

Sermon #4 — Habakkuk Series

Title: **IN WRATH MERCY PROMISED**

Text: Habakkuk 1:5

Subject: *Redemption — God's Wondrous Work*

Date: Tuesday Evening — August 17, 2010

Tape # *Habakkuk #4*

Readings: *Joe Blakely and Allen Kibby*

Introduction:

The title of my message is — **IN WRATH MERCY PROMISED**. Our text will Habakkuk 1:5. The Book of Habakkuk is a prophecy of judgment. Yet, it is prophecy of judgment filled with earnest prayer. Before we look at our text in Habakkuk 1:5, let me talk to you for a minute about prayer.

PRAYER

Prayer, true prayer, is not just, as some put it “asking and receiving,” or “filling in a blank check from heaven.” **Prayer, true prayer, is praying in accordance with our heavenly Father's will, is the response of the believer's heart to the revelation of God's will.** Prayer is not just asking God for what we want, asking God to fulfil our lusts, but bowing to the will of God, asking the Lord God to do what he has

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purposed to do. Is that not how our Lord Jesus taught us to pray in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9-13)?

- **“After this manner therefore pray ye.”** Has the Lord God sworn to glorify himself, to get glory to himself in all things? Indeed he has. Therefore, our Savior teaches us to pray, **“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”**
- Did our Savior tell us that he would, with certainty build his Kingdom? — *“Upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Therefore, in Matthew 6:10, he teaches us to pray, **“Thy kingdom come.”**
- Does the Lord God assure us that he is God who does all his pleasure and all his will all the time and in all places? Therefore our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, **“Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.”**
- Does our God promise to feed us with sufficient bread day by day? Indeed he does. Therefore we are taught to pray, **“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

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- Does the Triune Jehovah assure us, “**I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins**” (Isaiah 43:25). Blessed be his name forever, that is the promise of God to every believing sinner! Therefore, our blessed Savior teaches us to pray, “**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**”
- Has our God promised that with every temptation he will give us a way of escape? That is what the Spirit of God tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Therefore, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, “**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**” (Matthew 6:9-13)

Do you remember what James said about that which we commonly call prayer? — “**Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts**” (James 4:3). I am not suggesting that we should not take our requests to our God. We should. We ought to unburden our souls before the

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throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), freely seeking mercy and grace in every time of need.

(Hebrews 4:16) “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

But prayer is not twisting God’s arm to get him to do something. Prayer is the cry of the believing heart, for God to supply the mercy and grace for which he has created a need, seeking the very thing God himself has sworn that he will do. Prayer is born in the heart when God causes his child to desire the very thing he has purposed and promised. Then, when we seek what God has purposed, we pray according to his will, — **“This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”** (1 John 5:14). That is exactly how David prayed (2 Samuel 7:25-29).

(2 Samuel 7:25-29) “And now, O LORD God, **the word that thou hast spoken** concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, **establish [it] for ever**, and **do as thou hast said**. 26 And **let**

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thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts [is] the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27 **For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: — therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.** 28 And now, O Lord GOD, thou [art] that God, and thy words be true, and **thou hast promised** this goodness unto thy servant: 29 **Therefore** now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken [it]: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.” (2 Samuel 7:25-29)

When the Lord God calls us to prayer, he says, — **“Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified”** (Isaiah 43:26). In its essence, prayer is worship. It is bowing at the throne of our great, glorious, sovereign God and Savior, seeking his will, and seeking his glory.

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As I said, the Book of Habakkuk is a prophecy of judgment. Yet, it is prophecy of judgment filled with earnest prayer. The Lord God threatened, no, promised that he would bring judgment upon the nation of Israel for her relentless iniquity and idolatry. When he did, Habakkuk made this prayer.

— “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard thy speech, [and] was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:1-2)

Habakkuk prayed, “O LORD, in wrath remember mercy.” And the basis of his prayer was the promise God made to him right in the middle of his declaration of wrath and judgment (Habakkuk 1:5).

(Habakkuk 1:5) “Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”

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At first glance, this verse seems to be out of place. In verses 1-4 Habakkuk pours out his grief to the Lord, telling him about the violence, oppression, iniquity and injustice he witnessed among his people. In verses 6-11 the Lord God responds by telling his prophet how he would send the Chaldeans to destroy the transgressors. But, before telling of judgment, the Lord promises mercy in verse 5.

(Habakkuk 1:5) “Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”

Judgment is not God’s wonderful work, but his strange work (Isaiah 28:21). God’s wonderful work, that which causes our hearts to “wonder marvellously” is not wrath and judgment, but redemption, grace and salvation. And that is what our God promises in Habakkuk 1:5. If you will read Paul’s sermon at Antioch in Acts 15, you will see that he quotes this very text, applying it to this Gospel Day of Grace in which we live.

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(Acts 13:15-41) “And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, [Ye] men [and] brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with [his] hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17 The God of this people of Israel **chose our fathers**, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that he gave [unto them] judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22 And **when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king**; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have

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found David the [son] of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, **which shall fulfil all my will.** 23 **Of this man's seed hath God according to [his] promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:** 24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not [he]. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of [his] feet I am not worthy to loose. 26 **Men [and] brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.** 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled [them] in condemning [him]. 28 And though they found no cause of death [in him], yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 **And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took [him] down from the tree, and laid [him] in a sepulchre.** 30 **But God raised him from the dead:** 31 And he was seen

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many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 **And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,** 33 **God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.** 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, [now] no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, **I will give you the sure mercies of David.** 35 Wherefore he saith also in another [psalm], Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 **But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.** 38 **Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:** 39 **And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.** ——— 40

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Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 **Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.**” (Acts 13:15-41)

It was, and still is a marvelous work, that many reject the truth of GOD, and equally marvellous that any receive it. The fact is no one can or will believe on Christ, no one can or will receive the glad tidings of the gospel, except God the Holy Spirit give them faith in Christ by his omnipotent grace.

All this is marvellous! The whole work of redemption and grace, the whole business of our everlasting salvation in Christ is marvelous! From the first experience of grace in the soul, through all the stages of our lives and our pilgrimage through this world, we “*wonder marvellously!*” And throughout the endless ages of eternity we will “*wonder marvellously!*”

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

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That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

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The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me
A sinner, condemned, unclean!
O how marvelous! O how wonderful,
Is my Savior's love to me!

Our Savior's name is "Wonderful;" and all the works of redemption and grace which he performs, by which we are saved are things we regard as most precious at which we "*wonder marvellously.*"

ISAIAH 29

There is a prophecy very similar to this word from God by Habakkuk in Isaiah 29. Right in the

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middle of sworn judgment against Abraham's natural seed, the Lord God promises mercy, grace and salvation to Abraham's spiritual seed, the Israel of God.

(Isaiah 29:13-14) “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near [me] with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14 **Therefore**, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, [even] a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hid.”

(Isaiah 29:18-19) “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19 The meek also shall increase [their] joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

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(Isaiah 29:24) “They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”

REDEMPTION

Obviously, the first thing that comes to mind, when we think of God’s wondrous works is the work of redemption. Take another very brief look at this thing called redemption, this work of God that causes our hearts to “*wonder marvellously*” (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

(Isaiah 52:13-53:12) “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14 As **many were astonished at thee**; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider.”

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“53:1 ¶ **Who hath believed our report?** and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him. 3 **He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:** and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

“4 ¶ **Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:** yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But **he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.** 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8

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He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: **for the transgression of my people was he stricken.** 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth.”

“10 ¶ **Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief:** when **thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,** **he shall see [his] seed,** he shall **prolong [his] days,** and **the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.** 11 **He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied:** **by his knowledge** shall my righteous servant justify many; **for he shall bear their iniquities.** 12 **Therefore** will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

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(Ephesians 1:7) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

The wonder of redemption is the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed his sufferings
(1 Peter 1:10-11).

(1 Peter 1:10-11) “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace [that should come] unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

What mind can comprehend, what tongue can describe the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ?

- The Sufferings of His Body!
- The Sufferings of His Heart!
- The Sufferings of His Soul!

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(Lamentations 1:12-14) “[Is it] nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted [me] in the day of his fierce anger. 13 From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate [and] faint all the day. 14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, [and] come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into [their] hands, [from whom] I am not able to rise up.”

“Much we talk of Jesus’ blood,
But how little’s understood!
Of His sufferings so intense
Angels have no perfect sense.

Who can rightly comprehend
Their beginning or their end?

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‘Tis to God and God alone
That their weight is fully known.

See the suffering Son of God
Panting, groaning, sweating blood!
Boundless depths of love divine!
Jesus, what a love was Thine!”

Yet, our Lord’s sufferings, by which he accomplished our redemption, earned for him as our God-man Mediator all the Glory that he enjoys as Lord over all forever (Romans 14:9).

(Romans 14:9) “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

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MEN WONDERED AT

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The wonder of redemption is the people redeemed by the Son of God. In Zechariah 13: 8, God the Holy Spirit tells us that God’s elect, sinners saved by his grace are “*men wondered at.*” Our Savior’s name is “*Wonderful.*” And all who are one with him are people “*wondered at.*”

(Zechariah 3:8) “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they *are* **men wondered at**: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.”

We read the same thing in Isaiah 8:18.

(Isaiah 8:18) “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for **wonders in Israel** from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.”

- God’s saints are “*men wondered at*” **by the angels of God**. The angels are astonished at the love of the holy Son of God toward unholy sinners.

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- We are a people “*wondered at*” **by the world** around us. — “*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*”
- And we **are the greatest wonder to ourselves!** Oh, what a wonder that God the Father should have loved us, and chosen us in Christ Jesus before the world began! — That God the Son should have loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor! — That God the Holy Spirit should have loved us, called us with an holy calling, regenerated, illuminated, convinced us of our sin, and of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and brought us to love the God we once abhorred!

We are a world of wonders in to ourselves! Yet, while filled with wonder, we are so cold, unthankful, and indifferent! Our God, by his distinguishing grace, has called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light, while thousands all around are left to the blindness and ignorance of their hearts. I am astonished that these things, things I know so well, have so little influence over my hard heart!

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But, reading Zechariah's words in their context, the cause of great wonder is this. — We are people wondered at because God has saved us by his matchless, free grace in Christ. By his grace, God has made you one “*wondered at*” by the accomplishments of Christ, his Servant, the Branch.

- Redemption Accomplished!
- Redemption Applied!

(Zechariah 3:1-5) “**And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.** 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: **[is] not this a brand plucked out of the fire?** 3 Now **Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.** 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, **Take away the filthy garments from him.** And unto him he said, **Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with**

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change of raiment. 5 And I said, **Let them set a fair mitre upon his head.**— — **So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.**”

Illustration: A. J. Gordon (Clarendon Street Church, Boston, MA) and The Two Snow Birds

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb,
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am!

GOD’S METHOD OF GRACE

The wonder of redemption is God’s method of grace and salvation. — “*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2).

(1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2) “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;

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but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where [is] the wise? where [is] the scribe? where [is] the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? **21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.** 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But **we preach Christ crucified,** unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For **ye see your calling, brethren,** how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the

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wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 **That no flesh should glory in his presence.** 30 **But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:** 31 **That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**”

“2:1 ¶ And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For **I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**”

THE CHARIOTS OF SALVATION

Once more, the wonder of redemption is “*the chariots of salvation*” (Habakkuk 3:5-8;

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Zechariah 6:1-5). God's chariots of salvation by which he brings redemption, grace and life to chosen sinners are all the works of his providence. Even the judgments he brings upon the nations are the "*chariots of salvation*" for his elect!

(Habakkuk 3:5-8) "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways [are] everlasting. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: [and] the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? [was] thine anger against the rivers? [was] thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses [and] thy chariots of salvation?"

(Zechariah 6:1-5) "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two

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mountains; and the mountains [were] mountains of brass. 2 In the first chariot [were] red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What [are] these, my lord? 5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These [are] the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.”

(Habakkuk 1:5) “Behold ye among the heathen, and **regard**, and **wonder marvellously**: for I will work a work in your days, which **ye will not believe, though it be told you.**”

Truly, our God, the Triune Jehovah, is “*the God that doest wonders!*” Bless his holy name, in wrath, he remembers mercy!

(Psalms 136:1-4) “O give thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:

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for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 4 **To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy [endureth] for ever.**”

In wrath our great God remembers mercy, because “*he delighteth in mercy!*”

Amen.