

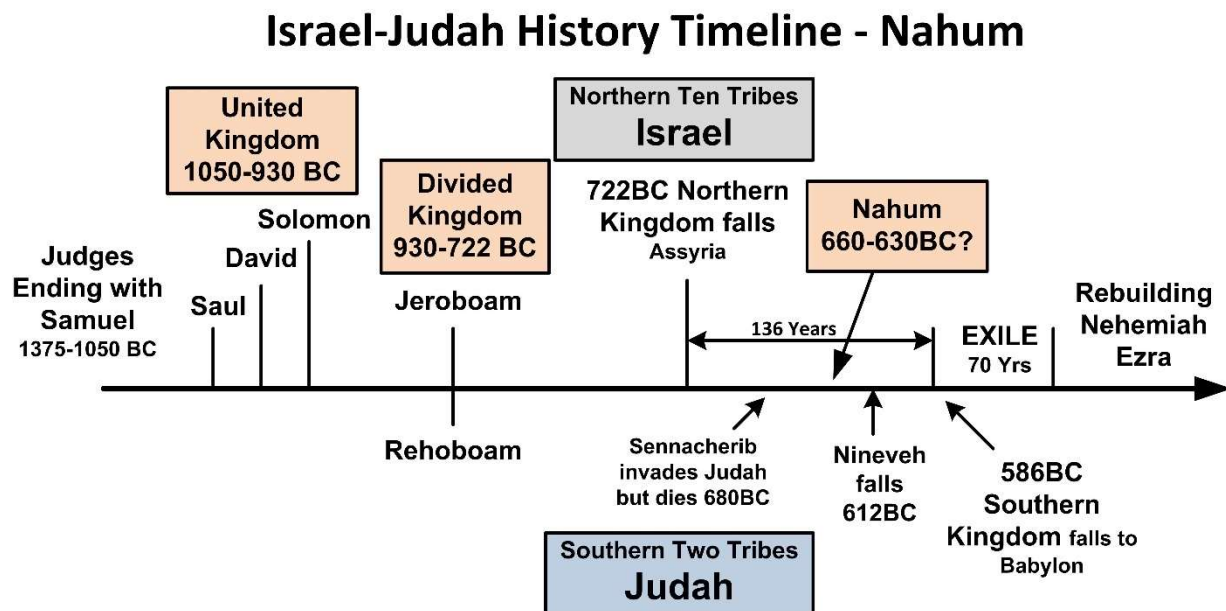
Old Testament Survey Part 4 - The Prophets

Nahum Chapters 1-3

Author, Date and Setting

The **first verse** of **Nahum** the **prophet** tells us who **wrote** the **book**, “**1:1 - The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**” The **date** of **Nahum’s writing** is estimated to be sometime between **660BC** and **630BC**, after the **Assyrian Invasion** and **control** of **Judah** which began around **664BC** and lasted until **death** of the Assyrian King **Ashurbanipal**, who died in **627BC**. You may recall how the **prophet Jonah** had **warned** the city of **Nineveh** of **God’s** impending **judgment** because of its great **wickedness**, and to **Jonah’s** dismay that they actually **believed** and **repented**. This of course was some **100** years **earlier**, approximately **770BC**. The **repentance** of **Nineveh** was, however, **short lived**, as they reverted back to their **violent** and **cruel tactics** not long after **God’s great mercy** upon them. This of course sowed the seeds of **judgment** upon them again, a **judgment** that **Nahum** both **warns** and **promises** will soon come. This is of course the theme and message of Nahum’s book. Nahum’s **name** means “**comfort,**” and his book is **written** to indeed **comfort** the **people** of **Judah**, promising them that the **Assyrian kingdom** of **Nineveh** will soon **fall**. This was very timely as **Assyria** had in **recent years** expanded its kingdom into the **Northern Kingdom** of **Israel** and either **killed** or taken most of its people into **exile** and **captivity**. This of course was one of **Assyria’s horrific tactics**, they were **extremely violent** and showed **little regard** for the peoples they **conquered (3:8)**. In fact, they are known as one of the cruelest of all foes. The ESV Study Bible comments: *“Tiglath-pileser III (745–728/727) made his people the leading military power in the Near East. The vast Assyrian Empire was established by bloodshed and massacre, cruelty and torture, destruction, plundering, and exiling such as has seldom been seen in history. After several campaigns, Tiglath-pileser greatly enlarged the territory paying him homage with annexed land and vassal kingdoms, including the northern kingdom of Israel (reduced in size by the Assyrians) and the southern kingdom of Judah. Succeeding rulers maintained and expanded this empire. In 722 B.C. the Assyrians brought to an end the northern kingdom of Israel. Sennacherib (reigned 704–681 B.C.) made Nineveh the capital of his kingdom (c. 700). His energetic building program included a splendid palace, water-supply and water-control projects, and a massive wall to surround the expanded city. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C., never to be restored, marking*

the end of Assyria.” End quote. You may recall from our study of **Isaiah** that **Sennacherib** was the one who invaded **Judah**, taking most of its cities by **siege**, and eventually made his way to **Jerusalem**. But when he came to Jerusalem and **mocked Hezekiah King of Judah** from outside the **wall**, and with an **arrogant letter**, (Isaiah 36-37), Hezekiah went to the prophet **Isaiah** and **turned to the Lord** in **prayer**. God responded by **pronouncing** Sennacherib’s **demise**. This resulted in **185,000** Assyrian soldiers being **killed in one night** by the **Angel of the Lord** while they slept, and the subsequent **retreat** of the **entire Assyrian army** after that. **Sennacherib** returned home to Nineveh and was **murdered** by his **own sons** in **680BC**. The below **timeline** pictures the **timing of Nahum’s prophecy** which happened during the **reign** of the wicked **King Manasseh** of Judah.



After the **Assyrian invasion** had come to **most** of the **cities of Judah** by 680BC, and for **many years** after had them under **tribute** and the **threat** of Assyria’s **horrific war tactics**, you can see they were **greatly fearing** this foe in the days of **Nahum** the **prophet**. So **Nahum writes to comfort** the **people of Judah**, foretelling the irrevocable **fall of Nineveh** and therefore the **fall of the Assyrian empire**. This would happen just a **few decades** after **Nahum’s prophecy**, when in **612BC** **Nineveh** was **conquered** by a coalition of **Babylonian** and **Medes** armies.

Themes and Features

Nahum is a **gloomy book** indeed consisting almost **entirely** of **oracles of judgment**. Thus, Nahum portrays **God** as a **Divine Warrior**, revealing many of His

attributes as they relate to **His wrath** upon **His enemies** and **foes of His people**. Nahum speaks to **taunt God's** enemies with **pronouncements** of **woe** and vivid **narratives** of **destruction**. Chapters **2 & 3** give **imagery** and **motifs** concerning the **fall** of the **massive city** of **Nineveh** and its **king** in very **certain** terms. This **judgment** against **Assyria** and its **capital city** is **irrevocable**, as God will **replace** this **ruling nation** of the **world** with the new **Babylonian Empire**. See then, as in all the **prophets**, **God** in His **Sovereignty** rules over the **nations** of the **world**, raising them up and tearing them down, using them as **He wishes** in the **accomplishment** of His **Divine purposes**. Although God has **used Assyria** as the **rod** of His **judgment**, He will yet bring **judgment** upon **Nineveh** and **Assyria** for their fierce **cruelty**, **greed**, and **idolatry**. Nahum proclaims that **God is jealous** for His **own honor**, that He is **wrathful** and **avenging** against His **enemies**, **just** and **righteous** in His **judgments**, and yet at the same time He is **slow to anger**, merciful, **loving** and **faithful**, who will **deliver** and **protect** those **who trust in Him**. Although God has used Assyria to **judge** unfaithful **Israel** and **Judah**, He is a **refuge** for the **faithful** among **His people** who **trust Him** and **seek Him** when in trouble.

Nahum 1:7 - 7 The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him. NASU

Even though **Nahum** presents as a **prophet** of **doom**, yet he features a **comprehensive view** of **who God is** and **what He is like**. The **Divine Warrior** and **Sovereign** over **all** He has **made**, including the **most powerful** of **nations**, who is a fierce **Avenger** against **His enemies** and yet a **gracious refuge** for His **own people** who **look to Him** with **faith**.

Outline

Introduction ([1:1](#))

A Psalm Descriptively Praising the Lord ([1:2-8](#))

The Lord's Coming Judgment on Nineveh and Deliverance of Judah ([1:9-15](#))

Focus on Nineveh: The Lord's Coming Judgment ([2:1-13](#))

More concerning the Lord's Coming Judgment ([3:1-19](#))

A Psalm Descriptively Praising the Lord ([1:2-8](#))

As Nahum begins to speak, the **main character** of his **prophecy** takes **center stage** when the **prophet recounts** the **glories of God's nature**.

Nahum 1:2-6 - 2 A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. 3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And

the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither. 5 Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it. 6 Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him. NASU

He we learn that God is jealous, avenging, and wrathful. **“2 a jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.”** God will not be **mocked** by **humanity** as they **dishonor Him** with all manner of selfish **warfare** and **destruction** of **others**. Especially if such make war with **His people**, and in which case He is not **only jealous** for His **character** and His **righteousness**, but also for **His name** which His **people** bear. Although **“3 the Lord is slow to anger and great in power,”** His patience will not endure forever but **“3 the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.”** At the right time, God will bring **justice** to **all people** and in **just measure**. God will **avenge** His **own character** as God and **judge** those who **persist** in **unrighteous** and **unjust treatment** of others, even if **He reserves His wrath** for the right **time**. The **wicked** do not always **immediately** get the judgment they **deserve**, but in time it **will come**. But in the case of His **enemies** and the **enemies** of His people, He is fierce beyond any, for He is the **awesome Creator** of all. **“3 In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. 4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither. 5 Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it.”** Here God is depicted **ruling over nature** by His **Providence**, commanding the **storms** and winds, the waves of the **sea**, the mighty **mountains** and even the **world** and **all its inhabitants**. God is **awesome** beyond **comparison**, **ruling** His **world** with a **meticulous Providence** and there is **none like Him!** Nahum describes Him as the Omnipotent and unassailable **Divine Warrior!** **“6 Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him.”** The obvious answer is, **no one** or **nobody** can **stand before** the **Lord** and His **burning anger** against His enemies. And yet throughout **human history** men have been so brazen as to **ignore** Him, **rebel** against Him, and even **blaspheme** His **name** and His **honor** as the Creator.

Yet **humanity** is not without its **warnings** from **God**, as in **every age** His prophets have warned of His **fierce judgment** for their **sin** and **injustice**. Even the great **Flood** of **Noah's** day deluged the **whole world** in His **wrath** for its **iniquity**, when God saw that the **"thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"** (Gen 6:5). It stands as a **testimony** to every **succeeding generation** that God will indeed **bring wrath** on **humanity** for its **sin**, and the **call to fear the Lord** is written on the **conscience of all**. Yet **humanity** remains **steadfast** in its **rebellion** against God.

Romans 1:18-21 - 18 For **the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men** who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** 20 For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** 21 For even though they knew God, **they did not honor Him as God or give thanks**, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASU

Nahum will go on to **focus** on **Nineveh** and **Assyria**, but He has **opened** with solid facts about **who God is** what **He is like**. And these **attributes of God** are His **eternal nature** and therefore **applicable** to **all people** in **every age**, and humanity seems to have been in a perpetual cycle of **human violence** and **oppression** in every age. **Human history** is filled with **tribes** and **nations**, elevating themselves against **each other** and using **violence** to take what they want, resulting in the **death** and **oppression** of the **innocent**. But **Nahum** **explains** that by this cycle of violence and **selfish warfare** God is **grieved**, and He cares about the **death** of the **innocent**, and that **His goodness** and **His justice** compel Him to **orchestrate** the downfall of **oppressive nations**, and God's judgment on **evil** is **good news**. Now in this **Gospel Age** we realize that we have all **fallen short** of **God's glory** (Rom 3:23) and are **worthy** of His **judgment**. We know that **God** has fixed a **day** when He will **judge** the **world** in **righteousness** by the man He has **appointed** (Acts 17:31), and people can now find a **refuge** from His **coming wrath** in the **Person** of His **Son**, the **Lord Jesus Christ**, who is a **Savior** and refuge to **all** who call upon Him. **Nahum** also proclaims this about the Lord.

Nahum 1:7-8 - **7 The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him.** 8 But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies into darkness. NASU

Here we learn that even though **God** is a **refuge** for those who **seek Him**, yet He will not let the **guilty** go **unpunished**, and He **“will pursue His enemies into darkness.”** Interesting that **Jesus described** the **eternal abode** of the **wicked** as **outer darkness**. Of all the foes in the **world**, the last **one whom** you want as your **enemy** is the **Lord**! Let us **take refuge** in **His Son**, before it is **too late**!

The Lord’s Coming Judgment on Nineveh and Deliverance of Judah ([1:9–15](#))

Nahum continues in **1:9-15**, where the focus turns to **Nineveh** and **Judah**, alternating between the **Lord’s coming judgment** on **Nineveh** and his deliverance of **Judah**. Nineveh’s plans will be **thwarted**.

Nahum 1:9-11 - 9 Whatever you devise against the Lord, He will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice. 10 Like tangled thorns, And like those who are drunken with their drink, They are consumed As stubble completely withered. **11 From you has gone forth One who plotted evil against the Lord**, A wicked counselor. NASU

Here, plots against God’s people are plans against the Lord. He will take up the cause of His people Judah. Here God promises to break off the yoke of Assyria.

Nahum 1:12-13 - 12 Thus says the Lord, "Though they are at full strength and likewise many, Even so, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. **13 "So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you, And I will tear off your shackles."**

You can imagine after being under tribute for decades this was a powerful promise of deliverance. He now promises doom on Nineveh.

Nahum 1:14 - 14 The Lord has issued a command concerning you: **"Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image From the house of your gods. I will prepare your grave, For you are contemptible."**

Returning again to **Judah**, the **Lord consoles** them as a **bearer of good news**, here bringing the news of the **fall of Nineveh**. But also, a **call to the faithfulness** of His **people** in **response** to this **good news**.

Nahum 1:15 - 15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! **Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; Pay your vows.** For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely. NASU

Calling the people to **keep the feasts** was **essential** to their ongoing faithful **worship** of **God** but also a way of reminding them of **God’s** deliverance in the past. **Paying their vows** was of course another **act of worship** and **obedience** from the **Covenant** that the **Lord** was **calling** them to.

Focus on Nineveh: The Lord's Coming Judgment ([2:1–13](#))

Chapter 2 is a thorough **prophecy** of the **complete overthrow** and **plunder** of the city of **Nineveh**. As he begins, **God** is seen **taking up** the **cause** of His **people** as the **basis** for the **overthrow** of **Nineveh**, who has **conquered** and **plundered** His people for many decades.

Nahum 2:1-13 - 2 The one who scatters has come up against you. Man the fortress, watch the road; Strengthen your back, summon all your strength. 2 **For the Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob Like the splendor of Israel, Even though devastators have devastated them And destroyed their vine branches.** NASU

As the **city** is **overcome** by **shielded warriors** and **shining chariots**, her people are reduced to **mourning** with **none** to **rescue**.

Nahum 2:1-13 - 3 The shields of his mighty men are colored red, The **warriors are dressed in scarlet, The chariots are enveloped in flashing steel When he is prepared to march, And the cypress spears are brandished.** 4 **The chariots race madly in the streets, They rush wildly in the squares, Their appearance is like torches, They dash to and fro like lightning flashes.** 5 He remembers his nobles; They stumble in their march, They hurry to her wall, And the mantelet is set up. 6 The gates of the rivers are opened And the palace is dissolved. **7 It is fixed: She is stripped, she is carried away, And her handmaids are moaning like the sound of doves, Beating on their breasts.** NASU

Here the great **Nineveh** has been **reduced** to **no defense** and **completely plundered**. What has become of the once mighty Nineveh, who **cruelly conquered** people, **plundering them** and bringing them into captivity and slavery?

Nahum 2:1-13 - 8 Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days, Now they are fleeing; "Stop, stop, "But no one turns back. **9 Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure —Wealth from every kind of desirable object. 10 She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste!** Hearts are melting and knees knocking! Also anguish is in the whole body And all their faces are grown pale! 11 Where is the den of the lions And the feeding place of the young lions, Where the lion, lioness and lion's cub prowled, With nothing to disturb them? 12 The lion tore enough for his cubs, Killed enough for his lionesses, And filled his lairs with prey And his dens with torn flesh. NASU

The once **dominant city** with its **young** and **strong warriors** has been reduced to

plunder and completely stripped bare. Where is their arrogance now? This section is an **intense taunt** of **Judah's enemies** in Nineveh.

Nahum 2:1-13 - 13 "**Behold, I am against you**," declares the Lord of hosts.

"I will burn up her chariots in smoke, a sword will devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the land, and **no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard**." NASU

Their **doom is fixed** for the **Lord** has **spoken**. It is He that is **against them** and their demise will be **final**.

More concerning the Lord's Coming Judgment (3:1-19)

As Nahum continues, not only has Nineveh been plundered but her people slain. The once **massive** and **dominant city** has been **overthrown** and many **thousands** of its **people** have been **slaughtered**. From this **wound** she shall **not** be **cured**!

Nahum 3:1-7 - 1 Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; Her prey never departs. 2 The noise of the whip, The noise of the rattling of the wheel, Galloping horses And bounding chariots! 3 Horsemen charging, Swords flashing, spears gleaming, Many slain, a mass of corpses, And countless dead bodies —They stumble over the dead bodies! 4 All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, The charming one, the mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries. 5 "Behold, I am against you," declares the Lord of hosts; "And I will lift up your skirts over your face, And show to the nations your nakedness And to the kingdoms your disgrace. 6 "I will throw filth on you And make you vile, And set you up as a spectacle. 7 "And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, 'Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her? 'Where will I seek comforters for you?'" NASU

The **imagery** here tells a **story of shame**! The **ESV Study Bible** comments; *"The seductive prostitute (Nineveh) will receive a punishment befitting her shameful trade. The figurative language dramatically conveys the message that God will bring Nineveh's wicked activity to an end and utterly humiliate the city by having it conquered and devastated. Its disgrace would be internationally known."* **End quote**. As he continues describing **Nineveh's** complete **destruction**, he compares her **downfall** to the **city of Thebes**, who the **Assyrians** conquered in **664BC**. The great city of **Thebes** in **Egypt** was thought to be **unassailable**, yet violently routed by **Assyria**. Its **infants** were **dashed** and it **mighty men** made **slaves**. This was a **well-known** event in the ancient near east. As it happened to them, so shall it happen to **Nineveh**!

Nahum 3:8-19 - 8 Are you better than No-amon, Which was situated by the waters of the Nile, With water surrounding her, Whose rampart was the sea, Whose wall consisted of the sea? 9 Ethiopia was her might, And Egypt too, without limits. Put and Lubim were among her helpers. **10 Yet she became an exile, She went into captivity; Also her small children were dashed to pieces At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound with fetters.** 11 You too will become drunk, You will be hidden. You too will search for a refuge from the enemy. NASU

The **book of Nahum** ends on a **gloomy** note. The **last verses** are a **taunt song** revealing **Nineveh's complete destruction** because of the city's **perpetual evil**. Nineveh's king is **taunted** in its ruins, its people scattered and its **wound incurable**.

Nahum 3:12-19 - 12 All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit — When shaken, they fall into the eater's mouth. 13 Behold, your people are women in your midst! **The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies; Fire consumes your gate bars.** 14 Draw for yourself water for the siege! Strengthen your fortifications! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Take hold of the brick mold! **15 There fire will consume you, The sword will cut you down; It will consume you as the locust does.** Multiply yourself like the creeping locust, Multiply yourself like the swarming locust. 16 You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven —The creeping locust strips and flies away. 17 Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust. Your marshes are like hordes of grasshoppers Settling in the stone walls on a cold day. The sun rises and they flee, And the place where they are is not known. **18 Your shepherds are sleeping, O king of Assyria; Your nobles are lying down. Your people are scattered on the mountains And there is no one to regather them. 19 There is no relief for your breakdown, Your wound is incurable.** All who hear about you Will clap their hands over you, For on whom has not your evil passed continually? NASU

Let us learn here that ***“the eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good,”*** (Prov 15:3). God's judgment is not sleeping, and He is always at the business of ruling the nations according to the council of His own will (Eph 1:11). The **wicked** do not always **immediately** get the judgment they **deserve**, but in time it **will come**.

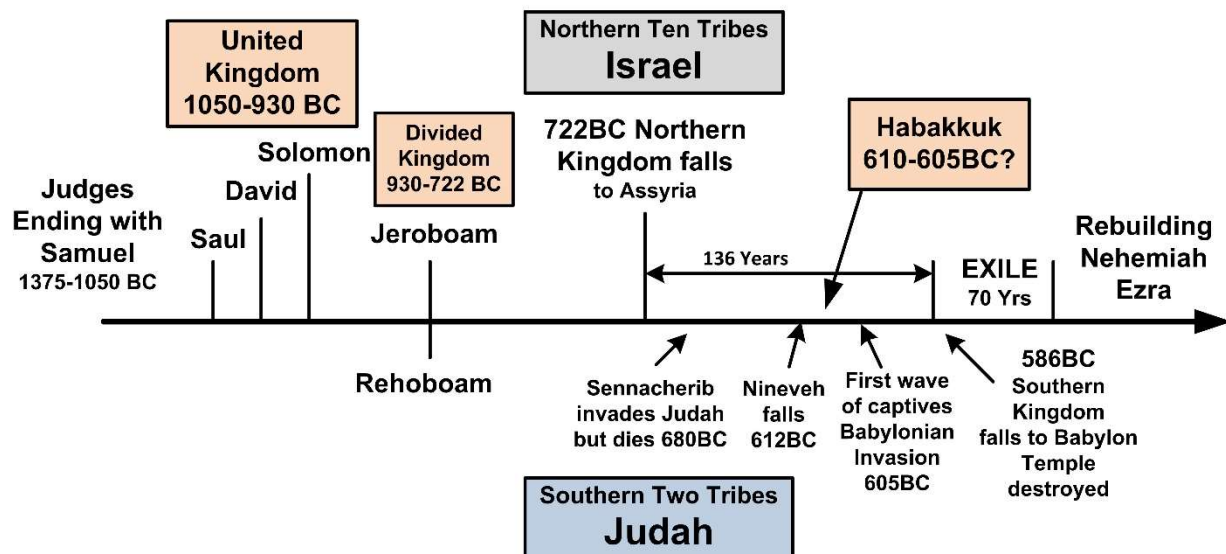
Old Testament Survey Part 4 - The Prophets

Habakkuk Chapters 1-3

Author, Date and Setting

The very **first verse** of **Habakkuk** tells us **who wrote** the book. “**Habakkuk 1:1** – “**1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.**” Concerning the date and setting of Habakkuk, we know that he writes just near the end of the **reign** of **Josiah** the righteous **King of Judah**, and the beginning of the **reign** of **Jehoiakim** that wicked king, just before the **Babylonian invasion** of **Jerusalem** in **597 BC**. You remember that the **Northern Kingdom** of **Israel** had long ago been **judged** by **God** and **annihilated** by the **Assyrian Invasion**. The few survivors of the **Northern 10 tribes** were **scattered** among the **nations** of Mesopotamia in **captivity** back in **722 BC**, some **120 years** earlier, and a **small remnant** remaining among the **land of Judah**. Now the **Southern Kingdom** of **Judah** had been descending into wickedness as well under the wicked kings Manasseh and Amon. Apart from the **reforms** of **King Josiah** which lasted about **14 years** (2 Kings 23:21-27), Judah had **quickly fallen** back into **idolatry** and wickedness after **Josiah’s death**, under the reign of **Jehoiakim**.

Israel-Judah History Timeline - Habakkuk



Thus, the **judgment** of **God**, after His long-awaited **patience** has been tried, is about to sweep them away into **exile** as **captives** in the Babylonian Invasion. There they will, according to the **prophecy** of **Jeremiah**, be in captivity for some **70**

years, before God will bring them **back** to **rebuild** the temple under the ministry of **Ezra the Scribe** and rebuild the **city** under the ministry of **Nehemiah**. It is in these **final days** before **exile** that **Habakkuk** is **deeply troubled** over the **wickedness** of **God's own people**, and worse God's **looming judgment** by the hand of the wicked **Babylonians**, that he records his **oracle** and **dialogue** with **God**. This, by the way, makes this **book unique** among the **prophets**, as a **recorded dialogue** between the **prophet** and **God**. His questions and God's answers, along with his **prayer** make up the entire **3 chapters**.

Theme and Message

As with most of the prophets, the **main character** is **God** Himself. Here God is put on **display**, and many of His **wonderful** and **awesome attributes** are **highlighted**. We will see God's **Justice** and **Wisdom**, His **Judgment** and **Wrath**, His **Sovereignty** and **Providence** over the nations of the earth, and even His **Mercy** and the purity of His **Holiness**. And, yet **Habakkuk** himself is the **secondary character**, as he, **like all of us**, **wrestles** with and **questions God's purposes**. Several great **lessons** come forth for this **man of faith**, and subsequently, there is much **food** for our **weary souls** to cling to here as we see our **Sovereign God** revealed in all His wisdom, **power** and **splendor**. Here, not only will our **vision** of **God** be **expanded**, but this will be the **very thing** that strengthens **our faith** in **God**. You see the **theme** and **message** of **Habakkuk** is that **God's ways** of **preserving** and **purifying** His **people** are often **mysterious** to the believer; and yet God calls His **suffering people** to have **faith** that His **purposes** for the **world** are **good** and will at last **prevail**. And this is the same **faith** that the **New Testament** authors **develop** and **commend**. **Chapter 2:4 "the just shall live by faith,"** is quoted **3 times** in the New Testament! We don't always **understand** what He is **doing**, but we must **rely** upon the wisdom and **justice** of God and **trust Him** with **dependent faith**.

You see we cannot **forget** as we **look closely** into the **Old Testament**, that we look back on it from the **age** of **Jesus Christ the Messiah**. He has **come** and **brought** the **salvation** of **God** to the **nations** of the **earth** through the **good news** of His **incarnation** and His **life**, and His **death** on the Cross for the **sins** of His **people**. And more, He was **raised** from the **dead**, and His **resurrection** shows His **power** over **death**, and His ability to **promise eternal life** to **all** who will **trust** Him with **genuine faith**. The **God** of the **Old Testament** is in fact the very same **God** who **came** and **manifested Himself** in the **Person** of **Jesus** in the **New Testament**, even though the **plan** of **God** was not **completely clear** in **Old Testament** times. But

now **Jesus has come** and made **God's plan** and **purpose clear**, so that now we can understand with **clarity** and **precision** how God was all the while **working** to bring **His plan** for the **ages** to **fruition**. The **promises** of the **Old Testament** have **dawned** upon us, and are **even now coming** to their **fulfilment**. It will all **unfold** in **God's time**, and perfectly according to **His plan** to install **His Son** as **King** and give Him the **nations** as an **inheritance forever**. Let us therefore remember that **Habakkuk** didn't have the **whole story**, but He had the **same faith** in the **same God** that helped him to **endure** his **trials** with **joy** and **strength**. And so his message is very relevant for us **today**, as we also **wait with faith** for **God's plan** to **unfold**, for **justice** to be **served**, and the **promise** of a **world without evil** is finally brought by God! He shall **wipe every tear** from our **eyes**, sorrow will flee away and be no more, and we will lie down in **peace**, in a world of **bliss** and **happiness** forever in His presence! In Habakkuk we **learn to trust in God** and to **wait upon Him** to **accomplish His purposes** in **due time**, and in the midst of our **suffering** and **trusting** in Him we can **rejoice** in His **goodness** and **love**, which **follows us** all the **days** of our **lives**. In it we see the **majesty** and **splendor** of the **great God of Heaven**, and our **faith** will find its **rest** in **God alone**, and with the Psalmist we will cry,

Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11 - 1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. **7 The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.** 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. 9 He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. 10 **"Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."** 11 **The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold.** Selah. NASU

Habakkuk's message is this; The God of justice who governs the nations by His Providence can be **trusted** to be a **source of Joy** and **Strength**, even in the **midst** of bitter **circumstances** for the **righteous** who **live by faith**. God will be **faithful** to **accomplish His Word** in **His time**!

Outline

First Cycle ([1:1–11](#))

Habakkuk's lament ([1:2–4](#))

God's response ([1:5–11](#))

Second Cycle ([1:12–2:20](#))

Habakkuk's lament ([1:12–2:1](#))

God's response ([2:2–20](#))

Habakkuk's Prayer ([3:1–19](#))

First Cycle ([1:1–11](#))

Habakkuk's lament ([1:1–4](#))

Habakkuk opens getting right to the point. Seeing the **idolatry, sinfulness, and injustice** of his **people** in Judah, He wonders **why God** has not **corrected** these things that should **not be**. The **righteous prophet** longs for things to be **right** in his world and he finds himself in **prayer questioning God** as to what He is up to.

Habakkuk 1:1-4 - 1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. **2 How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, "Violence!" Yet You do not save.** 3 Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises. **4 Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted.** NASU

Here see that **Habakkuk's people** in Judah are overcome with **wickedness and violence**... he says, **strife and contention** exists, and no one pays **attention** to the **law**! The **wicked** surround the **righteous**, and justice is **gone** from the land! Sounds very much like modern America doesn't it? And so we can **identify** with **Habakkuk**, we understand, and we are **troubled too**! And so the prophet is **dismayed**, he is tormented, he is troubled. He **cares** about **God's people**, and more, he cares about **God's honor**, and the **defaming** of His **great name**! And so he calls and cries to God! He **wrestles** with **God** and cannot **understand** why God has not acted to **bring justice** and deliverance to His people! **Seven times** in this text **verses 1-17** the prophet **questions God**! His world is in **disarray**, the righteous are **suffering**, and **evil** seems to **dominate**. So with **faith** and much **despair** he laments and cries to God! And what's also beautiful here is His **relationship with God**! He **knows God** and **loves God**, and He **talks** to God in **prayer**! And God hears

him and compassionately receives his cry... even if Habakkuk doesn't truly **understand** and seems to be **questioning God's justice**. And so God **answers!**

God's response ([1:5-11](#))

Now for **many years** God has **waited** for His people to **repent!** He sent prophet after **prophet**, raised up **righteous kings** and brought **revivals**, and yet again and again they **spurn** His **name**, **profane** His **worship**, and **rebel** against **His Law!** It has been **400 years** since **David reigned** in Judah and Israel, and God's people have steadily declined to a **very deplorable** and wicked place. **Israel is no more** and **Judah is ripe** for **judgment** and correction. **God answers** Habakkuk, and His answer clearly shows that God does care and **He will act!** And no doubt with much fear and trembling Habakkuk hears God's awesome reply.

Habakkuk 1:5-11 - 5 "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days —You would not believe if you were told. 6 "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. 7 "They are dreaded and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves. 8 "Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour. 9 "All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand. 10 "They mock at kings And rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress And heap up rubble to capture it. 11 "Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god." NASU

This of course is astonishing. You know when God says behold, **"be astonished, and wonder at what I will do"**... you better take notice. When God is gonna fix a problem, He is gonna fix it good, and you **better hope** you're on His side! Not only am I going to **correct my people** who have gone astray Habakkuk, I am going to bring **400 years** of **rebellion** crashing down on their **rebel heads**, and completely sweep them **away** in **destruction**, and only a remnant will be spared and brought into **desperate captivity**. And only after a **long 70 years** of **captivity**, while the land finally enjoys its **Sabbaths**, will they **return, humbled, weak**, and in desperate need of **fellowship** with **God again**. More than this, I will use those fierce and violently **wicked Chaldeans** to make sure my judgment is **swift**, total and perfectly in accord with the **wickedness** of **your sins**. You love violence and destruction,

strife and contention... **“be astonished,”** I am bringing the **most violent** and strife filled **devils** you ever saw to sweep you away in **judgment!** Yes even the Babylonians! Indeed we see what you mean, **we wouldn’t believe** it even if you **told** us! Notice here, **“6 I am raising up the Chaldeans.”** Let us **not forget** that God is in **control**, the **world belongs** to **Him**, and He does as **He wills** in the heaven and on earth. **God** is **here acting** in **Sovereign Power**, in **Ruling Providence**, and in **Righteous Judgment**. God exercises His **rule** of the **nations** and raises them up and tears them down **according** to His own will and desire (Eph 1:11). They are **His possession** (Psa 82:8) and He is said to use them for **His purpose** and **plan** because **He** himself is the **Lord** of **time and history**. From the standpoint of the history books we see that **Babylon** conquered **Judah** and Jerusalem in **605BC** and the **Persians** conquered **Babylon 58 years** later in **539 BC**. But from the standpoint of God, He **decreed** it from all **eternity** and brought it to pass by the **mouth** of His **prophets** before it ever happened in **history**. Let us see here that **God reigns** over the **nations!** Habakkuk has **lamented** that God seems **idle** when the **wicked rule** in the land of **Judah**, but little did he realize God was about to act in fulfilment of all those **prophet’s warnings** before him. **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel**, and several others all **warned** that this **day** would **come**, and with **vivid** and specific **details!** Now that day has **arrived** because of the **unceasing idolatry** and **wickedness** of His own people. When God sees the **wickedness** of **Judah**, and His purpose reaches fulfilment, He **brings judgment** on them by the **Chaldeans**. And notice verse **“11 But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.”** When He is finished with that, He sends the Medes and Persians in 539BC to judge the Chaldeans. And **HIStory** marches on down through the ages until everyone of His **righteous purposes** is **fulfilled** and the **expected end** that He has **decreed** for human history reaches its **final completion**. God is the **Judge** of all the **earth** that executes a **righteous judgement**, and no one can **stay His hand** or **call Him** into question! Let us **lament** over the **deeds** of **God’s ancient people**, and more, let us **fear** and **tremble** when **God’s patience** reaches its **end** and **judgment comes!**

Second Cycle ([1:12–2:20](#))

Habakkuk’s lament ([1:12–2:1](#))

Now this **unbelievable** thing has **Habakkuk** astonished, and this of course causes him much **consternation**. He realizes that **God** is about to **bring judgment** on the **sins** of his **people**, but He will **do it** with a much **more wicked** and **violent people!** Habakkuk **wonders** how God can use a **wicked nation** to punish a less wicked one. And so Habakkuk laments and questions God yet again!

Habakkuk 1:12-17 - 12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct. 13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why

do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they? 14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them? 15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful. 17 Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?

Three times here Habakkuk **asks God WHY?** From his **limited view** he cannot **understand** these amazing and **profoundly** intense **actions** of **God**. To him it seems **unjust**, but the **Lord** will **instruct him** and **call him to faith** and trust in **God's goodness** and His **wisdom**. With **much faith** he must **learn to wait** upon the **Lord** to bring to **pass** His **good purposes** in His **own time!** God in His **mercy** will **answer** Habakkuk's **questions**. Chapter 2 is **God's answer** to these probing questions **WHY**.

God's response (2:2-20)

Habakkuk realizes he has asked a lot from the Lord, but he is determined for God to hear and answer him, even if it comes as a reproof.

Habakkuk 2:1-3 - 1 I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproofed. 2 Then the Lord answered me and said,

"Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. 3 "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. NASU

The Lord will indeed **answer** with a very **bright light** and **discourse** and explain that **His justice** is not **sleeping**, but will **ripen in time** and His **good purposes** will come to pass. But Habakkuk must **learn to trust God with faith**, even when he doesn't **understand** what **God is doing**.

Habakkuk 2:4-5 - 4 "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith. 5 "Furthermore, wine

betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, And he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations And collects to himself all peoples. NASU

Even though the **proud Chaldeans** march on **consuming peoples lives** and destroying others only to **satisfy** their **own greed**, yet God will also **bring** them to **justice**. Here the Lord will **pronounce judgment** upon **Babylon** whose judgment will also **ripen** when God's **good time** arrives.

Habakkuk 2:6-8 - 6 "Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, Even mockery and insinuations against him And say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his —For how long —And makes himself rich with loans?' 7 "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, And those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them. 8 "Because you have looted many nations, All the remainder of the peoples will loot you —Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants. NASU

Here the nations will take up a **taunt-song** against **Babylon** in the day that her **judgment arrives**. Here God pronounces **five “Woes”** against them and these woes **manifest** His **own glory** as **God**! These **“Woes”** describe the **reasons** why **Babylon deserves** its coming **punishment** and what that **punishment is**.

Habakkuk 2:9-14 - 9 "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house To put his nest on high, To be delivered from the hand of calamity! 10 "You have devised a shameful thing for your house By cutting off many peoples; So you are sinning against yourself. 11 "Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, And the rafter will answer it from the framework. 12 "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed And founds a town with violence! 13 "Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts That peoples toil for fire, And nations grow weary for nothing? 14 "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea. NASU

Even as the **nations** are in **upheaval** and **rolling on** through **history**, yet God **purpose** and **plans** will eventually reach its long-expected **end**. Then **“14 the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.”** For now the **violent Chaldeans** are ripe for **woe** and **judgment**, and God's **righteous plan** will soon bring them to a **dreaded end**.

Habakkuk 2:15-17 - 15 "Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom even to make them drunk So as to look on their nakedness! 16 "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. **The cup in the Lord's right**

hand will come around to you, And utter disgrace will come upon your glory. 17 "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, And the

devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants. NASU

Notice here it is **"the cup in the Lord's right hand"** that will come around to them, and they will be **made to drink** His **wrath**, just like **they brought** upon so many **others**. One interesting thought in **light of this** is that on the night **Babylon was conquered**, King Belshazzar was using the **cups** from the **Temple** of the **Lord** at his feast, **blaspheming God**, when the **hand appeared** and **wrote** on the wall to spell out their judgment (Daniel 5:1-31).

Daniel 5:30-31 - 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two. NASU

In the **last woe** the **folly** of **idolatry** is compared to the **glory of God**, who **controls** the **nations** and **history**. The **mute** and **dead idols** cannot **speak** or **teach**, but God **rules** over the **nations** from His **heavenly Temple**.

Habakkuk 2:18-20 - 18 "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols. **19 "Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, And there is no breath at all inside it. 20 "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."** NASU

It is **amazing** to think **all the purposes** of **God** that came forth from the **Babylonian Invasion**. The violent kingdom of **Assyria** was **brought down** after hundreds of **years** of **cruelty** and oppression. The **Southern Kingdom of Judah** and its surrounding **nations** were all brought under **judgment** for their **corruption**. When **Judah** was brought into **captivity**, the entire **book of Daniel** came about as Daniel and his friends **served** on the **Babylonian Court**, and the **remnant** of **Judah** and **Israel** was **preserved** through the **reign of Babylon**. When the **Exile** was over, **God raised up** the **Medes** and **Persians** to send the **captives** of **Judah** back to **Jerusalem** and fund the **rebuilding** of the **Temple** and the **city**. God used Babylon in many **significant ways**, but all of it eventually **fulfilled** His **good plan** to bring the **Messiah** and **save humanity** from their **sins**.

Here **God's answer** to **Habakkuk** is that when **Judah** has been **swept away** by the **Chaldeans**, they too will **reap** the **judgment** they have **sown**, and eventually God's purposes will reach His expected end and **"14 the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea."** Even in the midst of such terrible judgment, there is **hope** that the **world** will finally be made **right** under the **righteous rule** of **God**. And this **answer** from **God** comforts Habakkuk, as he realizes that **God is** indeed in **control**, His purposes are **wise** and **just**, and for now He must **wait with faith** and **patience** for the **Lord's good purposes** to **ripen** and come to **fruition**. With this reassurance He breaks into a song of **praise** to **God**.

Habakkuk's Prayer (3:1–19)

The words **3:1 "according to Shigionoth,"** tell us that this **prayer** of Habakkuk is a **song**. Here his godly response to God's answer is reverent fear as he surveys God's awesome Providence over the nations.

Habakkuk 3:1-8 - 1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. **2 Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.** NASU

As he **trembles** considering the **works** of the **Lord**, he **prays** for God to revive his people and to be **merciful** when He judges them, **"in wrath remember mercy."** He continues now **praising God** for His **awesome Providence** and **rule** over **nature** and **history**.

Habakkuk 3:1-8 - 3 God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. **4** His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power. **5 Before Him goes pestilence, And plague comes after Him. 6 He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting.** **7** I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling. **8** Did the Lord rage against the rivers, Or was Your anger against the rivers, Or was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, It is **remarkable** that Habakkuk is so **comforted** and **assured** by **God's answer** that he is **resolved** with **much faith** and now **praises God** for His **meticulous Providence**. He recounts how all of this **upheaval** of **nations** and **history** is all happening at the **hand** of **God**. Once the **faithful** realize that **God is in control**,

and that His **purposes are good**, even when we don't understand, we are **privileged to praise Him** for His **Sovereign grace** and **wonder in thankful amazement** at His **awesome glory**!

Habakkuk 3:9-15 - 9 Your bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah. You cleaved the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw You and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted high its hands. **11 Sun and moon stood in their places; They went away at the light of Your arrows, At the radiance of Your gleaming spear. 12 In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled the nations. 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah. 14 You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those Who devour the oppressed in secret. 15 You trampled on the sea with Your horses, On the surge of many waters.**

Notice in **verses 13 and 14** God's use of and **judgment** upon the **Chaldeans** is like a **type** of **God using Satan** to accomplish His **great purpose** of the **salvation** of His people. In the end **God's people** will be **saved**, even if for now they must go into **Exile** in Babylon. **"13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah. 14 You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs."** The very blows of Satan seeking to kill the Messiah on the Cross at the hands of God's misled and corrupted people are the very means that God used to **"strike the head of the house of evil"** and was the **death blow** that brought down that great Goliath **enemy, Satan**. The **most evil** act in **History** is the very act that **killed evil forever**, and the **devil** was **caught** in his **own trap**!

As Habakkuk **ends** his **prayer song**, he is a **changed man** of **resolute faith** trusting in the **Lord**. He utters some of the most beautiful **faith filled words** in the **Bible**. He began by **questioning God** and **His justice** and now **He trusts** with much **faith** and **patience** that **God does** all things **right**! Habakkuk knows **Judah** will soon be **conquered** and **exiled**, yet he waits **patiently** for **God's good plans** to come to pass!

Habakkuk 3:16-19 - 16 I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us. **17 Though the fig tree should not blossom And there**

be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord God is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments. NASU

Even in midst of great suffering and loss Habakkuk has learned to trust in the Lord, and even rejoice in God! **“18 Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.”** This stands as one of the **great lessons of faith** for **God’s people** in the **Bible**. Our **lives** often encounter **suffering** and **loss** which we don’t understand. But **God** is in **control** and has our **best interest** in mind, so we must look to Him with **much faith** and **patience, waiting** upon the **Lord** for His good **purposes** to come to pass. Let this be the **confession of lives**, even when we don’t understand **life’s trials...** **“19 The Lord God is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places.”** Amen.