

Expanded Analysis of
HABAKKUK

"FAITH AMIDST PERPLEXITY"

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. Habakkuk 3:17-18

Published by James T. Bartsch April, 2013
Updated September, 2013

Published Online by WordExplain.com Email
Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE ®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

HABAKKUK

"FAITH AMIDST PERPLEXITY"

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. Habakkuk 3:17-18

Author: Habakkuk, perhaps a Levite and musician (Scofield).

Date: Perhaps after 612 B.C., certainly before 605 B.C.

A 1 HABAKKUK'S FIRST QUESTION 1:1-11

B 1 Introduction: The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. 1:1

B 2 Habakkuk's Asking of His First Question: Why is unjudged sin permitted in Judah? 1:2-4

C 1 His frustration at God's inactivity over Judah's evil 1:2

D 1 "How long, O Lord, will I call for help and You will not hear?"

D 2 "I cry out to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save."

C 2 His examples of Judah's endemic evil 1:3-4

D 1 "Why do You make me see iniquity, 1:3

D 2 "And cause me to look on wickedness?"

D 3 "Yes, destruction and violence are before me;

D 4 "Strife exists and contention arises.

D 5 "Therefore the law is ignored 1:4

D 6 "And justice is never upheld.

D 7 "For the wicked surround the righteous;

D 8 "Therefore justice comes out perverted."

B 3 God's Answer to Habakkuk: He will judge Judah with the relentless Chaldeans! 1:5-11

C 1 The shocking character of His response 1:5

D 1 The commands

E 1 "Look among the nations!

E 2 Observe!

E 3 Be astonished!

E 4 Wonder!"

D 2 The reason: "Because I am doing something in your days -- You would not believe if you were told."

C 2 The content of His response -- He will judge them with the invading Chaldeans: "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, (1:6a), described as: 1:6b-11

D 1 Invasive: That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth 1:6b

D 2 Conquering: To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

D 3 Fear-inducing: "They are dreaded and feared. 1:7

D 4 Autocratic: Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

D 5 Militarily superior: "Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. 1:8

D 6 Highly mobile: Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

D 7 Violent: "All of them come for violence. 1:9

D 8 Irresistible: Their horde of faces moves forward.

D 9 Enslaving: They collect captives like sand.

D 10 Self-confident: "They mock at kings, And rulers are a laughing matter to them. 1:10

D 11 Proficient: They laugh at every fortress, And heap up rubble to capture it.

D 12 Overwhelming: "Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. 1:11

D 13 Accountable: But they will be held guilty,

D 14 Idolatrous: They whose strength is their god."

A 2 HABAKKUK'S SECOND QUESTION 1:12 - 2:20

B 1 The Question: Why the wicked Chaldeans? (Why is holy God allowing an evil nation to discipline a more righteous nation?) **1:12 - 2:1**

C 1 His questioning of God's justice 1:12-13

D 1 His recognition of Yahweh's Eternality: Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? 1:12

D 2 His belief, aghast, in the survival of the nation: We will not die.

D 3 His consternation: You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct. (!)

D 4 His concession of God's absolute holiness: Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. 1:13a

D 5 The crux of his question 1:13b

E 1 Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously?

E 2 Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

C 2 His description of the Chaldeans' evil: They catch nations like fish in the sea! 1:14-17

D 1 His question as to why God permits humans to be vulnerable prey to one another 1:14

E 1 "Why have You made men like the fish of the sea,

E 2 "Like creeping things without a ruler over them?"

D 2 His description of the Chaldeans' "fishing" process 1:15

E 1 The hook: "The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook,

E 2 The net: "Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net.

E 3 Their joy: "Therefore, they rejoice and are glad."

D 3 His description of the Chaldeans' idolatry -- worshiping their own strength and prowess 1:16

E 1 Their rituals

- G 1 "Therefore, they offer a sacrifice to their net.
- G 2 "And burn incense to their fishing net;"
- E 2 Their reasons
 - G 1 "Because through these things their catch is large,
 - G 2 "And their food is plentiful."
- D 4 His question as to the termination of the Chaldeans' slaughter of nations 1:17
 - E 1 "Will they therefore empty their net
 - E 2 "And continually slay nations without sparing?"
- C 3 His determination to wait for God's response 2:1
 - D 1 His station: "I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart;
 - D 2 His watch: "And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,
 - D 3 His response: "And how I may reply when I am reprovred."

B 2 God's Answer 2:2-20

- C 1 The proper attitude: Faith amidst perplexity 2:2-4
 - D 1 God's command to record legibly the certain and inevitable vision 2:2-3
 - E 1 The need to preserve the vision: Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. 2:2
 - E 2 The future time of the vision: "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; 2:3a
 - E 3 The certain fulfillment of the vision 2:3b
 - G 1 "It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail.
 - G 2 "Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay."
 - D 2 God's acknowledgment that the disciplinarian (Chaldea) is not right with God: "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; 2:4a
 - D 3 God's dictum that the righteous need to trust Him anyway! But the righteous will live by his faith. 2:4b

- C 2 God's pronouncement of woe upon Chaldean wickedness: The "Taunt-Song" of Babylon's conquered nations 2:5-20¹
 - D 1 Woe to the militarily greedy 2:5-8
 - E 1 Chaldea's greed for conquest 2:5
 - G 1 Inflamed by wine: "Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home.
 - G 2 His ravenous appetite for more territory: He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, And he is like death, never satisfied.
 - G 3 His devouring of nations: He also gathers to himself all nations And collects to himself all peoples.
 - E 2 The prediction of vengeance upon Chaldea -- The first woe of the "Taunt-Song" of Babylon's conquered nations: "Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, Even mockery and insinuations against him, And say, (2:6a) 2:6-8
 - G 1 Woe to those who steal: 'Woe to him who increases what is not his-- For how long-- And makes himself rich with loans?' 2:6b
 - G 2 The "repossession" of "creditor" (nations): "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, And those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them. 2:7
 - G 3 The revenge of pillaged nations 2:8
 - H 1 Because of Chaldea's looting: "Because you have looted many nations, All the remainder of the peoples will loot you--
 - H 2 Because of Chaldea's bloodshed and violence: Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants.

¹ 2:5-20 The question arises as to whether these woes are directed against Chaldea or also against Judah. Ryrie, for example, maintains, "These woes are not pronounced against the Babylonians only, but also against Israelites who practiced these evils." Ryrie proceeds to indict rulers in general (2:12-14); Jehoiakim personally (2:15-17); and idolaters in general (2:18-20) (*RSB* note on 2:6). While in a sense, all of Scripture can be applied to anyone, the approach taken by *The Bible Knowledge Commentary (TBKC)* in referring the woes to Babylon and its military conquests is much more satisfactory (J. Ronald Blue, *Habakkuk*, 1513-1516). After all, the taunt-song is taken up against Chaldea -- him -- not against Judah (2:6).

- D 2 Woe to the covetous 2:9-11
- E 1 Woe to Chaldea's pursuit of security for his house through evil gain: "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house To put his nest on high To be delivered from the hand of calamity! 2:9
 - E 2 Chaldea's shame and sin against its own house: "You have devised a shameful thing for your house By cutting off many peoples; So you are sinning against yourself. 2:10
 - E 3 The coming agony of Chaldea's house: "Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, And the rafter will answer it from the framework. 2:11
- D 3 Woe to the violent 2:12-14
- E 1 The evil predicted upon Chaldea for building up Babylon through bloodshed and violence: "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed And founds a town with violence! 2:12
 - E 2 Jehovah's decree that nations (such as Chaldea) exert great effort in conquest to no avail: "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts That peoples toil for fire, And nations grow weary for nothing? 2:13
 - E 3 Jehovah's decree that the earth will one day be filed with the knowledge of His glory! "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea. 2:14²
- D 4 Woe to public humiliators 2:15-17
- E 1 Woe to Chaldea for shaming and exposing its neighbor nations: "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! 2:15³
 - E 2 The judgment to befall Chaldea 2:16-17
 - G 1 Being filled with disgrace and dishonor: "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. 2:16a

² 2:14 - This prediction of the earth as filled with the knowledge of God's glory will be fulfilled, to a large extent, during the millennium, but completely fulfilled only in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21 - 22). Observe that the solution to international wars is not the United Nations but the universal knowledge of the glory of Yahweh!

³ 2:15 There may be a double meaning here: 1) Woe to those who cause their neighbors to become drunk to uncover their nakedness, i.e. to commit immorality with them; and 2) Woe to those nations who cause their neighbors to be drunk with bloodshed in order to expose their society to rob and steal and kill them in their vulnerability.

- G 2 Disgraceful drinking of Yahweh's cup! The cup in the LORD'S right hand will come around to you, And utter disgrace will come upon your glory. 2:16b
- G 3 Partaking of the same evil it had committed against Lebanon, including 2:17
 - H 1 Violence: "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,
 - H 2 Destruction of wildlife: And the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them,
 - H 3 Violence against man and land: Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants.
- D 5 Woe to the idolatrous 2:18-20
 - E 1 The futility of Chaldea's reliance upon idolatry 2:18
 - G 1 The worthlessness of constructing an idol: "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood?
 - G 2 The absurdity of trusting as God what one has made with his own hands! For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols.
 - E 2 Woe to the idol-maker! 2:19
 - G 1 Attributing life to the inanimate: "Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a dumb stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? 2:19
 - G 2 Failing to admit it cannot breathe, for it is covered with metal! Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, And there is no breath at all inside it.
 - E 3 The command to keep silence before Yahweh, the One True God, as He speaks! "But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him." 2:20⁴

⁴ 2:20 The idea is this: Not only the Babylonians, but all the earth, rather than speaking endlessly to inanimate objects they have made, telling them to awake and become their gods, ought to keep silence and listen to the commands of the true God from His holy temple in Mt. Zion! Of course the application of the teaching could not be lost on the idolatrous Judeans, either!

A 3 HABAKKUK'S PRAYER 3

B 1 Habakkuk's Request for Mercy alongside Justice 3:1-2

- C 1 The superscription of his prayer 3:1
 - D 1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet,
 - D 2 according to Shigionoth.
- C 2 His fearful reaction to Yahweh's response to his questions: LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. 3:2a
- C 3 His plea to Yahweh 3:2b
 - D 1 To restore Judah to spiritual and physical life and health in the future: O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known;⁵
 - D 2 To be merciful in His judgment of Judah: In wrath remember mercy.

B 2 The Description of Deity: A theophany⁶ of God's coming judgment and salvation illustrated by God's dramatic dealings with Israel in past history⁷ 3:3-15

- C 1 The theophanic prophecy of God's majestic coming approach from the south: The backdrop -- His giving the Law on Mt. Sinai 3:3-5
 - D 1 The geography of His approach: God comes from Teman,⁸ And the

⁵ 3:2. Presumably "revive" (2421 *chayah*) is in the Hiphil stem, or is it Piel?

⁶ 3:3-15 "Verses 3-15 relate a theophany (an appearance of God) accompanied by the awesome features of a violent storm. (RSB) The difficulty with understanding this passage lies in the time eras evidently implied, three in number: 1) Present: Habakkuk sees the theophany -- the appearance of God -- in His present. 2) Past: The language with which Habakkuk describes the events are laden with images of the past -- God's past judgments against Israel's foes and His past salvation of Israel, many times in connection with military battles. 3) Future: And yet the whole function of this appearance of God to Habakkuk is to give hope for the future. As God rescued His people in the past, so also shall He do in the future. Some of the elements of this theophanic prophecy no doubt target relatively near events and include God's coming judgment upon the Chaldeans and their king (cf. 3:13-14). Nevertheless, as prophecy so often does throughout Scripture, some elements target remote events. 3:13-14 must ultimately find its fulfillment in the final overthrow of the man of sin, the antichrist, the beast and his armies as described in Rev. 19:11-21.

⁷ Chap. 3: "The background here is the memory of the events of the Exodus and Sinai. Just as the Lord manifested Himself when He redeemed Israel from Egypt, He will appear again to deliver the godly among His people from their oppressors among the nations and will judge their foes as He did the land of Egypt.... The first verb of 3:3 (and so all the verbs through v. 15) should not be translated as a past, as though Habakkuk were placing himself back at the time of the events of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. It should rather be rendered 'cometh' with a future sense, for as the Lord once came to His people at Sinai to do wonders among them and for them and establish a covenant, so He will come again to liberate them from their enemies." Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 216-217.

⁸ 3:3 - Teman: A reference to Edom, south and east of Judah. See also Amos 1:11-12, Jer. 49:7-10, and Obadiah 1:8-9.

- Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. 3:3a ⁹
- D 2 The majesty of His approach 3:3b-4
- E 1 His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. 3:3b
- E 2 His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power. 3:4
- D 3 His fearsome attendants 3:5
- E 1 Before Him goes pestilence, ¹⁰
- E 2 And plague ¹¹ comes after Him.
- C 2 The theophanic prophecy of God's coming earth-shaking pause to survey the earth 3:6-7 ¹²
- D 1 His purpose: He stood and surveyed the earth; 3:6
- D 2 His effect 3:6b-7
- E 1 Upon the nations in general: He looked and startled the nations.¹³ 3:6b
- E 2 Upon the topography around Him: Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting.
- E 3 Upon particular nations: I saw ¹⁴ the tents of Cushan under

⁹ For a comparison of Deuteronomy 33:2 and Habakkuk 3:3, see Appendix A

¹⁰ 3:5 Pestilence certainly has in mind God's miraculous judgments of disease upon Egypt during the exodus, both upon man and beast (Ex. 9:3, 15; Ps. 78:50), but also upon Israel after David's ill-advised census (2 Sam. 24:13-15 -- 70,000 Israelis died). Pestilence was promised to the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos 4:10) and to the southern kingdom of Judah as a Divine judgment for idolatry (Jer. 14:12; Ezek. 6:11-12, etc.). In fact, there are far more references to pestilence judging Israel / Judah than to any Gentile nations.

¹¹ 3:5 plague (7565, *resheph*). Of the six occurrences, half require the concept of flame or burning (Song of Solomon 8:6; Ps. 78:48; Job 5:7) So here. In Deut. 32:24, *resheph* is connected with "burnt with hunger" [AV] as a judgment. There, as well as here in Habakkuk, it may well signify the heat caused by a burning fever that accompanies some sort of plague. Today we would label it a life-threatening viral infection that causes fever. The reference in Deut. 32:24 is a promise of judgment upon Israel if they should forsake Him in idolatry. The overtones of judgment against Israel as well as of salvation cannot be omitted from this passage. Deut. 32:40-42 is alluded to also in Hab. 3:9.

¹² 3:6-7 *TBKC* (1519) relates this to this continuing vision of Habakkuk's which he saw in connection with God's descent on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:18). But how does that event relate to startling the **nations**?

¹³ 3:6 Could this be a reference to the dispersing abroad of the nations at the Tower of Babel?

¹⁴ 3:7 "I saw" This relates to the theophany that Habakkuk saw.

distress, The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.¹⁵ 3:7

- C 3 The theophanic prophecy of God's coming judgment and salvation as prefigured by His past interventions 3:8-15
- D 1 His awesome power in connection with water 3:8-10¹⁶
- E 1 Reminiscent of His salvation of Israel in connection with the Nile, the Red Sea, and the Jordan 3:8-9a
- G 1 His anger -- not addressed against the rivers and sea: 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, On Your chariots of salvation? 3:8¹⁷
- G 2 His war-like rebuke: Your bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah. 3:9a¹⁸

¹⁵ 3:7 When the Moabites and Midianites had conspired together to curse Israel, and then to sabotage Israel's theocentric purity by introducing false worship through sexual immorality and inter-marriage, God ordered Moses to destroy Midian (Num. 22:4-7; 25:15-18; 31:3-8). *TBKC* (1519) relates this to Cushan and Midian's seeing God's work on behalf of Israel in the Exodus and subsequent wilderness wanderings.

¹⁶ 3:8-10 As this passage indicates, God's future coming in the Person of Jesus Christ will be accompanied by fearful aqueous displays and judgments. Though God has promised never to inundate completely the earth with water, we can only suppose, if our interpretation is correct, that there will evidently be tremendous floods caused both by atmospheric torrents and subterranean eruptions. At the very least, Revelation assures us that God's wrath against mankind will again be felt by water. Revelation 8:8-11 8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. 10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. Revelation 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. Revelation 16:3-4 3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead [man]: and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. These plagues are, of course, reminiscent of God's judgment upon Egypt at the time of the exodus: Exodus 7:21 And the fish that [was] in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

¹⁷ 3:8 *TBKC* (1519) relates this to God's smiting of the Nile, the Red Sea, and the Jordan.

¹⁸ 3:9 "rods of chastisement" "The expression, 'chastising rods (chastisements) are sworn through the word,' points to the solemn oath with which God promised in Deut. 32:40-42 to take vengeance upon His enemies, and avenge the blood of His servants: 'For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, As I live for ever, when I have sharpened my glittering sword, and my hand grasps for judgment, I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, and repay them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will eat flesh; from the blood of the slain and the captives, from the hairy head of the enemy.' That Habakkuk had in his mind this promise of the vengeance of God upon His enemies, which is strengthened by a solemn oath, is unmistakably evident, if we compare ['glittering spear] in ver. 11 with glittering sword in Deut. 32:41, and observe the allusion in [head out of the house of the wicked] and [head of his villages] in vers. 13 and 14 to [beginning (*head*) of revenges upon the enemy] [all AV] in Deut. 32:42." (K & D, X, (Nahum-Malachi), p. 105.

- E 2 Reminiscent of His judgment of the earth in connection with the Great Flood of Noah ¹⁹ 3:9b-10
- E 3 Reminiscent of His judgment of the earth in connection with the Great Flood of Noah 3:9b-10
- G 1 His gouging of channels: You cleaved the earth with rivers. 3:9b
- G 2 His shaking the earth with quakes: The mountains saw You and quaked; 3:10a
- G 3 His inundating the earth with torrents from above and geysers from beneath: The downpour of waters

¹⁹ Having travelled extensively across the midwest U. S., I have often noted with fascination and awe the vast rivers that once did "cleave" the earth. Now they are but meandering creeks or modest rivers, like the Missouri, which has now shrunk to a fraction of its former size. Even a small river like the James River 15 miles north of Huron, South Dakota has a bank on one side, a flat flood plain extending at least a mile followed by a bank on the other. It was once a big river! The Missouri at Council Bluffs - Omaha has a bank (bluff) on the Iowa side and a similar one on the Nebraska side. From bank to bank there the once mighty river was then five miles wide, but now only a quarter mile wide. Traveling down I-29 from Sioux City to near St. Joseph, there are places where the river was once an estimated 10 or 15 miles wide, at the confluence of two or more rivers. Even this spring (1997), in consequence of huge snow melts in South and North Dakota, the Red River overflowed its banks creating a huge river an estimated 30-40 miles wide in some places as it rumbled northward into Manitoba! It is my belief that this cleaving of the rivers spoken of by Habakkuk refers to the great rivers that eroded the earth as the Deluge of Noah began to inundate the entire earth and then again as they drained the earth at the conclusion of the Flood as God raised up the land masses and further sank the ocean basins (Ps. 104:6-9). [Incidentally, this process took place both during the abatement of the Great Flood and also during God's Creation on the third day, in a much accelerated but non-catastrophic manner (Gen. 1:9-10).]

K & D do not see the Flood in Hab. 3:9b, but certainly see it in Hab. 3:10: "The colours and different features of the description are borrowed from the judgment of the flood. Ver. 10 (a and b) points to this divine judgment of the olden time, both the coming of the showers of water (*geshem* as in Gen. 7:12 and 8:2, and strengthened by *mayim*, analogous to *hamabbul hayah mayim* in Gen. 7:6; *'abhar* as in Nah. 3:19, Ps. 48:5), and also the *nathan tehom qolo*, the raging outburst of the abyss. *Tehom* is the mass of water in the abyss, not merely that of the ocean, but that of the subterranean wasters also (Gen. 49:25; Deut. 33:13), the 'great deep' (*tehom rabbah*), whose fountains were broken up at the flood (Gen. 7:11); and not the ocean of heaven, as Hitzig erroneously infers To this mass of water, which is called *tehom* from its roaring depth, the prophet attributes a voice, which it utters, to express the loud, mighty roaring of the waters as they rush forth from the bursting earth. As at the time of the flood, which was a type of the last judgment (Isa. 24:18), the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep were opened, so that the upper and lower waters, which are divided by the firmament, rushed together again, and the earth returned, as it were, to its condition before the second day of creation; so here also the rivers of earth and rain-showers of heaven come together, so that the abyss roars up with a loud noise (Delitzsch). This roaring outburst of the mass of waters from the heart of the earth is then represented as a lifting up of the hands to heaven, with reference to the fact that the waves are thrown up.... The lifting up of the hands is not a gesture denoting either an oath or rebellion; but it is an involuntary utterance of terror, of restlessness, of anguish, as it were, with a prayer for help (Delitzsch)." (K & D, X, (Nahum-Malachi), pp. 107-108.)

Granting the assumption that this theophany predicts the future, it is uncertain as to precisely how the many references to watery destruction and salvation will be fulfilled at Christ's return. There are, as noted previously (see note on 3:8-10), extensive references to aqueous judgment in the book of Revelation. The prophet Isaiah combines an interesting reference to aqueous judgment in combination with the return of Christ: Isaiah 24:18-23

18 And it shall come to pass, [that] he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.

19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.

20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones [that are] on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

22 And they shall be gathered together, [as] prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.

23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted
high its hands. 3:10b

- D 2 His power reminiscent of His fighting for Israel against the Amorites in the Valley of Aijalon (cf. Josh. 10:12-14) 3:11²⁰
- E 1 Sun and moon stood in their places;
- E 2 They went away at the light of Your arrows, At the radiance of Your gleaming spear.²¹
- D 3 His judgment reminiscent of His defeat of the Canaanites (cf. Judges 5:4): In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled the nations. 3:12²²
- D 4 His victory reminiscent of His salvation of Israel at the Red Sea

²⁰ Hab. 3:11, NIV: Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. Josh. 10:12-13 (TBKC, I, 1520). Assuming the future orientation of this theophany, it is uncertain precisely how this phenomenon will be repeated in the future, though the Scriptures certainly predict celestial anomalies (Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. Isa 24:23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. Joe 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. Joe 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. Mt 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: Re 6:12-13 12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.)

²¹ 3:11 According to Keil and Delitzsch, the sun and moon are obscured by the shining arrows of God (11b)., and this is not a reference to Joshua! They affirm that the arrows and spear here are not lightning, but weapons with which God destroys His foes in His wrath (K & D, X, [Nahum-Malachi], pp. 108-109). Blue (TBKC, I, 1520), however, states, "In the chorus of nature, the sun and moon stood still (cf. Josh. 10:12-13), eclipsed by the dazzling majesty of God. . . . Sun and moon paled before the brilliance of the lightning flashes, which perhaps accompanied the hail that destroyed Israel's enemies near Gilgal (Josh. 10:11). In His wrath God often used and controlled the forces of nature." Feinberg (p. 219) and JFB (IV, 635) take a similar approach.

²² 3:12 Strictly speaking, the use of the verb "march" (6805 *tsa'ad*) as found in similar contexts (Judges 5:4 and Psalm 68:7-8) deals with the Sinai experience -- the giving of the Law. However, in the case of Judges 5:4, the praise song of Deborah and Barak, the historical antecedent is the battle summarized in 4:23 "So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel."

The tenor of this statement in Hab. 3:12 sounds almost too all-encompassing to refer to an event already past. Though it does reflect the past, it seems so broad and sweeping that it must ultimately refer to an event yet in the future -- the wrath of God in the Tribulation period -- Rev. 19:15 ("From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.") or Rev. 6:12-17. "God comes as Judge of the World to trample the nations of the world (K & D, X, 109)." "He is seen marching in anger through the earth and in His fury treading down the nations. It is a majestic picture the Spirit of God gives of that coming day of wrath and judgment (Arno C. Gaebelein, V, 232)."

3:13-15 ²³E 1 His salvation: You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. ²⁴ 3:13a

E 2 His defeat of the enemy 3:13b-15

G 1 Of the leader 3:13b-14a

H 1 You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. ²⁵ 3:13bH 2 You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs. ²⁶ 3:14a

²³ 3:13-15 - It is difficult to pin down precisely the time of this passage. 3:15 seems to indicate that the Red Sea passage is in view. However, 3:13 speaks of the salvation of the nation and the anointed. Certainly there was no anointed king in Exodus nor at the time of the crossing of the Jordan River. There may well be a mixed allusion -- part of the passage looking backward, part of it looking forward. According to K & D, 3:13-15 = prophetic perfects. "God has come to save Israel & Messiah (The Davidic king absolutely including Jesus)" (K & D, *Commentary on the O. T.*, X, part ii, pp. 109-110).

²⁴ 3:13 Is "anointed" singular (the king) or plural (the nation)? *TBKC* indicates "anointed" is never used of the nation of Israel (1520), and probably refers here to the coming Messiah. "One [interpretation] sees here a reference to Israel, thus paralleling the thought of 'thy people.' The other holds that the anointed is God's King, the Messiah Many passages confirm this latter position, while the first view finds support in Psalm 105:15 (Feinberg, *Minor Prophets*, 219)." In a sense, both are in view here. In the first part of v. 13 obviously the people of Israel are in view. In the second part, the Messianic King as leader and head of the people of Israel is in view. As the King leads His troops into battle, He represents the Nation! Salvation from the enemy for the nation and for the Messiah are one in the same! As the latter part of v. 13 indicates, this ultimate salvation will occur first at the expense of the man of sin, the Antichrist (Beast) and his followers (Rev. 19:11-21) and ultimately at the expense of Satan himself and his followers (Rev. 20:7-10).

²⁵ 3:13 "The head of the house of evil" may well refer in past time to Pharaoh, in Habakkuk's day to the Chaldean king, and long-term, to the Antichrist and even Satan himself.

Pharaoh: *TBKC* refers this to God's victories over such leaders as Pharaoh (Ex. 12 ff.) and Belshazzar (Dan. 5).

The Chaldean king: "If the reference be to a past event (as a pattern) ... allusion may be to one of the kings of Canaan. However, if the prophet is speaking of the future, and this is the more probable, then the king of the Chaldeans is meant (and the Chaldean dynasty) (Feinberg, *Minor Prophets*, 219)."

The Antichrist: The doom of the man of sin, the Antichrist (Beast) and his followers is described in Rev. 19:11-21. "And there will be on the earth in that day the head of the house of the wicked, the ungodly head, the man of sin, the heading up of all apostasy and opposition to God." Gaebelin, *The Annotated Bible*, V, 232

Satan: The final doom of Satan himself and his followers is described in Rev. 20:7-10.

²⁶ 3:14 Various commentators cite instances of mutual destruction in the O. T. record: "By mutual destruction (as in the cases of 1 Sa 14:20 and 2 Ch 20:23-24), the enemy will fall by their own weapons ..." (Feinberg, 219); Reminiscent of God's overthrow of Midian w/ his own sword (Jud 7:22) (JFB, IV, 633); K & D look ahead in the near future to the defeat of the Chaldean army, while looking backward as well: God defeats the Chaldean hordes (piercing reminiscent of Jael's tent peg through Sisera's head - Jdgs 5:26). Troops slay one another (K & D, *Commentary on the O. T.*, X, part ii, pp. 110-111); Barnes looks to the long-term future: "And so it shall be, God says, at the end, of the army of God; 'every man's sword shall be against his brother' " (Ezek. 38:21) II, 218. Though illustrations abound of troops decimating one another, the text states specifically, *Thou didst pierce with his own spears The head of his throngs*. Who is the head (singular) who was pierced with his own spears? We are unsure as to whom this refers in the past. In the future we believe it to be antichrist, but exactly how this will eventuate, we do not know. The emphasis in the passage is certainly plural (*spears* and *throngs*).

G 2 Of the troops who had intended to overwhelm Israel
3:14b-15

H 1 They stormed in to scatter us; Their
exultation was like those Who devour the
oppressed in secret. 3:14b

H 2 You trampled on the sea with Your horses,
On the surge of many waters. ²⁷ 3:15

B 3 Habakkuk's Attitude 3:16-19

C 1 Fear 3:16a

D 1 I heard and my inward parts trembled,

D 2 At the sound my lips quivered.

D 3 Decay enters my bones,

D 4 And in my place I tremble.

C 2 Resignation 3:16b-17

D 1 Quiet waiting for invasion: Because I must wait quietly for the day
of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us. 3:16b

D 2 Realization of coming deprivation: 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,
3:17

C 3 Joyful trust in God 3:18-19

D 1 Active exultation: Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the
God of my salvation. 3:18

D 2 Active faith: The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my
feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. 3:19a

D 3 Musical instructions: For the choir director, on my stringed
instruments. 3:19b

²⁷ 3:15 The evidence seems overwhelming in favor of this referring to the Red Sea experience. What is more difficult to determine is the circumstances under which this will be accomplished at Christ's return, assuming the correctness of the prophetic element here.

Appendix A
A Comparison of Deuteronomy 33:2 and Habakkuk 3:3-4

Deuteronomy 33:2 (NAS)	Habakkuk 3:3-4
<p>... The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned (KJV "rose;" - 2224 zarach nearly always in the context of the sun rising) on them from Seir; He shone forth from mount Paran, And he came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them. (KJV = "from his right hand [went] a fiery law for them.")</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Yahweh came (etc.): from Sinai, Seir, Paran presence of light: dawning (= [sun] rise?), shining forth, flashing lightning (fiery law - KJV)</p> <p>reference to God's hand: His right (3225 yamiyn) [hand]</p> <p>from Mount Paran: Paran - "wilderness area bounded on the north by Palestine, on the west by the wilderness of Etham, on the south by the desert of Sinai, and on the east by the valley of Arabah; the exodus was through this area and probably all 18 stops were in this area." (On-Line Bible)</p> <p>from Seir (a reference to Edom)</p> <p>Sinai - in the context of the giving of the Law (33:4)</p>	<p>Elohim comes: from Teman, Paran presence of light: splendor (glory, majesty, honor), radiance, sunlight, rays flashing (the word is "horns" (7161 qeren) - probably the rays of light from his hand looked like horns.</p> <p>reference to God's hand: (3027 yad)</p> <p>from Mount Paran</p> <p>from Teman = "south" ... "1) son of Eliphaz, grandson of Esau, and one of the dukes of Edom ... 3) the region occupied by the descendants of 1, located east of Idumea" [near the southern end of the Dead Sea] - On-Line Bible)</p>

Conclusion: Hab. 3:3-4 appears to borrow heavily from Deut. 33:2. In both passages God's glory is emphasized. In both there are references to His hand. In both passages, God comes / emanates from Mount Paran, and variously from Seir and Teman, both references to Edom. All of these areas appear to be generally north of the traditional site of Sinai, mentioned in Deut. 33:2. Unquestionably the latter passage relates to the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. It would seem, then, that Habakkuk is comparing the theophany of God he is viewing in 3:3-4 to God's glory at the event of the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. In Deut. 33 God's approach to Israel at Mt. Sinai is described as originating from the north, while in Habakkuk, with Israel situated in the land, God's approach is from the south.

TBKC also relates this passage (Hab. 3:3-4) to the Mt. Sinai experience.

Expanded Analysis of Habakkuk
Published by James T. Bartsch April, 2013
Updated September, 2013

Published Online by WordExplain.com Email
Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE ©, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
(www.Lockman.org)