

Faith Sees and Surrenders

Habakkuk 3:1-19

The last chapter of Habakkuk is one of the most majestic passages of the Old Testament. Through awe-inspiring poetry Habakkuk describes the effect of God's presence in both the world of nature and of nations—giving it a special place among the prophetic Scriptures.

In the first verse of chapter 3 we find an important musical notation: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to *"Shigionoth."*" (NASB) "*Shigionoth*" refers to a form of music with intense feeling. It is a high form of praise, rhythmic and exuberant! The same word is used in the title of Psalm 7, but nowhere else. In both contexts "*Shigionoth*" was employed at a time of *fear* and *praise*. From the repetition of the word "Selah" (Habakkuk 3:3, 9, 13), so common in the Psalms, we can conclude that Habakkuk chapter 3 was designed to be sung in public worship.

In the opening verses of chapter 3, Habakkuk again bares his heart as he did in chapter 1.

Read Habakkuk's prayer in 3:1-2. *Compare Habakkuk 3:2 in several translations.*

1. As Habakkuk honestly pours out his feelings to the LORD what two elements co-exist in his heart at this time? Explain.

Open Your Heart: O God, make my feet like hinds' feet (Habakkuk 3:19) (NASB) that will not stand still in the face of terror—but will continue to walk and make spiritual progress upon my "high places" of trouble and suffering.

In a spirit of worship read and ponder Habakkuk chapter 3. Remember, this is not a private prayer but given by the prophet under divine inspiration.

2. a. Compare Habakkuk's attitude in his prayer from 1:1-4 with his outlook in 3:1-2. What dramatic changes are you able to observe in the prophet's mood and frame of mind as you evaluate these two references?

b. To what do you attribute this change?

In 3:2 Habakkuk pleads with God. . . “in wrath (earnestly) remember love, pity and mercy.”
(Amplified Version)

3. What situation do you think Habakkuk has in mind when he makes his appeal to God? Support your answer.

In response to the prophet’s request (3:2c) God gives Habakkuk a glorious recital of God’s amazing acts from ancient times in 3:3-15! *The splendor of this revelation is first described in Habakkuk 3:3-4. Reflect on the glory and majesty of God as you muse on these beautiful, descriptive words.*

A Closer Look

What does it mean that “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran?” What is the significance of God’s coming from Teman? These questions will be explored below.

Keep in mind that what Habakkuk is describing is a vision he is also experiencing!

4. **Read** Deuteronomy 33:2 and compare with Habakkuk 3:3-4. What similarities do you find in the language of Habakkuk 3:3-4 and God’s glorious appearance at Mount Sinai in Deuteronomy 33:2?

Note: Teman and Paran are mountain ranges in southern Israel bordering the Sinai. When Habakkuk stated, “God came from Teman,” he was saying that God came out of the Sinai where He had met with Moses, and that God’s glory was shining over His people like the rising sun.

Try to imagine the panoramic scene of glory witnessed by Habakkuk in verses 3-4. Let the beauty and splendor of God Himself fill your soul! (**Reread** from the Amplified version if possible.)

5. How do the sweeping images of God’s glorious majesty ignite in you a yearning to know Him better? To praise Him with all that is within you?!

After describing the glory and splendor of the appearance of the LORD, Habakkuk now turns to the purpose of the next part of the vision in 3:5-15. *God will come in judgment to deliver His people* (3:13a). The prophet sees a future redemption for Israel under figures taken from past events. Because God's great power had brought the Jewish people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land in the past, Habakkuk was confident that He could provide a "second exodus" for His people—not from Egypt but from Babylon.

6. **Read** through the sections in chapter 3 below as well as the corresponding references. Each segment highlights a facet of God's mighty work on Israel's behalf in the past. **Comment** on how *observing these incredible displays of God's power could breathe new life into your faith.*

3:4-7 – From Egypt to the wilderness in Sinai (Exodus 7:2-5; Exodus 19:18; Judges 5:4)

3:8-10 – Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:5-31)

3:11-12 – The Promised Land (Joshua 10:12, 13)

3:13-14 – The past devastation of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-10, 19-22) and the future destruction of Babylon (Daniel 5:22-31)

3:15 – A further allusion to the Exodus (Exodus 15:8)

Comments:

7. How could the years of barren hopelessness in Judah be transformed by this vision of God's salvation and become a gift to Habakkuk's own generation and subsequent generations?

The scene suddenly changes in verse 16. The vision has ended and now we see Habakkuk's initial response.

8. What does the prophet's contemplation of divine judgment produce at first (verse 16a)? Why did he respond as he did?

What follows are some of the most moving statements of faith in all the Bible. **Read** and ponder the reality of Habakkuk's words in 3:16b-19.

9. How does Habakkuk's response in verses 17-19 powerfully illustrate what it means for "the righteous to live by faith?"

Heart Check: Consider what it would be like if all of verse 17 were true at once. Would you still respond as Habakkuk did: "*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior?*"

Never again in Habakkuk's lifetime would he or his family know life as they had known it. But he and the rest of the godly remnant had to submit their individual lives to God's greater purpose. Likewise we need to view our lives within the greater picture of God's purpose in history.

10. How can we learn to trust God like the prophet Habakkuk? What concepts or spiritual principles can be found in this section that would encourage you to remain steadfast in the face of devastating losses?

11. A book that began with agonizing questions concludes with a statement of profound faith! Restate Habakkuk 3:19 in your own words, making personal application to your life.

12. How has Habakkuk's prophecy changed your *perspective of life*?

13. ♥ **Store in your heart Habakkuk 3:17-19.** Recite in unison with your group Habakkuk's commitment of faith.

*If you are in a difficult place today, go into your secret place, shut the door and pour your heart out to God. Then raise the roof with some **Shigionoth** praise! Invite God to teach you about the power of exuberant praise—in times of pain and joy!*