

**8) THE LORD IS A WARRIOR**  
**(SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020)**

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**Scripture reading** – Matthew 5:1-12; Habakkuk 3:8-15

**INTRODUCTION**

We know that we are not the center or focus of all that God does.

**God's chief end is His own glory.**

However, Scripture is very clear that we serve a God full of compassion, mercy, and patience.

We read Romans 8 and should be filled with incredible encouragement.

God works all things for the good of His people.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

At times we cry, Lord, how long?

**2Cor. 1:9** Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

But if we take Scripture seriously, we know this truth: the Lord is at work and will defend His truth and His people.

Last week I mentioned that this chapter is properly translated in the past tense even though Habakkuk is speaking of the future.

The LORD was going to use fearsome, wicked Babylon to punish His own people.

The LORD was also going to bring Babylon to a fearsome punishment.

There would be a preservation of God's people and God's truth such that the fullness of God's work of salvation in Christ would be accomplished.

**Never doubt that God is at work for the glory of His name and the protection of His truth and His people.**

We will look at Habakkuk 3:8-15, but I first want to share a few other points in terms of review.

[1] Review

[2] The Battle, vv. 8-15

### **1) REVIEW**

As I mentioned last Sunday, starting with verse 3 through the end of the chapter, there are **three main parts**.

1) Theophany or Revelation of God's Majesty, vv. 3-7

**2) The Battle, vv. 8-15**

3) The Response of Faith, vv. 16-19

MacArthur wrote:

The argumentative tone of the previous chapters, in which he cried for divine interference, is transformed into a plea for God's mercy (v. 2), a review of God's power (vv. 3-15), and a chorus of praise for God's sustaining grace and sufficiency (vv. 16-19). But while the tone changes, a strong, thematic connection remains.

Having been informed of God's plan of judgment, Habakkuk returns to the matter of Judah's judgment, pleading for mercy.<sup>1</sup>

And as I noted last week also, while we read and study this chapter, and it is not wrong to do so, this chapter is given to God's people to sing and to use in the worship of our great God.

Though the language is challenging in many ways, it is given to encourage you to live by faith.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), paragraph 16500.

**The Lord is at work and will defend His truth and His people.**

There would be an incredible time of devastation and testing that God's people faced, and this is why Habakkuk prayed, in wrath, remember mercy.

The LORD's great work does not mean we will have it easy.

## **2] THE BATTLE, VV. 8-15**

Notice in verse 8 that there is a change to the second person pronoun – you.

The language of verses 8-15 is similar to verses 3-7, but here the focus is now the LORD going to war.

The LORD is a mighty warrior!

As you look at these verses, what are some words that you notice are repeated?

The word **rivers** is used 3x in verses 8 and 9.

The word **sea** is used in verse 8 and 15 as well as two times earlier in the book.

The word **arrows** is used also 2x in verses 9 and 14.

The word **horses** is also used 2x in verses 8 and 15.

And we also understand that **water** is used in different ways as a symbol of God's opponent and enemy in battle.

Two other things to note are:

First, God's glory and power cause creation to respond in fear.

Second, the imagery connects with previous accounts of God's work in the life of His people.

This is a very rich description of God's power and the fact that He will fight His enemies.

The focus is that He will bring salvation to His people.

Let's consider in greater detail what we see in verses 8-15, first looking at verses 8-11.

In verses 8-11, the imagery of battle is described in terms of **water** – rivers, water, and sea.

The word translated as river in verses 8 and 9 is a common word in the OT used over 100 times in the OT.

Most of the time the word is used to speak of a particular river, like the Euphrates River or the Nile.

In some of the prophets we see the word **river** used to speak of those who are God's enemies.

The word **rivers** is also used this way in the Psalms.

Listen to Psalm 93:3 where the word **floods** is the word **river**.

**Psa. 93:3**      The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
The floods have lifted up their voice;  
The floods lift up their waves.

We see similar imagery in Job.

**Job 26:12**      He stirs up the sea with His power,  
And by His understanding He breaks up the storm.  
**13**      By His Spirit He adorned the heavens;  
His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

Here in Habakkuk God is represented as a mighty warrior coming on a chariot of victory or salvation.

David Baker notes the following:

Yahweh is presented as having engaged in combat with the sea at creation or at other unspecified periods (cf. Job 26:12-13; Pss 29; 89:9-10). The same motif is also picked up and used in the context of God's mighty acts of salvation in the exodus and conquest, when the Red Sea and Jordan were parted through God's power (cf. Exod. 13:17-14:31; Josh. 3:13-17; 4:21-24; Isa. 10:26; 43:16; 50:2). *Horses* and *chariots* are associated with the Red Sea event (cf. Exod. 14:5-28; Deut. 11:4; Josh. 24:6), only here in Habakkuk they are part of God's own army (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11-12; Jer. 4:13; Zech. 6:1-7; Rev. 9:7-9; 19:11-21) rather than that of his enemies. They bring salvation for God's people rather than slaughter (see vv. 13, 18).<sup>2</sup>

Verse 9 then speaks of how God is ready for battle.

His bow is ready.

His arrows are made ceremonially ready.

Then notice the word **Selah** divides verse 9 into two parts.

This is a helpful division, because what we see in the rest of verse 9 through 11 is the response of creation to God's mighty power.

In the last part of verse 9, God uses swollen rivers to divide the earth and bring judgment.

In verse 10 you notice the imagery goes from high to low - from mountain, clouds and stormy waters, to the deep.

The picture is of shaking mountains and a storm.

Flash floods producing by heavy rainfall.

And then finally the surrender of the deepest of the waters.

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<sup>2</sup> David W. Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 71.

There is something fascinating that although ancient people had no way of determining how deep the oceans were they had an understanding of the depths of the ocean.

Scripture gives a testimony through the use of the word **deep** that the ocean depths are incredible.

Today scientists have the tools to map and measure the oceans such that we know the deepest point that we have discovered, the **Challenger Deep**, has a center depth of 6.6 miles, which is greater than the height of Mt. Everest.

Atmospheric pressure is 14.7 psi.

The pressure this deep in the ocean is 15,750 psi, about 8 tons.

There is still today an element of great mystery in terms of all that goes on in the depths of the ocean.

I have heard some say that we know more about parts of space than we know about the deep places in the oceans.

And so, in some forms of ancient thought, the word **deep** is used a symbol of chaos and also of God's enemy.

In verse 10, the picture is of the deep surrendering – *you lift up your hands when you surrender.*

In verses 9-11 this imagery of different aspects of creation is connected to some of the greatest acts of God in bringing His people out of captivity and giving them the Promised Land.

The imagery connects with the crossing of the Red Sea and Jordan River, and Joshua's victory over the Amorites at Gibeon.<sup>3</sup>

Look at verse 11. What story is behind the imagery?

Verse 11 connects to the famous story in Joshua 10 involving the sun and the moon standing still, the victory of the Amorites.

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<sup>3</sup> NIDOTTE, s.v. "תְּהוֹמוֹת," n.p.

The imagery is a little different then in verses 12-13.

There is no imagery of water in these verses, but the focus is still on God going out to battle against His enemies, in this case the nations.

And what a beautiful statement is given in verse 13, which I think we can say is the center of this text.

**13**        You went forth for the salvation of Your people,  
              For salvation with Your Anointed.  
              You struck the head from the house of the wicked,  
              By laying bare from foundation to neck.

The word salvation used two times in this verse is the word *yeshua*, connected with the name Joshua and Jesus.

The word Anointed in verse 13 is a word also that could be translated as Messiah, another reference ultimately to our Lord.

Look at the end of verse 13 – You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck.

The idea or picture is of the person stripped of their weapons and clothes and left bare in great shame.

John Calvin wrote:

Since then the salvation of the Church has ever been the design of God in working miracles, why should the faithful be now cast down, when for a time they were oppressed by adversities? for God ever remains the same: and why should they despond, especially since that ancient deliverance, and also those many deliverances, of which he had hitherto spoken, are so many evidences of his everlasting covenant. **These indeed ought to be connected with the word of God; that is, with that**

**promise, according to which he had received the children of Abraham into favor for the purpose of protecting them to the end.**

The final two verses of this battle are verses 14 and 15.

Here what is described is how the Lord destroyed those who thought that they would easily destroy God's people.

Here the reflection in terms of Israel's history might go back to the amazing account of the Midianites.

Not only did God bring about an incredible victory, but part of the victory was achieved as the Midianites fought themselves.

**You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages.**

Notice in verse 13 the word me.

Who is the me of this verse?

Probably Habakkuk is not just speaking about himself, but uses the singular to speak in reference to God's people.

And then notice how verse 15 returns to the imagery of water and sea.

The picture is again of the Lord's power in the face of seas, wind, and waves.

It is with this background that we should understand the two great miracles Jesus did in silencing the stormy and windy seas of Galilee.

Listen to Matthew 8.

**Matt. 8:23** Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. **24** And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. **25** Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

**Matt. 8:26** But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. **27** So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

**The Lord is at work and will defend His truth and His people.**

#### CONCLUSION:

Why are things the way they are if God is in control and has all power to save and deliver?

This is a variant of the problem of evil we can say.

Some things have been revealed to us, but not everything. We have to rest in what has been revealed not what we figure out on our own.

The sure knowledge that God is sovereign does not mean that everything will be easy, but we must as best we can stick to the promises and instructions we find in God’s Word.

Here in this chapter we are reminded that God is certainly at work, but individually we are not the center of God’s plan.

His truth; His glory; His church; the salvation of all the elect – this is what God will seek.

**Rom. 8:31** What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Let us with great joy and thanksgiving consider the incredible battle that our Lord endured to bring salvation to all of His people.

**You went forth for the salvation of Your people; for salvation with your Anointed.**

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 357

**BENEDICTION - HEBREWS 12:1-3**

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.