

Habakkuk Study 3: Rejoicing in God

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1. What has happened to Habakkuk? Something drastic happened between Chapters 1 & 2 and 3.
(a) Westling with God → Resting in God; (b) Miserable → Joyful; (c) Shouting → Singing; (d) Prayer → Praise; (e) Impatient → Patient; (f) Asks for justice → Asks for mercy; (g) Down in dumps → On a cliff high. *Habakkuk was silenced before the LORD (2:20)* c.f. (Matt 17:5 – ‘Listen to Him’);
(a) *Habakkuk is trembling because of the vision of the LORD (3:2, 16)*; (b) Habakkuk prays for the revival of God’s past works (c.f. 2:14); (c) Habakkuk is pleading for mercy rather than for justice.
2. The meaning of ‘Shigionoth’ (3:1) Plural form of ‘Shiggaion’ as in Ps 7. Evidently means ‘a poem with intense feeling’ and/or ‘to be sung enthusiastically’ with deep feelings. It is a prophecy about an intense military conquest of the Lord in a song. C.f. Song of Moses in Ex 15. We will join the heaven to sing such ‘Shigionoth’ in the future (Rev 15:3-4). So far only Habakkuk 3:17-19 is used in songs. E.g. David was a mighty worshipper before a great king. Charles Wesley has written 6000 hymns.
3. Compression of time: The verbs in Hebrew are in ‘present tense’ – i.e. prophetic present. E.g. I ‘saw’ in Hebrew is I ‘see’ (3:7). Habakkuk is clearly in a visionary encounter. E.g. Moses saw the creation to write Genesis 1 and the future of Israel to write Duet 33.
Is Habakkuk 3 a vision of the past or the future? The song seems to refer to the mighty work of YHWH in the past deliverance in Exodus (3:2). But it becomes clearer that He is also seeing the future coming of the Lord (3:13). The song is divided into 3 parts – ‘He’ (3:3-7) - ‘He did this & that...’; ‘You’ (3:8-16) - ‘You did this & that...’; ‘I’ (3:17-19) - ‘Yet I will rejoice...’ (x2). [Selah]
4. ‘He’ (3:3-7) – [Habakkuk is overwhelmed with the vision of God’s power and justice]
 - a. *“God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran.” Selah (3:3a)*. Teman & Mt. Paran. It is a desert area in Edom (southeast of Israel’s border today in Jordan). C.f. Deut. 33:2-4 & Judges 5:4-5 refer to the Lord coming from Mt. Paran during Exodus. Is 63:1-6 refers to the Lord coming in judgment in red garment from Bozrah, which is the same area as Teman/Mt. Paran.
 - b. *“His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise.” (3:3b)* God’s glory over the heavens and God’s praise on the earth. C.f. Pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire led Israel out of Egypt God’s glory was visible on earth and on Mt. Sinai. One day Jesus will come in His glory with the cloud of heaven and the earth will be filled with His praise. (1 Thess 4:16; Rev 1:7-7; 15:1-3). The song of Moses will be sung again!
 - c. *“His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden. Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet.” (3:4-5)* God’s power is in His hand as plagues & fever (3:4-5). God struck Egypt with 10 plagues in Exodus. When Jesus returns, He will strike the antichrist’s kingdom with the 7 bowl judgments. (Rev 16:2). C.f. John G. Lake spoke of lightning of God that struck pestilence and diseases.
 - d. *“He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed.” (3:6)* - The quaking earth and a great panic of the nations at the coming of the Lord. Mt Sinai shook in an earthquake as the Lord descended in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. The Lord routed the Egyptian army by simply looking at them out of the pillar of cloud (Ex 14:24). At Jesus’ second coming the earth will be shaken violently and all the tribes of the earth will mourn (wail). Rev 1:17; 6:12-17; 16:17-21.
 - e. ‘His ways are everlasting’ (3:6b) – i.e. It dawned on Habakkuk that God has a long view of justice! *‘Though the mills of God grind slowly yet they grind exceedingly small.’* C.f. Is. 28:21 – Isaiah spoke of God’s unusual (alien) work on executing judgment on the earth.
 - f. *“I saw the tents of Chshan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian trembled.” (3:7)* - Tents of Cushan (Ethiopia) and the land of Midian (east of the Gulf of Aqaba: Saudi Arabia).
5. ‘You’ (3:8-16) – [Habakkuk is probing God’s feelings in judgment]
 - a. *“O LORD, were You displeased with the rivers... was Your anger against the sea?” (3:8)* – God divided the Red Sea and drowned the entire Egyptian army which was the greatest display of God’s direct military intervention (Ex 14). When the Lord comes back, He will dry up the Euphrates to set up Armageddon war which will be a greater display of God’s military power over all the nations of the earth (Rev 16:12-16). This will be the war that ends all other wars and bring salvation to Israel.

“...That you rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation? Your bow was made quite ready; Oaths were sworn over Your arrows.” (3:8-9) [Selah]

Here, Habakkuk is probing into God’s feelings in judgment. This is important portion of God’s people in prayer in a time of judgment and war. E.g. The cost of Gaza-Israel war has already exceeded 10,000 lives. How does God feel about this? The prophets are filled with the feelings of God and were often moved by the zeal for the Lord. C.f. *Is. 49:1-16, “Can a woman forget her nursing child...?”*; 1 Kings 19:14 – Elijah’s zeal for the Lord.

- b. *“The mountains saw you and trembled; The overflowing of the water passed by...The sun and moon stood still in their habitation” (3:11)* – The coming of the Lord will be both global and cosmic event with great shaking of the nations. *Is 24:19-23; Zech 14:6; Matt 24:29; Rev 16:8-11.*
 - c. *“You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed.” (3:12-13)* - The Lord will march through the land and judge the nations while saving His people through ‘His Anointed’ – *Is 63:1ff; Isa 25:10-12; Zech 9:14; 14:1-9; Rev 16.*
 - d. *“You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages...” (3:14-15)* - Antichrist’s army will be destroyed by the Lord’s Anointed on that day (3:14). *Rev 19:19-21.*
6. ‘I’ – (3:17-19) – Habakkuk’s unusual response of joy.
- a. No one stayed the same after encountering God. e.g. Isaiah, John, Jeremiah, etc. The highest God can give to us is the revelation of Himself.
 - b. From short view to long view: Habakkuk’s view changed from immediate to the ultimate – i.e. *“I trembled in myself. That I might rest in the day of trouble...” (3:16)* a.k.a. the day of the Lord.
 - c. From misery to rejoicing: Habakkuk got into direct contact with the ‘goodness of God.’ Normally when we say God is good, we mean, something good happened to us and God is behind it. That is not wrong, but we can call this an ‘inferred goodness of God’ that is based on our present experiences. It is not the same as experiencing the goodness of God directly.
- Story of Allen Gardiner (1794-1851) - In 1851 an English missionary, Allen Gardiner was shipwrecked in his missionary journey on Picton Island which is at the tip of South America. The crew slowly died one by one (6 men) on that island by disease and starvation. He was the last man to die, but he kept a journal. Allen’s journal was found right next to his cold body which showed the struggle of his shaking hand as he tried to write legibly. It was a quotation from Ps 34:10, *“The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.”* And he wrote, – *“I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God.”* He never got to be a real active missionary in South America as was his desire. Yet somehow, he got in direct contact with the goodness of God on that island in the last days and weeks of his life on the earth.
- A suffering in life is not a hindrance for our spirit to get in contact with the goodness of God. It could even serve as a doorway (fuel) for the rocket ship to launch us into orbit of God’s grace. David also said, *“Oh, Taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Ps 34:8)* when he was at the lowest point of his life. When we are in pain, rather than inoculate that pain with all kinds of false comfort (food, entertainment, alcohol, drugs, etc) that is not based on the truth (easy way out), we are better off staying with the pain a little longer in search for the solid rock to which can plant our feet – i.e. truth of God’s word. Only the truth can set us free.
- We need to silence the voice within our soul and come to behold God’s sovereign justice & mercy – i.e. In the economy of God’s universe, nothing that is right will come out wrong, and nothing that is wrong will come out right. Habakkuk finally saw the day of the Lord when the justice of God would be served to the full, and the mercy of God would be his portion forever.
- This led to Habakkuk’s confession: *“The LORD is my strength; He will make my feet like deer feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.” (3:19).* C.f. Mountain deer can scale the heights of hills because his back feet land exactly on the same spot as the front feet.

Q1: What is the difference between Habakkuk in Chapter 1 & 2, and Habakkuk in Chapter 3?

Q2: What made it possible for Habakkuk to rejoice in God? Have you rejoiced in God during difficult times?

Q3: What is the most important lesson you learned from the study of Habakkuk?