 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. 17 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" (Hab. 2:15-17).

The Prophet pronounces a woe upon the man who takes advantage of his neighbor and causes him to become intoxicated. From this context it is clear that Habakkuk referred to Nebuchadnezzar of his era and to the Antichrist of the end time. God who sees and understands the hearts and motives which prompt every man warns these rulers that He will make them drink of the cup of His wrath. For a similar warning, read Jeremiah 25:15-26.

#### V. Fifth Woe

"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? 19 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. 20 But Jehovah is in his holy temple let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:18-20).

What profit is there in graven images, that men will fashion them, believing that an idol can help them? Idols are made of material substances. Though they have eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, they are still idols (Ps. 115:1-8). Habakkuk speaks of graven and molten images as teachers of lies. The reason for his doing so is found in Psalm 106:24-39. From this passage, one learns that all idolatry is backed up by demons. Those who worship idols come in contact with demons and are influenced by them.

In contrast with dumb idols, Habakkuk points to the Eternal God, saying, "But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK  
Installment 6

Habakkuk 3:1-7

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

In the Old Testament there are numbers of prophecies concerning the first coming of our Lord when He entered the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth. Chief among these prophecies is Isaiah 7:14, which is an echo of Genesis 3:14,15. There are also a number of outstanding prophecies which foretell the Second Coming of Christ—His glorious coming to earth at the conclusion of the Tribulation period. Among these prophecies are Deuteronomy 32:39-43, Psalm 18:1-19, and Habakkuk 3:1-15. There are passages which give the entire redemptive career of King Messiah, consisting of the two comings of the one Messiah and separated by the Christian dispensation, during which the rejected Messiah is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, awaiting Israel's repudiation of the national sin of rejecting Him. In this month's study of Habakkuk, we shall examine part of the prophecy concerning the Lord's Second Coming.

The caption to this prophecy is "A Prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet, set to Shigionoth." The Hebrew word translated *prayer* has a broader significance than is conveyed by the English word *prayer*. A study of the use of this word reveals the fact that sometimes it signifies praise; on other occasions it indicates a prophecy and in other connections it indicates a prayer. In Habakkuk 3:1 it refers to a prophecy introduced by a short prayer (verse 2). This prediction was to be used in connection with the temple service, for it is dedicated to the Chief Musician, as is stated in the last line of the chapter. This prophecy was to be set to a familiar tune called *Shigionoth* (v. 1).

"O Jehovah Revive Thy Work"

"O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid:  
Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years;  
In the midst of the years make it known;  
In wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).

Habakkuk, chapter 3, is cast in a mold of Hebrew poetry. The simplest form of Hebrew poetry is known as Hebrew parallelism. A statement is made by the selection of certain words. This line is followed by another which is parallel to it, and which repeats the exact thought of the first line or adds a supplemental thought. In this way, the second line is a comment on the first. Often the simple parallelism is expanded, as in the present case, and may be called an introversion. In the present case, line one is supplemented by line four, and line two by line three. Thus arranged, the verse reads as follows:

"O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid:  
In wrath remember mercy.  
O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years;  
In the midst of the years make it known."



In some way, or from some prophet, Habakkuk had heard something about the Lord Jehovah which terrified him. The thing that frightened the Prophet was the fact that the Lord's wrath was stirred to the very depths. Though the Lord is a merciful, gracious being, sometimes His wrath, rises to white heat. The Prophet, therefore, prays that the Lord will remember mercy, though He is justly indignant. Since this prayer is followed by a prediction of the coming of the Lord in wrath (vv. 3-15), and since, as is learned from parallel passages, the Lord returns to the earth at the end of the Tribulation period, the wrath of which Habakkuk speaks in lines one and four is the wrath of the Tribulation—a period of seven years during which God will purge the earth of all wickedness.

According to lines two and three, the work of God on the earth is brought to a standstill. The Prophet, therefore, prays for the Lord to revive the work in the midst of the years. Since the period of wrath is seven years, and since it is stopped in the middle of the period, there will be three and one-half years more for the pouring out of God's wrath. When these facts are viewed in the light of related passages, it is learned that the thing which stops the work of God "in the midst of the years" is the assumption of absolute power and control over the entire world by the Antichrist.

In answer to this prayer, and doubtless to the prayers of myriads of others, the Lord will revive His work in the middle of the Tribulation. It probably will go forward, but not with the same momentum which it has at the time when it is closed down. This work of God is that which is foretold in Revelation, chapter 7—a world-wide revival in which the greater portion of the human family will turn to God.

#### God's Coming from Edom

"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" (Hab. 3:3).

This passage reminds one of Deuteronomy 33:2 and possibly is an echo of it:

"And he said, Jehovah came from Sinai,  
And rose from Seir unto them;  
He shined forth from mount Paran,  
And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones:  
At his right hand was a fiery law for them."

Allied with these two verses is Judges 5:4,5:

"Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,  
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,  
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,  
Yea, the clouds dropped water.  
5 The mountains quaked at the presence of Jehovah,  
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel."

Though these three passages may point back to the time of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, it is quite certain that Habakkuk was also looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ; for, immediately, the Prophet speaks of our Lord's glorious return to earth at the end of the Tribulation. Confirmation of this interpretation is found in Isaiah's prediction of the Lord's coming in Isaiah 63:1-6.

"Came" or "Cometh"

In Habakkuk 3:3, line 1, the verb *came* appears in the text, but on this verb there is a footnote which reads "or, *cometh* (and similarly to the end of vs. 15)." Grammatically, both renderings are possible. As is well known by all Bible scholars, verbs in the original Hebrew and Aramaic languages do not express the time element. The action expressed by the verb is either completed or incompleting. Usually verbs in the perfect tense express actions in the past, but the facts of each context must indicate definitely the exact meaning intended. Verbs in the imperfect tense always refer to incompleting action, but the facts of the context must likewise point to the exact meaning.

If one adopts the text reading in these verses (3-15), he must understand the Prophet as speaking of the vision of the coming of the Lord as an experience which he had enjoyed in the past. On the other hand, if one adopts the marginal rendering, he is to understand that the Prophet is relating what he sees at the time of the vision. If this second interpretation be adopted, the passage is a prediction of the Second Coming given in terms of the present tense which has a future significance.

#### The Lord's Coming as a Warrior

“And *his* brightness was as the light;  
 He had rays *coming forth* from his hand;  
 And there was the hiding of his power.  
 5 Before him went the pestilence,  
 And fiery bolts went forth at his feet.  
 6 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 going's were *as* of old,  
 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;  
 The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble" (Hab. 3:4-7).

The description of the Lord's Coming by Habakkuk reminds one of a similar prediction found in Psalm 18:1-19. When the Lord returns at the conclusion of the Tribulation, midnight darkness will envelop the globe (Matt. 24:29-31). Suddenly there will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. It will burst forth with a brilliancy that will startle all tribes and people living at that time, and they will mourn because of Him.

According to verse 4, there will flash forth rays from His hand. The word rendered *rays* means literally "horn," but the word *rays* seems to fit the context better than the word *horns*. Since it is said that in these rays is the hiding of His power, it is highly probable that these rays may be some kind of miraculous

manifestation which may accurately be thought of as "death rays"—as has been suggested by some Bible students. If these rays do not slay men, they will in some way inflict injuries on the wicked.

Before the conquering Son of Man there will go forth pestilence and fiery bolts (vs. 5). Without a doubt this passage is related to the one found in Jeremiah 25:30-38. We see by an examination of Jeremiah's prediction that the slain of the Lord will be from one end of the earth to the other. These slain ones will be the wicked who spurn all offers of mercy and love.

As He marches forth against His enemies, He stops and shakes the earth by His omnipotent power. Then He charges forward against the armies of the world which are under the command of the Antichrist. A passage related to this one is found in Revelation 19:19-21. When the strong Son of God goes forth to battle against the armies of the nations, the carnage will be appalling.

According to verse 6, the earth will tremble and quake under His mighty power. The mountains will be thrown down, and all the cities of the world will become a shamble. The inveterate enemies of God and of His people will then tremble through fear—as is seen in verse 7.

THE PRO PHECY OF HABAKKUK  
Installment 7

Habakkuk 3:8-19

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST  
(Part 2)

In last month's study we examined the first seven verses of Habakkuk, chapter 3, which foretell the glorious, marvelous Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. In this month's study we shall complete the exposition of this chapter.

The Waters of the Earth are Affected by the Second Coming of Christ

- 8 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?
- 9 Thy bow was made quite bare;  
The oaths to the tribes were a *sure* word. *Selah*  
Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
- 10 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" (Hab. 3:8-10).

The oceans and the seas cover three fourths of the earth's surface, but there are great reservoirs of water underneath the continents. That this statement is true is seen from the following quotation:

"For he hath founded it upon the seas,  
And established it upon the floods" (Ps. 24:2).

That the waters of the earth will be churned into a raging fury by the events connected with the Tribulation period and the Second Coming of Christ is seen from such a passage as Psalm 46:1-3:

- 1 "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,  
And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas;
- 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof. *Selah*.

The writer of Psalm 93 likewise spoke of the roaring of the sea:

- 3 "The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,  
The floods have lifted up their voice;  
The floods lift up their waves.  
4 Above the voices of many waters,  
The mighty breakers of the sea,  
Jehovah on high is mighty" (Ps. 93:3,4).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in speaking of the coming events of the end time which culminate with His Second Coming, speaks of the roaring of the sea and the billows in connection with supernatural phenomena in sun, moon, and stars: "And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows" (Luke 21:25).

From Habakkuk 3:8-10 one sees that the earth will be rent at the Second Coming of Christ and that rivers and reservoirs beneath the surface of the earth will be exposed to human gaze.

In verse 8 the Lord is represented as "riding upon horses, upon chariots of salvation." This language reminds one of the description of the Lord's coming found in Revelation 19:11-16.

In verse 9 the Lord is represented as a warrior with his bow rushing into battle. In the same verse the Prophet calls attention to the fact that God's oaths to His ancient people are sure. God will carry out every threat which He has made and fulfill every promise.

In verse 10 we learn that the earth will be terribly rent (Ps. 60:2) and new rivers will flow. In this verse the mountains are thought of as people who are terrified by the sights which they behold. The sea is likewise personified. It utters its voice and lifts up its voice on high—in surrender to the Lord of all the earth.

#### Heavenly Bodies Affected by the Second Coming of Christ

"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" (Hab. 3:11).

The sun, moon, and stars are likewise thought of as intelligent beings that in amazement stand in awe at the light of Jehovah's arrows speeding on their way and at the shining of His glorious spear.

#### Jehovah's Marching Through the Land

"Thou didst march through the land in indignation;  
Thou didst thresh the nations in anger" (Hab. 3:12).

According to this verse, Jehovah will thresh the nations of the world by His mighty power (cf. Zechariah 14:1ff).

#### The Last Great War

"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  
 14 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" (Hab. 3:13,14).

In this Scripture we learn that this last war is fought in order that Jehovah may deliver His people Israel. In this titanic struggle the Lord deals a death blow to the last ruler of this earth, the Antichrist. The generalissimo of the Antichrist in charge of the titanic struggle is slain. Those leading the armies of the enemy come with high expectation, but their hopes are blasted as they go down in defeat.

#### The Prophet's Depressed Spirit Comforted

"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.  
 17 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:  
 18 Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,  
 I will joy in the God of my salvation.  
 19 Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength;  
 And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
 And will make me to walk upon my high places" (Hab. 3:16-19).

The vision of the invasion of the State of Israel first by the Chaldeans (Hab. 1:5-11) and by the armies of the world and the subsequent destruction of the country caused the Prophet to be spiritually depressed. Since the whole land will be turned into a battleground, food there will be reduced to a minimum. There will be untold suffering, but the Prophet rises on the wings of faith and sees the glorious outcome of Messiah's appearance.

(The End)