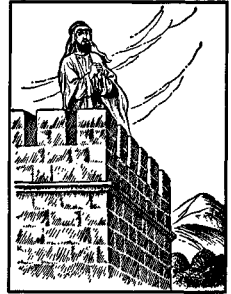


UPON THE WATCHTOWER



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HABAKKUK

HABAKKUK'S MESSAGE FOR THESE DAYS

HABAKKUK lived in days that were remarkably like the present. It was an age when divine standards were relaxed and gross permissiveness permitted in human conduct (Ch. 1:4). This attitude on the part of the people of Yahweh distressed the prophet. He could see that there was no future in it; that a people of privilege who abandoned the terms of their call faced personal and national tragedy. He pleaded with Yahweh to intervene; and he pleaded not in vain. Yahweh revealed to the prophet the nature of the coming judgment, and the revelation appalled the prophet. A crisis was impending that would bring the nation to an end: the divine punishment would be decisive and overwhelming.

This distressed the prophet more than ever. He had a deep and abiding love of Israel, and wanted its conversion, not its destruction. He now pleaded the cause of the people and urged the need of mercy and forbearance. In response, he was told that the Gentiles would triumph only for a time, and that ultimately divine glory would succeed over Jewish rebelliousness and Gentile darkness. In his final vision, he was taken into the future, and witnessed the triumphant march of Christ and the glorified saints from Sinai into Jerusalem; he saw that ultimately the light of truth will conquer and destroy the forces of darkness. The words of the prophet had commenced with a sob, but they ended in song! So it will be with all those who put their trust in Yahweh:

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” — Psalm 126:6.

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PROMISE OF THE COMING MESSIAH

The basic message of the prophet is: "The just shall live by his faith" (Ch. 2:4). These words are a complete summary of the doctrine of the Atonement, and, indeed, of all religion and revelation. They are associated with the one who will come to establish it. The prophet was told: "Though it (the vision) tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The Septuagint renders this: "Though *he* should tarry, wait for *him*; for *he* will surely come, and will not tarry." The words in this form are cited by Paul and applied to Christ (Heb. 10:37), suggesting that the original Hebrew conformed thereto. Christ, as the Word made flesh, is the personification of the vision given to the prophet (cp. Hab. 3:3). The One who will come is the Mighty One from Teman: Christ in glory; and the prophet was exhorted to wait for the glorious consummation he will effect.

Introduction

HABAKKUK lived in an epoch of impending crisis which was destined to completely change existing conditions. Once the judgment broke, nothing would ever be the same again. Appalled by what he heard, the prophet endeavoured to stand in the breach, and questioned God as to the wisdom of such a course; he tried to change the march of events.

He was not able to do that; but he did receive a revelation that enabled him to see beyond his times, and which completely changed his outlook. The record of his experience comprises this short book. The study of it can help us to see beyond present frustrations to the glory of the future; and so equip us to extract comfort and joy in the most difficult of situations.

His message, therefore, is appropriate to these times, and can assist us to resist the pressures that are experienced both from within the Body of Christ as well as from without. And these are inevitable, for, as Paul taught, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

The Prophet

Nothing is known of Habakkuk apart from a few vague hints supplied by the prophet himself. From Chapter 3:19 it seems that he was of the tribe of Levi, and that he was numbered among the singers associated with the temple worship. There were twenty-four orders of singers selected by David from the Levitical families of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun. Their duty was to "prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals" (1Chron. 25:1), and, probably, Habakkuk was in the line of descent of one of these families.

And with that scant information, we must leave the personal details of the prophet. One day we may know more.

His name means *The Embracer* or *The Wrestler*, and this stands as a caption for the man. He embraced the truth warmly and with zeal, in a time of general apathy and lukewarmness towards the things of God; he wrestled faithfully and courageously with the frustrations and problems of his times, and was enabled to see beyond them to the glory yet to be revealed in the earth.

He was granted a vision that changed his whole outlook, and converted his opening sobs of complaint into an enthusiastic song of joy. He recognised that Yahweh would punish the wicked who were about him; but, ultimately, this would give place to a revelation of glory in a converted Israel. Punishment was inevitable; but the ultimate triumph of righteousness was beyond doubt. In confident anticipation of that consummation, the prophet dried his tears and proclaimed his faith in Yahweh: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd

in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in Yahweh, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Ch. 3:17,18).

There is a literal and a symbolical application of these words. Israel experienced a drought which ruined the crops and decimated the herds. That drought was typical of the sterile condition of the nation as a whole (Amos 8:11-12). "Fig tree," "vine," "olive tree," "flocks," "fields," are all familiar appellations of Israel; and in Habakkuk's time they failed to produce increase to the glory of their Creator. The prophet recognised the general failure to do so as a challenge, and boldly proclaimed that though the condition of the nation be as the land when drought-stricken, he would not succumb to such conditions, but, instead, would "rejoice in Yahweh, and joy in the God of his salvation."

A similar challenge faces individuals today. Will they succumb to the forces of darkness that are so much in evidence? Or have they sufficient faith to see beyond present conditions to the glorious future, and to boldly declare their intention to "rejoice in Yahweh, and joy in the God of salvation," in spite of prevailing conditions about them?

The Age Of Habakkuk

No personal details are given by Habakkuk to accurately pinpoint the period of his ministry. In chapter 1:5-6 he refers to the Babylonians as though they had already developed into a great power and were about to move against Judah. This, together with other incidental evidence contained in his short book, indicates that he probably prophesied in the days of Jehoiakim, about the year 610 B.C.

As such, he was contemporary with Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, although, unlike the last two prophets, he remained in Judah. It was his lot, therefore, to prophesy at a time when all things in Judah were rushing down to the final and mournful catastrophe; when political excitement was at its height; when the worst passions swayed the various parties; and the most fatal counsels prevailed. The reforms of Josiah were forgotten, and, heedless to the appeals of the contemporary prophets of Yahweh, the people rushed headlong over the precipice into the weltering political ruin below.

When he complained of prevailing apostasy and moral wickedness in Israel, and the lack of restraint manifested by the people, Habakkuk was told to "behold among the nations" the growing power of the Babylonians (Ch. 1:5), for they were about to attack and destroy Judah. Thus he lived at a time when Babylon had risen to a position of power among the nations: he could see the shadow of their blighting influence moving towards the people he loved.

Double Application Of The Prophecy

There is a Babylon of the New Testament, as well as of the Old. As historical Babylon in the past destroyed Judah; so mystical Babylon in conjunction with

Gog of Ezekiel 38, will attempt it in the future. Therefore, there is a double application to the prophecy. As Babylon, in the past, punished disobedient Judah, and was destroyed in turn; so this will prove to be the fate of mystical Babylon in the future. The third chapter describes this future judgment upon Gentile darkness.

Paul gave a double application to the prophecy. He quoted it to the Jews of Antioch as applicable to their day. He declared: "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 13:41).

These words are a citation of Habakkuk 1:5. Paul's application of the prophecy was fulfilled by the Romans in their destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Rome constituted the fourth beast of Daniel's prophecy, the latter-day manifestation of which will be "broken" by the Prince of princes (Dan. 8:25). This power is known in the Apocalypse as "Babylon the Great," to be overthrown by the Mighty One from Teman as described by Habakkuk (Ch. 3; Rev. 17:14).

As Paul quoted Habakkuk's prophecy in relation to the destruction of the Jewish State at the hands of the Romans, the overthrow of Babylon predicted by the prophet (Ch. 2) will have its fulfilment at Armageddon and its aftermath.

Therefore, the message of Habakkuk is not of mere academic interest as applying only to the past, but has real import in regard to the present.

The great controversy of the ages is *Babylon versus Zion*. Babylon was founded upon principles of rebellion against God (Gen. 11:2-9), and it has stood for those principles ever since. When Babylon is in the ascendancy, Zion is in decline. When Zion will triumph, Babylon shall fall. Today, Zion is rising from the dust, and that fact augurs ill for Babylon in the future: "For He bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He layeth it low, He layeth it even to the ground, He bringeth it even to the dust" (Isa. 26:5). When that happens, mankind will see the elevation of Jerusalem: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (verse 1). The rulers of this "strong city" of the future, will be the Elohim of Israel: "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in" (verse 2).

But meantime, the spirit of Babylon sometimes "rubs off" on to the saints. That was the case in Habakkuk's day, causing the prophet to lament the spiritual decline that he saw on all sides. It is the case today, and the antidote to it is a living, virile faith. Habakkuk was told that "the just shall live by faith." It was to stimulate and strengthen the faith of the just that Habakkuk was given his message and vision, and inspired to record it for those of that class throughout the ages. We can stimulate our faith, and assist to consolidate our status among the "just" by a consideration and application of the principles of his prophecy.

— H. P. Mansfield, May 1974.

Analysis

THE Book of Habakkuk the Prophet is conveniently divided into three parts, answering to the three chapters into which it is already separated. In the first chapter, the prophet is in an agony of frustration. His problem was the silence, apparent inactivity, and seeming unconcern of Yahweh. Violence abounded; lawlessness was rife, blatant evils defied all protests from the prophets; and yet Yahweh seemed to remain indifferent. An end was brought to the prophet's frustration with the message from Yahweh directing him to the Babylonians, whom Yahweh would use to punish the nation. This chapter expresses *The Burden* of the prophet.

Chapter 2 introduces us to *The Vision* he was given. It provides a revelation of the divine purpose. Habakkuk had been appalled to learn of the threatened judgment upon guilty Judea through the medium of the Babylonians, and pleaded with Yahweh not to permit the latter to gain the complete ascendancy. He was granted a revelation of the divine purpose in connection with Babylon, and shown that the success of that nation was but temporary, and that it, in turn, was due for punishment. There is assurance in this chapter. First, the prophet learned that "the just shall live by his faith", and second, he was told "for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh."

In chapter one there is expressed a twofold problem: (1) Why is Yahweh silent in the face of evil?; (2) Why permit the Babylonians to triumph? In chapter two there is expressed a double pledge: (1) The just shall live by his faith (answering the first problem); (2) The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh (answering the second problem). Chapter 3 records *The Prayer* of the prophet. It is really expressive of the glorious consummation of the divine purpose, and a complete vindication of all that Yahweh stands for.

The prophet had commenced to plead with Yahweh, but the Spirit caught him up and swept him into the future, to reveal to him how that the light of the Sun of Righteousness will destroy the powers of Darkness. It inspired him to record the victorious march of the Mighty One from Teman in his conquests of the nations. The prophet was presented with a message of hope, revealing the ultimate purpose of God in the earth. It completely changed his outlook both to Yahweh and the environment in which he lived.

Thus the ministry of Habakkuk, as recorded in his book, commenced with a *sob* but it ended with a *song*.

The book is unique in that two-thirds of it represent a conversation between the prophet and Yahweh. How consoling to receive an answer to one's questions and problems in that manner!

General Analysis:

HABAKKUK: PROPHET OF FAITH

1. A BURDEN — FRUSTRATION	Ch. 1:1 to 2:1
1. Question: Why Does Not Yahweh Intervene?	vv.1-4
2. Answer: Yahweh is Not Unmindful: Evil Does Not Go Unpunished Nor Virtue Unrewarded	vv.5-11
3. Question: Shall the Persecutor of Israel Prosper?	vv.12-2:1
2. A VISION — REVELATION	Ch. 2:2-20
1. The Just Shall Live by Faith	vv.2-4
2. The Persecutor Will Be Punished	vv.5-19
3. Yahweh Will Be Vindicated.....	v.20
3. A PRAYER — CONSUMMATION	Ch. 3:1-19
1. A Plea For the Consummation	vv.1-2
2. The Manifestation of the Mighty One in Glory	vv.3-4
3. Surveying the Work of Conquest.....	vv.5-6
4. Subduing the Arabs	v.7
5. Initial Conquests of Gentile Power	vv.8-10
6. Divine Authority Established on Earth	vv.11-13
7. Extending the Kingdom	vv.14-15
8. Habakkuk's Confidence, Vow and Assurance.....	vv.16-19

From the Pen of Brother Thomas

Habakkuk saw Israel in extremity, and the Thick-Clay Power in Egypt in all the confidence of victory. But the Stone out of the Wall makes proclamation against him, which results only in stirring him up to fury; and the prophet sees his hosts in tempestuous motion "coming out as a whirlwind to scatter me, and rejoicing in the prospect of devouring the poor in the lurking-place." The tents of Cushan and Midian, in this "day of Midian" (Isa. 9: 4) overspread the wilderness of Mount Paran, the country of Teman, situated between Palestine and Egypt, south of the Mediterranean, and between the Gulph of Suez and the Gulph of Akaba or Elath, north of Mount Sinai. The *mistar*, or lurking-place of Judah's Lion, the place of his encampment in the vision, is the region of Edom and Moab running down to the Gulph of Elath. After the type of the Exodus from Egypt, Jehovah will rise up from Seir, and shine forth from Mount Paran (Isa. 16:3,4; Dan. 11:41; Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3). This arrangement places the Gulph of Elath, "*the Tongue of the Egyptian Sea*" (Isa. 11:15), the Elanitic Gulph of the Red Sea; in other words, between the Gogian army of Egypt, and, as the Egyptian forces imagine, the feeble and dispirited outcasts of Moab. But they know not that with these outcasts is the antitypical Joshua, the prophet like unto Moses, and the antitypical Gideon, with the sword of Jehovah and his chosen band, as represented in Apoc. 19:14; 17:14. If the reader keep these geographical relations before his mind, he will discern what Habakkuk testifies in saying, "Thou didst march thine horses into the sea through a heap of great waters;" "was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thy horses, thy chariots of salvation?" No, the prophet saw that the wrath was against the tents of Cushan, and the curtains of the land of Midian, which, when they came to see the water open a way into their encampment for their enemy's cavalry, trembled in dismay. Brightness as the light burst forth upon them; beams of light from his hand, the hiding-place of his power. The prophet saw him march on in indignation, and thresh the heathen in anger. The conqueror's feet were like hind's feet; he overtook the flying enemy, and cut them in pieces with his troops. Israel in Egypt had cried unto Jehovah because of the oppressors, and he sent them "a Saviour, even a Great One," whom Habakkuk beholds from his watch-tower. "Thou wentest forth," says he, "for the salvation of thy people, for salvation with thy Christ (Anointed) thou woundedst the Head of the house of the wicked." Thus Jehovah becomes known to Egypt, and his outcasts in the land of Egypt are redeemed, and the way opened for them to return to the land of promise. The land of Judah now becomes a terror to the land of Egypt, and is terribly smitten from thence; so that every Egyptian that maketh mention thereof shall tremble because of the counsel of Jehovah of armies, which he determines against it. His counsel is this. "I will bring Israel again out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead

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and Lebanon, and room shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea in adversity, and he shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away" — Zech. 10:10,11.

But though Jehovah Elohim shall thus "smite Egypt," he will afterwards "heal it." His conquests, however, and its terrible accompaniments will never be forgotten. For "in that day five cities in the land of Egypt shall speak the language of Canaan, and swear allegiance to Jehovah of armies. *City of the Destruction* shall one be called. In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah: and it shall be for a sign, and for a witness to Jehovah of armies in the land of Egypt. And the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall promise a votive offering to Jehovah, and perform. And they shall turn to Jehovah, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria; and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land; whom Jehovah of armies shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" — Isa. 19:17-25.

After the conquest of Egypt, then, Habakkuk, whose position may be supposed to be Jerusalem, sees, in the vision of the end, "Eloah coming out of Teman, and the Holy One (or Christ) from Mount Paran." He has now taken away the dominion of the Lion and the Bear from India to Ethiopia, and possesses for his own Egypt, Israel, and Assyria. "His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise." In making these conquests, and those which remain, in relation to the Leopard, and the Fourth Beast of Daniel, "the pestilence goes from before him, and a flame from his feet." What follows is very grand. Viewing the work of conquest to be done, the prophet says, "He stood and surveyed the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations: and the mountains of antiquity (or empires) were scattered, the perpetual hills (or ancient kingdoms) did bow: the ways of antiquity are for him." That is, the kingdoms and empires existing in the hour of the end are for Jehovah's Christ. These "mountains saw him and trembled: the overflowing of the water," their military inundation, "passed by: the deep uttered his voice," the roaring of the bottomless pit of nations; but He, after the type of Joshua, commanded "the Sun and the Moon to stand still in their habitation; and his arrows went in the light, and his glittering spear in the shining." Judah his bow, and Ephraim his arrow, arrest the sun and moon of the Gentile heavens, and go in the light thereof."

Eureka Vol. 1, pp. 48-51.

HABAKKUK:
UPON THE WATCHTOWER

Section One:

***THE BURDEN:
FRUSTRATION***

Chapter 1:1—2:1

***Questions and Answers
Upon Divine Morality***

THE PROPHET'S BURDEN

The prophet introduces himself, gives himself a title, and records a conversation that he had with Yahweh. He felt completely frustrated. He was forced to witness a privileged people, possessing the truth, but living inconsistently with their profession. Yet Yahweh seemingly remained indifferent. Why? Why did God permit this rebellion against His law? The prophet realised that there was no future for Israel whilst it manifested such an attitude, and prayed for some action that would compel the people to honor the law. The silence of Yahweh posed a problem: Why does He suffer long with people who reject His ways? Peter provides the answer. He wrote: "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2Peter 3:15). We must not think it strange if Yahweh sometimes suffers wickedness to prevail far and to prosper long, for He has good reasons for His silence, and does not condone sin. He takes full account of all sin committed, and will surely make men answer for it in His own time. We must remember that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). That was the lesson Habakkuk had to learn, and did learn. The frustrating conditions the prophet had to experience, provided him with opportunity to learn more about God, and to change his point of view to his own personal benefit.

PART ONE: THE BURDEN — FRUSTRATION

CHAPTER 1:1 to 2 :1

Questions And Answers On Divine Morality

1. FIRST QUESTION: Why Does Not Yahweh Intervene? — Vv. 1-4

The prophet commences with a word of complaint. He saw that the law was ignored, apathy abounded, wickedness prevailed, and yet Yahweh seemed indifferent. It was frustrating to the prophet, as the repetition of similar conditions today may seem frustrating to us. The prophet questioned Yahweh as to why He permitted those conditions to prevail, and the answer he received is appropriate to these times.

VERSE 1

“The burden” — The Hebrew *massa* is from the root *nasa* “to lift,” and therefore implies something which is *heavy*, but which *rests* upon one, and therefore is something to be lifted up. It is a load to be borne, and in this context suggests a heavy prophetic oracle.

“Habakkuk” — His name means *Embracer*, or *Wrestler*. He embraced the truth with zeal; and he wrestled in faith with the problem that faced him.

“The prophet” — The Hebrew *nabi* signifies to boil or bubble over. Gesenius suggests that it is taken from the metaphor of a fountain bursting forth from the heart of a man into whom Yahweh has poured His spirit (cp. Psa. 45:1 mg; Prov. 1:23). The Greek form of the word is interesting. “Prophet” is compounded of two parts: *pro*, “for,” and *phet*, the messenger or interpreter of the divine will. It suggests the proclamation of the will of Yahweh, as well as declaring His future purposes. It implies the “forth-telling” of divine requirements; as well as the “fore-telling” of the divine purpose (cp. Exod.4:16; 7:1). When the spirit took possession of a person, the impulse to speak was irresistible.

Balaam found this to be so, and was compelled to speak against his will. Jeremiah determined that he would no longer speak in the name of Yahweh, because the people refused to hearken, but he found it impossible to remain silent. “His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20:9). He felt compelled to speak. Paul experienced the same impulse in preaching the gospel. He exclaimed: “Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1Cor. 9:16).

“Did see” — Prophets were originally called “seers” (1Sam. 9:9) because they saw in vision the things they reported. This explains the vividness of their messages.

VERSE 2

“O Yahweh, how long shall I cry” — This has been the plea of the righteous throughout the ages. See the lament of Jeremiah (Ch. 9:1-6), the prayer of the persecuted (Rev. 6:10), the answer of the Lord (Rev. 13:10), and the assurance of the Psalmist (Ps. 37:7-11).

“And Thou wilt not hear” — The temporary, material prosperity of the wicked seems to imply that Yahweh is indifferent to their moral condition. It was a problem that disturbed the Psalmist when he “saw the prosperity of the wicked.” They did not seem to be in trouble as other men, and as he observed them, he became envious at their state so that his “steps well nigh slipped” (Psa. 73:2-7). When he went into the Sanctuary, however, and filled his mind with divine principles, he comprehended their end, and recognized that they stood on very slippery ground (vv. 17-18). Jeremiah, a contemporary with Habakkuk, was brought to tears as he observed the same attitude on the

part of the people, and longed to withdraw himself from their company (Jer. 9:1-8). But Yahweh is not indifferent, as Isaiah (Ch. 59:15), and Malachi (Ch. 3:14-17) also observed. Now the same problem engaged the attention of Habakkuk. He complained that Yahweh did not acknowledge his cry, nor restrain the wickedness of his contemporaries. But, as he subsequently was told, even as he was voicing his complaint, Yahweh was working silently among the nations to punish the rebels (see vv. 5-6).

VERSE 3

“Why cause me to behold grievance” — The Hebrew *amal* signifies oppression or injustice. The RSV renders “wroongs.”

“There are that raise up strife and contention” — The RSV renders “strife and contention arise.” The obvious import of the context is that the prophet had to endure this strife and contention, probably as a result of his public protests at the prevailing wickedness.

VERSE 4

“The law is slacked” — Or slackened. There was no attempt on the part of the people or leaders to apply the principles of the law. In face of the general wickedness, the leaders compromised the divine requirements, so that “judgment” or “justice” (RV) did not go forth.

“The wicked doth compass about the righteous” — The wicked far outnumbered the righteous, and surrounded them with hostile intent whenever a voice of protest to their violent lawlessness was raised.

“Wrong judgment proceedeth” — Or, as it can be more clearly rendered “justice goes forth perverted.”

2. FIRST ANSWER:

Yahweh’s Answer: Evil Does Not Go Unpunished Nor Virtue Unrewarded
— Vv. 5-11

The prophet is invited to consider the signs of the times, and to recognise in the

developing crisis the hand of Yahweh, extended to punish His people. Yahweh is not indifferent to wickedness nor virtue but in His wisdom awaits the appropriate time to punish the one and reward the other. Portion of this section of the prophecy was cited by Paul and applied to the prevailing crisis of his days. It also has application today. Like the prophet, we may lament the prevailing wickedness, but the days of Yahweh’s vindication is at hand.

VERSE 5

“Behold ye among the heathen” — The prophet is invited to consider the signs of the times, and to see in the rising power of Babylon the means that Yahweh would use to discipline His people. Jeremiah described Nebuchadnezzar as Yahweh’s “servant” to perform His will upon the nations, and to punish the disobedient in Judah (Jer. 27:5-6). In Acts 13:41, Paul cites these words, and applies them to the Jews of his day, showing that Habakkuk’s prophecy has a double application: it primarily related to the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, contemporary with the prophet; and secondarily to mystical Babylon of the New Testament with its headquarters at Rome (Rev. 17:5-18). This latter is the fourth beast of Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 7:7), which swallowed up Judah in A.D. 70, and in its Gogian manifestation, is yet destined to “devour, break in pieces, and stamp the residue” of nations with its great iron teeth and brazen nails (Dan. 7:19). Habakkuk’s message, therefore, has a double application. It applied then, and it applies today. It related to historical Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar as king; and it has application to mystical Babylon in conjunction with the Russian Gog, the “mighty one of the Gentiles.” Paul’s citation in Acts 13:41 varies the wording of the A.V., and follows that of the Septuagint: “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.” In this rendition, “among the heathen” becomes

"ye despisers." The words are very similar in the Hebrew, for "the heathen" is *begaim* whereas "ye despisers" is *begadim*. The only change is in one letter: *daleth* for *vau*, and in the Hebrew they look somewhat similar. Therefore, it could well have been that the Hebrew text similarly had "despisers" instead of "heathen," and that the prophet was invited to consider the signs of the times from among the "despisers" of his day.

The invitation of Yahweh "to behold" His work among the nations, was to reveal that He was not indifferent to the prevailing wickedness, and was about to move against it. Yahweh was not unmindful of the "despisers," and called upon Habakkuk to maintain his stand separate and distinct from the evil environment of the ecclesia of his day. The nation, of course, constituted the ecclesia of his time (see Acts 7:38).

But what amazing work was the prophet invited to consider, a work so staggering that the people would not believe it, though it be proclaimed? It was nothing less than the complete destruction of the Jewish State, a calamitous tragedy considered beyond the bounds of possibility by the leaders of the nation. Yet warning after warning had been issued concerning this. Jeremiah, that great contemporary of Habakkuk, had declared: "Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Yahweh hath given unto you and your fathers for ever... and I will do you no hurt." But the sad comment of Yahweh, through the prophet, was: "Ye have not hearkened unto Me" (Jer. 25:4-6).

Now the time had come to put the threat into execution. Blind to the political crisis of the day, indifferent to their spiritual responsibilities, and deaf to the sorrowful exhortations of the prophets, the very leaders of the nation had brought it to the brink of disaster. They did not appreciate the responsibilities attached to the unique position of privilege enjoyed by the nation. Having been called by the name of Yahweh, it was required to justify

its existence as such. "Every one that is called by My name, I have created for My glory," declared Yahweh through Isaiah (Ch. 43:7). The nation that Habakkuk knew did not reflect to the glory of Yahweh, and therefore did not justify its existence. Jeremiah warned the people of this. They had been called that "they might be unto Yahweh for a people, for a name, for a praise and for a glory; but they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). They despised their precious heritage, their noble calling, their glorious future, and put too much store upon what the present could offer. As such the people were of no use to Yahweh, and the time had come to terminate their national existence.

This position of privilege is now assumed by the ecclesia taken out of the Gentiles as "a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). The ecclesia exists for Yahweh's glory, its members have been called out of Gentile darkness for that purpose. They, also, need to "behold" and "beware." Let them be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" among whom they should "shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life..." (Phil. 2:15-16). Otherwise they will "run in vain" (cp. Phil. 2:16 with Hab. 2:2).

"And wonder marvellously" — Consider deeply and earnestly. Rotherham renders: "stand stock still and stare!" The prophet was encouraged to consider and comprehend the full significance of what was about to happen; to see the crisis in all its dread implications. Let us consider world events in the same way.

"A work in your days" — There was to be "time no longer"; that generation would see the crisis explode. Thus there was an urgency about the appeal of the prophet that brooked no delay. Such an attitude should govern our attention to divine principles and purposes, for we live in similar times.

"Which ye will not believe" — A punishment beyond comprehension, beyond belief, a future which the people refused to believe when it was proclaimed

unto them, both in Jeremiah's day as well as in Paul's.

VERSE 6

"I raise up the Chaldeans" — The invasion of the land by the Babylonians was a work of God. It did not appear like that to the people. They were only conscious of the personal problems it imposed, and considered it merely as the result of chance or caprice. But "God rules in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17); and uses the policies and ambitions of men and nations to accomplish His purpose. In stating that He would give all the territory into the hands of "His servant Nebuchadnezzar," Yahweh declared, through Jeremiah, "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground by My great power, and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me" (Jer. 27:5). Such a statement is worthy of thought. We must not question the wisdom of God in permitting the uprise of certain men, or the development of certain crises. They may all be within the compass of His purpose, and may even perform a valuable service to that end. Men viewed Nebuchadnezzar as the haughty, all-powerful dictator of Babylon and sole monarch of the world; but the prophet described him as the mere "servant of Yahweh" (Jer. 27:6). The Mighty One of heaven gave Babylon "power and glory," in order that His purpose might be advanced; and when that had been accomplished, He controlled circumstances so that Babylon was set aside and that "another inferior kingdom" might take its place (Dan. 2:37-39). Yahweh used the Assyrians as His rod to punish Israel (Isa. 10:5); He used Rome to scatter Jewry into all the world (Deut. 28:49); He used Hitler to drive them home again (Jer. 16:16); He is using Russia to "gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2). Statesmen and nations are frequently used by Yahweh as the instruments of His purpose for the benefit of His saints (Rom. 8:28).

"That bitter and hasty nation" —

The ferocity and cruelty of the Chaldeans was proverbial (Isa. 14:6; Jer. 6:23; 50:42); whilst the term "hasty" suggests the speed of their conquests.

"Dwellingplaces that are not their's" — Rotherham renders this in the singular "his." And so the Hebrew is throughout the chapter. The bands of the Chaldeans were under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty one of the Gentiles, and the type of Gog in this prophecy.

VERSE 7

"They are terrible and dreadful" — Render in the singular: "He is ..." Nebuchadnezzar's reputation was feared throughout the world. See Daniel's description of his dictatorial power (Dan. 5:18-19).

"Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves" — Render in the singular: "His judgment" (Roth: "decision"), and his dignity, or elevation shall proceed of himself. He will not be answerable to flesh; he will rule as a dictator; not on democratic principles.

VERSE 8

"Horses swifter than leopards" — Referring to the Babylonian speed of conquest. Leopards are known for their speed; in ancient times they were tamed and trained to hunt. They were noted for their agility in seizing the prey. Thus the Chaldeans will be swift and sure in attack. Jeremiah likens them to eagles — Jer. 4:13.

"More fierce than the evening wolves" — See margin. Rotherham renders: "more sharply they attack" than the evening wolves. The "evening wolves" were noted for their rapacity; having fasted all day, they were particularly ferocious in attack under cover of night.

"Horsemen shall spread themselves" — They shall extend themselves all over the land, so that none would escape them.

"Fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat" — The keen eye of the eagle discerns the prey from a long distance, and flies swiftly

to it. This bird of prey swoops suddenly and unexpectedly upon its victim, which it conveys in its claws to distant parts where it can be consumed undisturbed. All this had application to the impending attack upon Judea. Leopard, wolf and eagle, here all applied to Babylon, are symbols likewise of Rome (Deut. 28:49; Rev. 13:2), thus suggesting that Babylon of old typified Rome of today.

The horse is the symbol of war. In *Eureka*, vol. 3, pp. 117, J. Thomas writes:

"I find the following concerning the horse in symbol in Daubuz. He says: 'The horse was of old used only for warlike expeditions, and not barely to ride, draw, and drudge, as it is now practised with us. Hence in that noble description of the horse, in Job 39:18-25, there is no notice taken of any quality of his but what relates to war. So that the horse is the symbol of war and conquest. When, therefore the spirit saith in Zechariah 10:3, 'Yahweh Tz'vaoth hath visited His flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle,' the meaning is, that He will ride them as their Commander-in-Chief, and make them conquerors over His enemies, glorious and successful.

"Thus in Psalm 45:4, *r'chav*, to ride, is rendered in the Septuagint by *basileuein*, to reign. And in several other places 'ride' signifies: to have dominion. 'Agreeably to this,' the Oneirocritics say, 'that if any one dreams that he rides upon a generous horse, it denotes that he shall obtain dignity, fame, authority, prosperity, and a good name among the people; in short, all such things which may accrue to a man by good success in martial affairs.' And hence, from the horse being an instrument of conquest, and therefore the symbol of the dignity, fame, power, prosperity and success he causes, when Carthage was founded, and a horse's head dug up by the workmen, the soothsayers gave out that the city would be warlike and powerful."

VERSE 9

"They shall come all for violence"
— The Chaldeans rooted out what nations

they conquered, and deported their populations to distant parts, to lessen the chance of revolt.

"Their faces shall sup up as the east wind" — Their faces of aspect, shall "sup up" or consume as the east wind. The lands of the Middle East are noted for a burning east wind which sweeps across the desert to blight and consume as it blows. It is frequently used in Scripture to symbolise disaster. Thus: "I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy" (Jer. 18:17. See also Ezek. 17:10; 19:12). The analogy graphically expressed the desolating effect of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests when he would attack Judah. No defence would prove adequate to hold him at bay. He would "gather the captivity as the sand."

VERSE 10

"He shall scoff at kings" — As did the Assyrian before him; Isa. 37:12-13.

"He (RV) shall deride every strong hold" — In his warlike ability, Nebuchadnezzar would treat the forts of his enemy with contempt.

"Shall heap dust and take it" — The RSV renders "dust" as *earth*. Nebuchadnezzar would build up mounds, and thus overcome the walled fortress cities of the Jews.

VERSE 11

"Then shall he sweep by as a wind and pass over (RSV)" — Referring to Nebuchadnezzar's speedy conquests and irresistible attacks.

"And offend, imputing this his power unto his god" — So long as the Babylonian Dictator devoted himself to the work of conquest, he acted as Yahweh's servant, and fulfilled the divine purpose in punishing the guilty nations (see Jer. 27:1-7). But when he accredited his success to his pagan gods and blasphemed the name of Yahweh, he offended. Doubtless the Babylonian repeated the folly of the Assyrian, "Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Yahweh

should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" asked Sennacherib of Hezekiah (Isa. 36:19-20). Nebuchadnezzar's boast was doubtless similar. It then became a case of Bel and Merodach of Babylon versus Yahweh of Israel. Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar viewed it in that light, and took the spoils of his conquests, including the holy vessels of the temple, to glorify the heathen temples in Babylon. This caused the Babylonian to offend, and ultimately called forth "the vengeance of Yahweh's temple" (Jer. 50:28; 51:11). Yahweh's indictment against Babylon was recorded by Isaiah: "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called, The Lady of kingdoms. I was wroth with My people, I have polluted Mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand; thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it" (Isa. 47:5-7).

In Babylon, at the height of his power, Nebuchadnezzar boasted: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). Daniel had warned the king against such an attitude, and when the warning went unheeded, punishment swift and terrible, fell upon Nebuchadnezzar, and later upon the kingdom he had established.

But, for the moment, this was not revealed to Habakkuk. Nevertheless, he had Yahweh's answer to his question: "Why does iniquity go unpunished?" The answer declared that it does not! Even as the prophet was pondering the problem, a crisis was developing in the north which would punish the guilty people of Judah, and sweep the nation into political oblivion. A privileged people must respect Yahweh's law; but they had despised it, and turned their backs to His counsel and appeal. They would surely suffer in consequence.

The word translated "god" is *Eloah* in

Hebrew, and concerning this title, J. Thomas writes in *Eureka*, vol. 1, pp. 94-95: "*Elohim* is a plural noun, which in the singular is written *Eloah*. The use of this in Habakkuk 1:11 shows that the idea of strength or power is the radical meaning of the word — as to *this one, his strength is his Eloah*, or the one in whom he trusts. The three men who appeared to Abraham were each of them an *Eloah*, but not each of them *Elohim*; the three together were *Elohim*. *Eloah* occurs fifty-six times in the Scriptures, and four of these times only in the Psalms; but in Job, forty-one times. The use of *Ail* and *Eloah* by Job would indicate that one and the same being is meant. Every member of the heavenly host is an *Eloah*, but of all the *Elohim* one only is the original and self-existent *Ail* — the absolute, omnipotent, and independent power of the universe."

In *Phanerosis*, page 51, he comments: "Another word applied to 'Power Increase,' and improperly rendered *God, is Eloahh*. It occurs fifty-six times in the Old Testament, of which forty-one occur in the Book of Job. It is used four times in the Psalms — only twice by Moses; once by Isaiah and Solomon — three times in Daniel, and twice in Habakkuk. It is not in all these places applied to the Most High. In Daniel it is applied to that power in the Little Horn's estate or dominion which enforces the adoration of 'Guardian Saints'; and in Hab. 1:11, *zu koho lailoho* — it informs us that the Chaldean shall offend in taking his *power* for his *Eloahh*. And Job, in speaking of him that provokes *Ail*, says in chapter 12:6, 'Who carries *Eloahh* in his hand'; that is, he calls the sword in the hand of the violent, his *eloahh*, in the sense of its being his power."

3. SECOND QUESTION:

Shall The Persecutor of Israel Prosper? v. 12—Ch. 2:1

Yahweh's revelation of impending judgment upon Judah seriously perturbed the prophet. He was a lover of Zion, and

desired the reformation of the nation, not its destruction — he called for discipline, not political annihilation. He wanted Yahweh to intervene in such a way as to bring the people to their senses, in order that the Law might again be respected, truth might prevail, and righteousness might be elevated throughout the nation. The predicted punishment was too severe in the opinion of Habakkuk, and he now turned to plead for the people, and to ask for further information concerning the divine purpose. Above all, he besought Yahweh not to suffer His people to perish, seeing that He has chosen them, and His purpose is with them. Like all men of God, Habakkuk was extremely careful in his selection of terms in which to petition Heaven. He did not address the Almighty with that easy familiarity that one does in approaching a fellow mortal. He recognised his low estate, and the wonderful privilege of being able to address the Father in prayer. He thus used a combination of divine titles, expressive of this and the grand purpose of the One to Whom he now turned for further information.

VERSE 12

“Art Thou not from everlasting” — Habakkuk is addressing no fellow mortal, but One Who is divine and immortal; therefore One Whose knowledge, experience, and power is beyond all doubt.

“Yahweh my God” — That One who is high above human thought has entered into covenant relationship with man, and has given Himself a name, even Yahweh. Upon this name, Bro. Thomas has expounded at length, and very beautifully, in the book *Phanerosis*, available from the *Logos Office*. The name was first proclaimed at Horeb, when Moses had been given the sign of the burning bush that was not consumed. The sign drew attention to the indestructibility of the people of Israel in spite of persecution that would be experienced by them. It was thus first proclaimed when Yahweh was about to extend Himself to rescue His people from the Egyptians (Exod. 3:15). It therefore

was most appropriate for Habakkuk to use it on this occasion.

The name is linked with the promises, and therefore is subjoined to the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob... this is My name for ever, and My memorial for a generation of the race” (Exod. 3:15, lit. Heb.). Abraham had been told, “I will make of thee a great nation” (Gen. 12:2), and this promise is linked with the divine name. The memorial name of Yahweh, pronounced upon the children of Israel, is a guarantee that the nation will finally rise to glory whatever may be its state in the meantime. At the epoch of its final restoration, the people will be told: “I do not this for your sakes. O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went” (Ezek. 36:22). In addressing the Creator by His covenant name, Habakkuk sought to secure “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” (Deut. 33:16).

The name of Yahweh had been bestowed upon Israel as a nation, for it constituted the family of God (see Num. 6:23-27). Today, the same name has been bestowed upon those Gentiles who have separated themselves from their fellows to constitute “a people for the name” (Acts 15:14). They are called out not merely for salvation, but to glorify the Father by building into their lives the divine principles manifested in their fullness by the Lord Jesus. Yahweh declared: “Every one that is called by My name, I have created for My glory” (Isa. 43:7). Israel was chosen, guided, educated in the divine will and purpose in order that they might reflect Yahweh’s glory, and that they might be equipped to pass on to others the message of His plan. “That they might be unto Me (Yahweh) for a people, a name, a praise, and a glory; but they would not hear” (Jer. 13:11). Yet Yahweh’s purpose has not failed, for He will yet mould them into a “great nation,” and will make of them “a name of joy, a praise and an hon-

our before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them" (Jer. 33:8-9).

These are some of the principles incorporated in the name, and the reason why it found a prominent place in Habakkuk's prayer.

"Mine Holy One" — *Kodesh* is the next title used. It comes from a root signifying "to be clean." It is a title vindicating the righteousness of Yahweh in spite of appearances to the contrary. Habakkuk did not know why the Chaldeans should be permitted to triumph over Judah, but he recognised that he lacked a full understanding such as would enable him to properly assess the situation. In spite of appearances he did not doubt that Yahweh was righteous, and so used this title. The very use of this title shows that the prophet recognised that he was approaching One whose very being was such that He could not look on unmoved at blasphemy and wickedness.

How frequently our limited vision hides the justice of Yahweh from our view. Let us ever remember that He is righteous, and though sometimes divinely controlled circumstances might give the appearance of injustice in our case. He is "from everlasting," and whatever we are called upon to endure, it is for our benefit.

"We shall not die" — This statement appended to the divine name and titles could apply to the nation, and thus be expressive of the prophet's conviction that any reverses would be but temporary, and that ultimately Yahweh would vindicate His promise and name by restoring the nation.

However, the RV margin renders: "Who diest not." According to the Companion Bible and Rotherham's translation, this is one of the 118 emendations of the Hebrew text by the *Sopherim*, the Jewish revisers of the ancient text, as noted in the Massorah. Rotherham quotes an authority, Rashi, as stating that "all the ancient records emphatically state that...the original reading was... 'Thou diest not.'" Accepting that reading, this statement can

be linked with the opening words of the prayer: "Art Thou not from everlasting—Thou Who diest not."

"Thou hast ordained them for judgment" — The prophet acknowledged that the Chaldeans had been selected to pour out judgment upon Judah, even as, previously, the Assyrian had constituted the "rod of Yahweh's anger" (Isa. 10:5).

"Mighty God" — The Hebrew is *Tzur* and should be rendered "Rock" as it is in the R.V. *Tzur* signifies a firm unyielding rock in the shadow of which one might shelter from the harsh burning sun; or upon the firm foundation of which one might build with every confidence. It is a divine title used by Moses and David. In his *Song of Witness* against Israel (Deut. 32), Moses made frequent use of the title. He styled God as the Rock of truth (v. 4), the Rock of which Israel was unmindful (v. 18), the Rock of deliverance, sure and secure among the shifting sands of life (v. 30). The Lord declared that the man who "hears and performs" the things he taught, builds a house upon a rock that will remain secure in spite of the storms of life (Mat. 7:24-27).

The rejoicing Hannah, in the full joy of her heart when granted the son of her desire, praised Yahweh, saying: "There is none holy as Yahweh, for there is none beside Thee; neither is there any Rock like our *El* (Strength)" (1 Sam. 2:2).

David praised Yahweh as the Rock on which he was able to lean with confidence in time of trouble (Psa. 18:29). "For who is a Mighty One (*Eloah*) save Yahweh? or who is a Rock save our Elohim? It is *El* (the divine Power) that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect" (Psa. 18:31-32).

The distressed Habakkuk experienced instability on every side, and appropriately sought for help, consolation and strength from the Rock of Israel.

VERSE 13

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" — This is basic to the character of

God. See Psa. 5:4-5; 11:4-7; 1Pet. 1:15-16.

“Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously” — To human reasoning, it seemed as though God viewed the evils of the Chaldean nation with indifference. The prophet knew that this was not the case, and so sought further information.

“Holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he” — The reference is to Nebuchadnezzar. Habakkuk thus states his problem. He recognised that the wicked of Judah were due for disciplinary correction, but he failed to see the wisdom of permitting a monarch, who was more lawless than the people of Judah, to gain the ascendancy over the latter. Surely that would suggest that crime does pay! Habakkuk would prefer to see sin and iniquity in all its forms put down. His question is appropriate to every age. The triumph of the wicked has always been a test to saints. The Psalmist nearly drifted from the Truth as his mind became obsessed with the seeming prosperity of the wicked (see Psalm 73:1-16). It seemed to him that he had “cleansed his heart in vain” (v. 13), until he went into the Sanctuary, and filled his mind with thoughts of Yahweh and His glorious future purpose, and then he “understood their end” (v. 17). Habakkuk viewed the subject from a similar standpoint, and sought for further comforting instruction.

Was Habakkuk right in describing Judah as being “more righteous” than Nebuchadnezzar? In a sense he was, for there were many, like Daniel, who would suffer as a result of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest. But on the Scriptural principle that “to whom much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48), he was not, and Yahweh had every right to expect more from His people than He received. Their sin was greater in proportion to the privileges granted them. In Yahweh’s sight there is “none righteous” (but the Lord Jesus—Rom. 3:10), except on a basis of faith (Rom. 3:20-23); and this became

the subject of further instruction to the prophet, who learned that “the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

VERSE 14

“Makest men as the fishes of the sea” — Nebuchadnezzar treated his conquests as sport, catching armies and nations as fishermen catch fish by the exercise of their ingenuity and skill.

“As the creeping things, that have no ruler over them” — The people acknowledged no authority but the flesh, and therefore would have no efficient leader to oppose Nebuchadnezzar. They would be as helpless as the creeping things of the field against the superiority of the Babylonian in war.

VERSE 15

“They take up all of them with the angle” — The RV renders “he” instead of “they,” thus referring this to Nebuchadnezzar. An angle is a hook such as fishermen use, so that the expression continues the analogy of the previous verse.

“Gathereth them in their drag” — RV = “his”. A drag is a large net designed to catch large numbers of fish which are then dragged to the boat or to the shore.

VERSE 16

“They (RV = he) sacrifice unto their (his) net” — He would not recognise Yahweh as the Giver of victory, but will worship his own ingenuity and skill — the “net” by which he would capture large numbers of “fish.” In this he would “offend, imputing his power unto his god,” as Yahweh had acknowledged (see v. 11).

“His portion fat; his meat plenteous” — Referring to the wealth he would accrue through conquest, and the riches he would require by oppression.

VERSE 17

“Shall they therefore empty their net?” — Would Nebuchadnezzar be permitted to continue his career of rapine and conquest? Would he be allowed to contin-

ually empty his net and refill it? Would divine justice permit this to happen?

“And not spare continually to slay the nations?” — Yahweh would not restrain him; he would not of himself spare the nations. Only the intervention of Yahweh would cause him to do that. Would Yahweh intervene to that end? Or would the wicked forever prosper? The prophet desired an answer.

CHAPTER 2

VERSE 1

This verse should be connected with the previous chapter. Habakkuk's prayer having been completed at the end of chapter 1, he now communes within himself, and mindful of his office, waits for the answer he confidently expected. Did not Yahweh declare: “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:3)?

“I will stand upon my watch” —

The prophets were watchmen to Israel (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7). As such, Habakkuk decided figuratively to take his stand upon the watch, standing upon the tower, and await the expected answer from Yahweh. To “watch” is to spy out. Habakkuk desired to spy out the secret of the divine will and purpose.

“What He will say unto me” — The margin, following the Septuagint, renders this “in” me. Accepting that reading, the prophet awaited divine inspiration. He was the amanuensis of Yahweh unto the nation “in whom” the divine message would be revealed. It was not his own message, his own answer to the problem that he sought, but the voice of Yahweh. By that means “God spake by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1); and they, in turn, ministered unto others (1Pet. 1:11). As a prophet, Habakkuk had

a responsibility to speak forth the words of Yahweh. As a watchman, he was called upon to exhort, warn, and rebuke.

A responsibility rested upon the appointed watchmen in Israel to faithfully proclaim the message of Yahweh to the people. If they failed to speak through weakness or indifference, they were held guilty of the blood of those who went astray in consequence (Ezek 33:6). If, however, the watchmen faithfully and courageously proclaimed the word of Yahweh, they were held as exempt from any failure on the part of the people to heed. Once their duty had been done, it was a matter of individual responsibility to act on the part of all those who heard.

Their task was an unenviable one for they had to proclaim the unpopular truths of Yahweh, in the face of open opposition and antagonism from those who “feared not God or man.” Paul, as a faithful, uncompromising watchman within the ecclesia, was able to report: “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). He warned his hearers that “of themselves” would men arise speaking perverse things, “to draw away disciples after them.” He counselled them to watch.

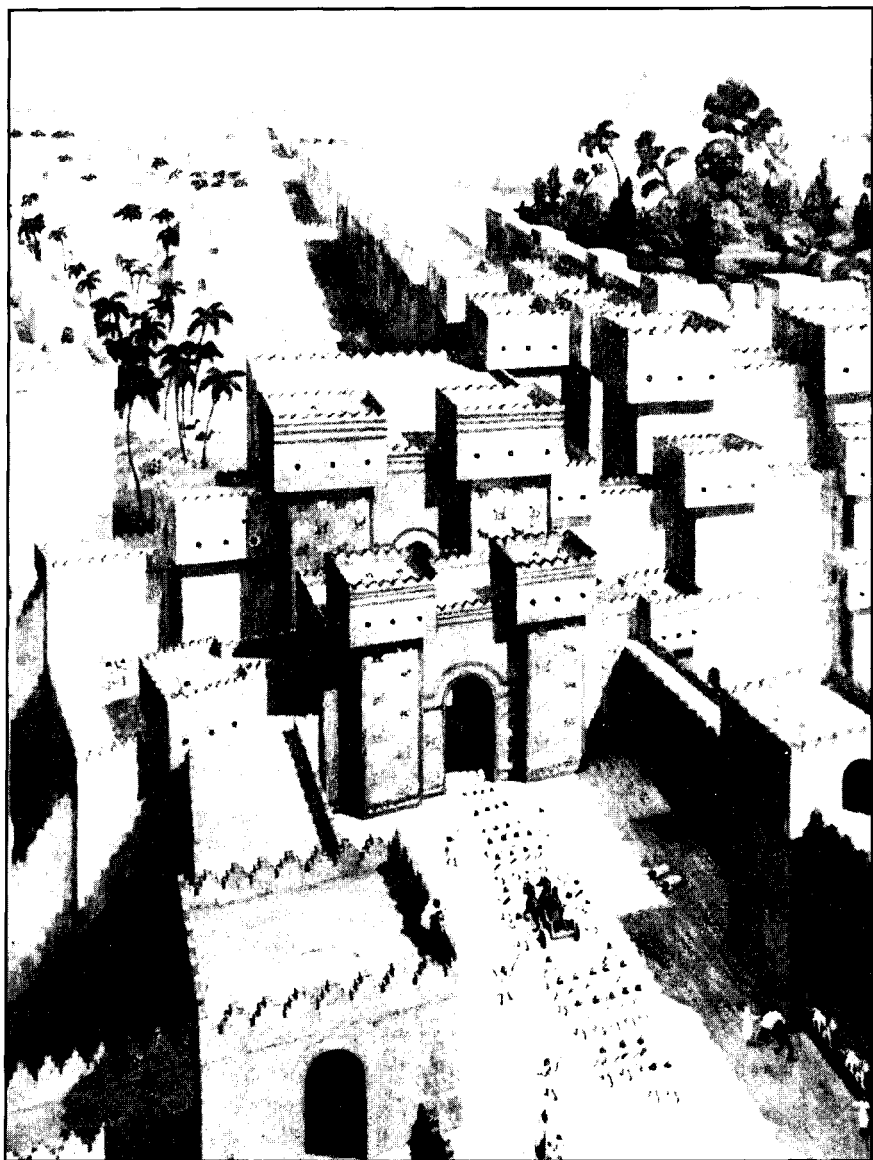
Watchmen are urgently needed today who will faithfully, uncompromisingly set forth the true counsel of Yahweh.

“What I shall answer when I am reproved” — The Berkeley Version renders this: “What answer I shall receive concerning my complaint”. This rendition certainly seems to express the sense of the prophet's statement. So, having isolated himself, he awaited the moment of inspiration when he would hear Yahweh's voice within him, providing answers to his complaints.

SUMMARY

The section of the prophecy that we have studied lays the foundation for that which follows. Habakkuk battled with much the same problem as Job and the writer of Psalm 73: the fact that wickedness continues apparently unchecked. Thus, in addressing Yahweh, the prophet used the language of complaint (vv. 1-4), challenge (vv. 12-17), and enquiry (Ch. 2:1). Current events faced him with the problem in a particularly acute form. Yahweh announced that He would use the Babylonians — a far more wicked nation — to punish His own people; and this led Habakkuk, the man of faith, to question God.

How can God, Who is just and good, Who hates evil, send against His people a nation that He openly admits makes a god of its own might? Righteousness seems completely hidden in such circumstances. Are such conditions to continue for ever? (Ch. 1:17). Though the prophet may have realised that they would not, he desired a revelation of Yahweh's intentions in regard to that nation (the Chaldeans) who would then triumph over Israel. The answer came in the vision and revelation of chapter 2.



"Babylon: the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah"

HABAKKUK:
UPON THE WATCHTOWER

Section Two:

***THE VISION:
REVELATION***

Chapter 2:2-20

***Yahweh's Answer
To the Prophet's Problem***

THE REVELATION

The second chapter of the Book of Habakkuk comprises a Revelation. In it the prophet learned three basic facts of the divine purpose:

- 1 — The just shall live by his faithvv. 2-4*
- 2 — The proud and rebellious shall be humbled.....vv. 5-19*
- 3 — Yahweh finally shall be exalted in the earth.....v. 20*

The greatest annotators upon the Hebrew text assure us that the words “shall live” mean “shall live eternally.” Now Habakkuk had acknowledged that Yahweh was from everlasting to everlasting” (Ch. 1:12), therefore, the fact that His people were to suffer political death conflicted with His nature. His name, Yahweh (He Who Will Be), required that He call them “to everlasting life” (Dan. 12:2). In the revelation now given the prophet, he received the answer to the enigma. He was told: “The just shall live by his faith.” In spite of circumstances that seemed to spell out the contrary, faith ultimately would triumph over sin, and lead the way to victory.

*Three times Paul quotes this passage from Habakkuk, but in each case, he gives it a different emphasis. To the brethren in Rome, he explained the life-giving promises of the gospel, emphasising that faith was essential: “The just shall **live** by faith” (Rom. 1:17). To the Galatians, who were troubled by the teaching of the Judaisers who claimed that they could earn their way to life, he wrote: “The **just** shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11). To the Hebrews who were losing their confidence in Christ, he explained: “The just shall live by **faith**” (Heb. 10:38). In his three quotations of the statement, the Apostle gave equal emphasis to its three parts. They comprise the three great steps to salvation — justification; faith; life.*

PART TWO: THE VISION — REVELATION

CHAPTER 2:2-20

Yahweh's Answer to the Prophet's Problem

1. The Just Shall Live By Faith

— Vv. 2-4

In this revelation, Habakkuk was shown a basic principle of Yahweh's dealings with man, interspersed with an exhortation, and an urgent appeal to apply it in view of the impending crisis. As such, the message is relevant to current events; for mankind lives in the shadow of an approaching crisis comparable to that of the prophet's times.

VERSE 2

"Yahweh answered me" — This is the second answer that he received to his questions. See Ch. 1:5.

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables" — The Hebrew *kathab*, "write" signifies "to engrave," whilst *ba'ar*, "plain" signifies "to dig." The idea is to engrave deeply upon stone so that the writing cannot be erased. Rotherham renders "tables" as *tablets*, a reference to the slabs of stone upon which were inscribed messages of such importance, as to be retained. The same expressions occur in Deut. 27:8: "Thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly."

"He may run that readeth it" — This statement is commonly interpreted to mean that the letters had to be of such a size that anyone running might be able to read the writing without the slightest pause; and upon this it has been reasoned, that the revelation of Yahweh is so clear, and so simply expressed, as to be instantly understood by the most superficial reading.

But the facts disprove this interpretation entirely, for comparatively few grasp the truth even in its simplest form; whilst such books as *The Apocalypse* are quite

beyond them. Concerning His revelation to man, Yahweh Himself has declared: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). The Bible expresses lofty, divine principles that flesh and blood find difficult to comprehend, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Thus Solomon declared: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; it is the honour of kings to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2). Yahweh often has expressed His will and purpose enigmatically in Scripture, and it requires patience and persistence on the part of those who are kings in prospect to unravel its meaning. He has designed His revelation as the medium of the sanctification of His saints (John 17:17); and therefore it is intended to change people for the Kingdom and not merely to instruct them in regard to it. This, indeed, was its impact on Habakkuk himself. The complaining prophet was converted into an enthusiastic advocate of Yahweh's disciplinary methods by the revelation made unto him. Men must exercise their minds upon the Word if they would comprehend its meaning; and when this is done, its character forming impact will be apparent in a changed attitude and character. Thus their thoughts and actions will be changed by the Word.

Habakkuk was instructed to write the vision so clearly, that none who desired to study it, would be hindered from so doing. The statement: "That he may run that readeth it," suggests the action that would follow an intelligent comprehension of the warning revelation. Believing the mes-

sage, and recognising the seriousness of the approaching crisis, such would urgently "run" to a place of safety, an adequate shelter, from the approaching storm. And where were they to run? Why, back to Him from Whom they had departed: to Yahweh Elohim of Israel. He comprises a place of shelter: "The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). Today, in the present atmosphere of impending crisis and storm, the urgent message of the prophet is needed, as much as it was when Babylon was about to move against Judah in the days of the prophet.

VERSE 3

"The vision is yet for an appointed time" — This is in answer to the prophet's enquiry of Ch. 1:2: "How long...?" Yahweh has determined both His purpose, and the time of its fulfilment. Through the Psalmist, He declared: "At the set time that I appoint, I will judge with equity" (Psa. 75:2. RSV). There is no true delay in the consummation of the divine plan; there is only an *apparent* delay due to our own limited comprehension of the times of His appointment. This much is certain, that in His economy, all things will be fulfilled, and at the time that He has before decreed. In the meantime, faith is tested by conditions when it almost seems as though Yahweh has abandoned the earth, when, as Habakkuk experienced, the wicked are in the ascendancy, and even the sons of God are influenced by the general environment of ungodliness. Paul instructed Timothy to maintain his efforts for the Truth "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). We live at a time when the preaching of the Word is considered "out of season," and this is a challenge to faith. Faith needs to be stimulated, and the Word is necessary for that. That Word, so plainly written, proclaims that the vision is for an appointed time; and thus reminds us that the present "out of season," epoch is limited in its duration.

The prophetic "times and seasons" are not matters of haphazard adjustment, but

are predetermined periods in Yahweh's keeping (Acts 1:7). Paul declared that when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His son (Gal. 4:4); and when the "set time to favour Zion" arrives (Ps. 102:13), "He will send him back to the earth". Paul to the Hebrews declared: "In faith, we perceive that the ages have been thoroughly adjusted by God's command" (Heb. 11:3, Diaglott). Therefore "the times of the Gentiles" are not vague and uncertain periods in the plan of the great Creator, but relate to specific epochs that He has appointed. Though we may be in ignorance of "the day and hour" of Christ's return, the signs of the times clearly indicate that they are at hand. The growth of Russia; the emergence of the State of Israel, the widespread Noahic violence and corruption; the increase of Sodomite immorality, all testify that Christ is at the door.

"At the end it will speak and not lie" — Daniel was instructed to seal up his prophecy "until the time of the end," when "knowledge would increase" (Dan. 12:4). As far as Jewry was concerned "the time of the end" came at the first advent of the Lord (Heb. 1:2; 9:26), and consummated in the "increase of knowledge" that came through the Revelation given to John. As far as the Gentiles are concerned, the "time of the end" is now upon us (cp. Luke 21:24), and current fulfilment of prophecy has made the whole purpose of Yahweh clearer. Ultimately the vision will clearly speak, and all will be revealed.

"Though it tarry" — The Hebrew word *mahahh*, "tarry," signifies to hesitate, to be reluctant. It is derived from the root *mah*, the particle of interrogation, what? how? why? indicating uncertainty. Habakkuk's environment, with Israelites indifferent to the requirements of Yahweh, and wickedness and evil rising as a flood, caused the prophet to question the divine purpose. There was a measure of uncertainty in his mind as to how, and when, and even if, Yahweh would act (see Ch. 1:2-3). He had to learn not to give way to despondency, but to retain faith in the pur-

pose and wisdom of Yahweh.

This statement constitutes a key to the prophecy. The Septuagint renders: "Though he should tarry, wait for *him*; for *he* will surely come, and will not tarry." These words, in this form, are cited by Paul and applied to Christ in Hebrews 10:37. Christ as the Word made flesh, is the personification of the vision, and Paul's use of these words in this form implies that the original Hebrew was in accordance therewith. The prophet, therefore, was urged to await the coming of the Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus (though he did not know him by that name) in glory. It was Christ who directed Rome against guilty Judah (Mat. 22:7), and who will return to fulfil the vision of Habakkuk 3, as "the Mighty One who shall come in from Teman." This prophetic reference to Christ should be linked with the statements of vv. 14, 20.

It is of the greatest significance to the whole prophetic ministry of Habakkuk, a key to the meaning of his book, to recognise that in these words he was told to anticipate the coming of the Messiah; and that this was the basic message that he passed on to his contemporaries.

"Wait for it" — Or "wait for him" to use Paul's rendition. The word *chakah* signifies "adhere" (Strong). So the waiting is an adherence to that which is promised — in this case the coming of Messiah, a waiting in faith, in which one does not lose confidence.

"It will surely come, it will not tarry" — Or "he will come and not tarry." Here the word "tarry" is a different Hebrew word from that used formerly. It is a translation of *ahar* or *achar*, to loiter, delay. Christ will come "at the set time," so that there is no delay in the true sense of the term.

VERSE 4

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him" — The Septuagint renders this: "If he shall draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." Paul uses this rendition in citing the verse in

Hebrews 10:38. It is a warning against lack of faith. Having impressed the prophet with the certainty of the vision, of the coming of the Lord, and of the need to grasp the opportunity of hastening to a place of shelter before the storm broke, the spirit warns of the consequence of those who draw back through lack of faith. The truly faithful are not discouraged by any apparent delay in the working out of Yahweh's plan, nor are such deterred by adverse circumstances that may arise, but are found "always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Cor. 15:58). Therefore, after citing this passage, Paul adds the comment: "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38-39).

"But the just shall live by his faith"

— This one statement epitomises the whole teaching of the law and the prophets. The law taught the hopelessness of flesh of itself to render perfect obedience to Yahweh (Rom. 7:13), and thereby made obvious the need of that faith and grace predicted by the prophets. The faith referred to is a loving trust in Yahweh, a full confidence in His promises, which finds its outworking in "fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8).

The statement, "The just shall live by his faith" was Yahweh's answer to the question posed by the prophet in Chapter 1:12-17. The answer is, despite all adverse circumstances and conditions, faithful Israelites will be vindicated and will attain unto life eternal; for the emphasis is expressive of more than normal life. The statement is of such significance, that Paul cites it no less than three times as epitomising the gospel, in Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38. He does so, apparently, with three different aspects in view, and with the emphasis on each occasion placed on a different word. To the Romans, he emphasised the ultimate destiny of the faithful: "The just shall *live* by his faith." To the Galatians, he drew attention to the means: "The *just* shall live by his faith."

To the Hebrews, he stressed the power: "The just shall live by *his faith*." In this last place, Paul used the statement to introduce his outstanding chapter on faith as the moving power of the ages. This faith, he defines as "a confident anticipation of things hoped for, a full persuasion of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, J. Thomas' translation). He taught that it comes "by hearing the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17), which recalls the written vision of Habakkuk, and the coming of the Word made flesh. John taught that personal victory is dependent upon the possession of faith: "This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith" (1 John 5:4). A living, active faith that begets works to the glory of the Father is necessary to that end.

2. The Persecutor Will be Punished — Vv. 5-19

In this section, the character of the Chaldean Dictator is described; and five woes are pronounced against him. The prophecy relates primarily to the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar upon Judah, and to the punishment which was ultimately inflicted upon the Babylonians through Cyrus "the anointed of Yahweh" (Isa. 45:1). Cyrus was a type of Christ in his role of Conqueror of Babylon the Great, so that the prophecy has a double application. The Chaldean is designated as "a proud man" who "keepeth not at home." As such he typed Gog of the latter days; and the five woes pronounced will have a latter-day manifestation. They are:

- a. *Woe to pride and greedy ambition (vv. 6-8);*
- b. *Woe to covetousness and materialism (vv. 9-11);*
- c. *Woe to power politics and ruthlessness (vv. 12-14);*
- d. *Woe to religious superstition and error (vv. 15-18);*
- e. *Woe to idolatry and popery (vv. 19-20).*

Here is a complete answer to the question of the prophet: "Shall they be always slaying the nations?" (Ch. 1:17).

VERSE 5

"Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine" — This is better rendered: "Yea, because wine is treacherous..." The treacherous influence of wine used in excess is stressed in Prov. 20:1. But wine is also used symbolically of the heady influence of ungodly, emotional religion, and of fleshly success. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit," exhorted Paul (Eph. 5:18). He thus contrasted the artificial, stupefying excitement of wine with the pure stimulation of the spirit-word, and urged that care should be taken to avoid the former. Wine was prohibited the priests in the tabernacle (Lev. 10:9), as typical of merely emotional religion without true understanding. In that regard, it is used of the heady doctrines of political and religious Babylon (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 17:2).

Wine is also used for bloodshed (Jer. 25:15,16). Nebuchadnezzar became inebriated with success, and boasted: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty!" (Dan. 4:30). Daniel declared that "when his heart was lifted up, and his mind was hardened in pride" he sinned against Yahweh (Dan. 5:2-21). Thus Habakkuk predicted what Daniel reported. As a result of his transgression Nebuchadnezzar was deposed from his kingly throne, until he learned "that the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men."

Habakkuk's prophecy has a latter-day application. The modern counterpart of this "proud man" will be Gog, the dictator of Russia, who will be aligned with the Papacy when he makes his drive south in an attempt at world domination. Daniel declares that he shall "cause craft to prosper in his hand" (Dan. 8:25), the reference being to priestcraft. Nevertheless, he continues, he shall be "broken without hand" by the "Prince of princes." Habakkuk thus reveals something of the character of Gog. He will manifest insatiable ambition for world domination. He will be a "proud" man, impervious to appeal, who will

“gather unto himself all nations, and heap to himself all peoples,” in one mighty confederacy (Ezek. 38). Gog will become drunk with power, and inebriated with the wine of Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:3).

“He is a proud man” — Whilst this has primary application to the Babylonian dictators, it has direct application also to Gog. Gog will be noted for his pride, greed and insatiable ambition.

“Neither keepeth at home” — He will be bent on world domination, as Russia is today.

“Who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death” — Hell is *sheol* in Hebrew and is derived from *sha'al*, signifying never satisfied, always demanding. It is rendered “grave” in Prov. 27:20; 30:16; 1Cor. 15:55. There is no end to the demands of Sheol, and no stopping the advent of death. Nebuchadnezzar also was insatiable in his demands, and Gog will be likewise. In Rev. 6:8 “hell, and death” are used in association with a conqueror symbolising his devastating conquests. There is a finality about hell and death to all but the Lord who has the keys to them both (Rev. 1:18); as he has also to the political situation.

“Cannot be satisfied” — Solomon observed: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc. 8:11). The initial successes of Gog will lift him up in pride, which, however, will only precipitate his fall. Then “the meek will inherit the earth” (Mat. 5:5).

“Gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people” — Nebuchadnezzar did this in the past, and Gog will attempt it in the future — this means the latter-day manifestation of the Image seen by Nebuchadnezzar will be set up. The word “people” is the plural *anim*, rendered *peoples* in the RV. Where the word occurs thus, it refers to the Gentiles.

(a) Woe To Pride And Greedy Ambition — Vv. 6-8

The nations are described as taunting

the “proud man” as the result of his fall; whilst the remnant of the nations are represented as rising up from the dead to spoil him.

VERSE 6

“Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him” — These are “the nations” previously gathered unto him. Now they take up a parable and a taunting proverb against him, which presupposes that he has been overthrown from his position of power. The defeat of Gog by Christ (the antitypical Cyrus) will have a powerful effect upon the nations. Some will be induced by that fact alone, to accept the ultimatum that will be addressed to all foreign nations by the Lord Jesus. Others will turn to Rome and shelter behind the influence of the papacy as it rises to oppose the Lord (Rev. 17:12-14). The mocking taunt of the previously subject nations against their Babylonian oppressor is predicted by Isaiah as well as by Habakkuk (Isa. 14:4, 12-16). “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north (i.e. Mt. Zion)... I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:12-13). Isaiah states that this “taunting proverb” will be heard after Yahweh has manifested “mercy on Jacob, and chosen Israel” and after “strangers have joined with them” (Isa. 14:1-2). Typically this was fulfilled when Cyrus took Babylon and issued his proclamation for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1); but it also will be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the terms of both Isaiah’s and Habakkuk’s prophecies require. Isaiah declared that the prophecy would be fulfilled when “the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet” (Isa. 14:7). In Ch. 2:20, Habakkuk spoke in similar terms. The fall of Babylon the Great will be followed by widespread

revulsion of its doctrines and principles. Zechariah declares that the truth shall be so firmly established, and its righteousness so completely acknowledged, that the closest relations of those who "teach lies in the name of Yahweh" shall give them over to death (Zech. 13:3).

"Woe to Him that increaseth that which is not his" — This is the first of the five "woes". It is pronounced against the dictator who, in his pride, continues to add by conquests, possessions that are not his. Such accumulation is particularly dangerous when the insatiable greed of such rulers leads them to acquire that which Yahweh has set aside for Himself. Zechariah declares of Yahweh's land and people, that "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8). The "apple" or *pupil* of the eye is the most tender part of the body, and the one to which a person will immediately react if any foreign matter intrudes. Thus the prophet further declares that "all that burden themselves with Jerusalem shall be cut in pieces" (Zech. 12:3). Well might the nations proclaim this first "woe" upon Gog when they observe the effect of his invasion of the land. Yahweh, through Ezekiel, states that, consequent upon the overthrow of Gog, "all the nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them" (Ezek. 39:21). Thus they shall be induced to say: "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his."

"How long?" — This question occurs as an interjection; as though the prophet broke in upon the proclamation of the woe to enquire: "How long is this state of things to continue unpunished?" "How long until the woe will be felt upon the enemies of Israel?" This is the constant question of true Israelites throughout the ages. The Psalmist constantly asked the question (Psa. 6:3; 90:13): "O Yahweh, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?" (Psa. 94:3,4; 74:10. See also Isa. 6:11;

Dan. 8:13,15). The saints in persecution prayed: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10-11).

"To him that ladeth himself with thick clay" — The mind instantly turns to the "clay" of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted by Daniel (Dan. 2:41-42). This certainly suggests the earthy, Socialist-democratic element of latter-day power. But in Habakkuk's Prophecy, the term "thick clay" is from the Hebrew *abiyt*, and signifies *pledges* as the word is rendered in the RV. 'It is from a root signifying *to pawn, to lend on security*, and suggests a modern day political pact between nations. The nations behind the iron curtain are helplessly bound to Russia by enforced pacts, and ultimately those outside it will be similarly hedged in by such "agreements." Gog will become as a guard unto them, a word signifying to hedge about (Ezek. 38:7).

VERSE 7

"Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee" — Who are the "they"? Not those who take up the taunt referred to in the previous verse, but who will spoil the oppressor. They are to "rise up," an expression that points to the resurrection from the grave. Here is a new power in the political arena: one brought again by the resurrected dead. This unexpected manifestation of resurrected powerful ones will appear "suddenly" in the earth, to bring Gog's power to an end. In the type, the Babylonians were overthrown by Cyrus and the Medes and Persians, who appeared suddenly before Babylon, and took the city when they were least expected (Dan. 5). They diverted the course of the Euphrates and so entered the city. That historical fact is taken as the basis of the prophecy of the drying Euphrates of the sixth vial (Rev. 16:12). "That bite thee" is literally *that exact usury*, and this suggests receiving back all that one has been forced to give, with interest added. The resurrected saints will exact from the oppressor

much more than he has taken. The "fourth beast" over which Gog will exercise authority, will be completely destroyed.

"And awake" — From the dead.

"That shall vex thee" — The Hebrew *zuwa* signifies *to agitate* with fear. See Psalm 2:5,12; 2 Thes. 1:8. The saints in power will cause fear and dread to seize upon the nations. John, in vision, saw the saints organised for war, with Christ at the head, and bringing the nations into subjection (Rev. 19:11-16).

"Thou shalt be for booties unto them" — The Hebrew word signifies *spoil* as in Zeph. 1:13, Isa. 42:22; Jer. 30:16.

VERSE 8

"All the remnant of the people shall spoil thee" — The word *people* should be in the plural, *peoples*, and relates to the nations. Who are the "remnant of the nations" who will spoil Gog? Those whom God hath "taken out of the Gentiles" a people for His name. In the day of their glory, they are represented as singing: "Thou (Christ) hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation... and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). To the remnant taken out of the nations Christ has promised: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26).

"Because of men's blood" — This is one ground of Yahweh's controversy with such as Gog. Those who ruthlessly and unlawfully, shed blood, will be given blood to drink. "Surely your blood of your lives will I require," declared Yahweh to Noah in establishing the terms of His covenant with him. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood (i.e. unlawfully), by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

"And for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein" —

Here are further grounds of complaint against Gog. His action in invading the land, and his violence against the people, and against the city of Jerusalem will be punished. This was the case with Babylon of old (see Jer. 50:28, 51:1-5), and will be so also with Gog. "It shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord Yahweh, that My fury shall come up in My face" (Ezek. 38:18. See also Zech. 2:8-9).

(b) Woe To Covetousness And Materialism — Vv. 9-11.

The second woe makes reference to a common failing of the modern world: covetousness and materialism. They are decried as idolatry by Paul (Col. 3:5). They comprise the modern "idols of silver and of gold" which men shall "cast to the moles and to the bats" in the day when Yahweh's terrible woes will be poured out upon the nations of fleshly pride (Isa. 2:11, 19-22).

VERSE 9

"Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness" — The Amplified Bible renders this: "who obtains wicked gain for his house". The most evil form of covetousness is referred to, even that which sets a man to ruthlessly seek his personal gain with complete indifference to the feelings of others. Is not this a modern sin? Today the worship of self is a widespread form of idolatry, begetting the most evil materialism. And materialism is a form of philosophy which seeks to express creation in terms that leave out the need of a Creator. It interprets mere acquisition as evidence of the greatest good. Habakkuk represents the "proud man's" covetousness, or gain, as designed to secure the permanency of "his house." That was Nebuchadnezzar's ambition. He boasted: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). He intended Babylon to last forever, but it was completely

destroyed. The leaders of modern Babylon the Great will have similar ambitions. The boast of self-aggrandisement will be heard: "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." But John continues: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day" (Rev. 18:7-8). That is the "woe" pronounced upon the system by Habakkuk in the verse before us.

"That he may set his nest on high"

— That is, inaccessible to the hunter, and impervious to attack, so as to ensure its continuity. In the plenitude of his power and glory, Gog, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, will believe himself to be above any power to harm, and will consider that he has established his "house" for perpetuity. Similar expressions are used in regard to Edom (Obad. 3-4), because Gog is the manifestation of latter-day Edom.

"Delivered from the power of evil"

— Evil in a city, or a nation, is frequently evidence of Yahweh's vengeance (Amos 3:6; Mic. 1:12). The words spoken to Edom can equally be applied to Gog, the "proud man" of Hab. 2, and the Edomite of the latter days: "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith Yahweh" (Obad. 4).

VERSE 10

"Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people" — The Hebrew word signifies *devised shame*. The idea is that whilst the "evil covetousness" of this proud man has been designed to establish his house forever, in fact, it will bring it to shame. The very means that Nebuchadnezzar used to that end ultimately destroyed him; and that, too, will be the experience of Gog. Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar (who typified Gentile power): "Thou art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth ... wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthen-

ing of thy tranquillity" (Dan. 4:22,27). Nebuchadnezzar refused to do so and was punished by Yahweh. Gog will not learn the lesson, and likewise will be punished. His own schemes of aggrandisement will destroy him. His own "house" will fall upon itself. "Every man's sword shall be against his brother," declares Ezekiel (Ch. 38:21). In his third chapter, Habakkuk predicts the self-destruction of the "house of the wicked" (Hab. 3:13-14). The very means that Gog will use to establish his power will be the cause of his undoing, for his invasion of the Middle East, and his antisemitism, will bring Christ and the saints against him, destroying forever the house he had hoped to establish for all time.

"Thou hast sinned against thy soul"

— Yahweh holds nations accountable for extreme acts of ruthless violence in which they indulge to establish their power; and disciplines them accordingly. See Eph. 5:5-7; and notes on v. 8.

VERSE 11

"For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it" — In these terms, the prophet revealed how "jerrybuilt" is the political "house" built by the "proud man." Its foundations are poor, and the workmanship shoddy. Instead of building for perpetuity, the rickety construction will reveal basic weaknesses. Like the metallic image seen by Nebuchadnezzar which was top-heavy, the foundations of this "house" are weak. "The house (seeming permanent construction) of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tent (temporary structure) of the upright shall flourish," declares Proverbs 14:11. What do the expressions used by Habakkuk denote? Ancient architects used to strengthen the mass of masonry with timber (1Kings 6:36). The apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus 22:16 declares: "Timber girt and bound together in a building cannot be loosened with shaking." However, the "shaking" of v. 7 will loosen the political edifice established by Gog, causing the "stone" and

“timber” to creak and groan under the strain, and ultimately fall to the ground. The collapse of this “house” will bring disgrace to the builder, resulting in the “taunting proverb” earlier expressed. In that day, the declaration of the prophet will be appreciated: “Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house...”

(c) Woe To Power Politics And Ruthlessness — Vv. 12-14

The previous two woes have revealed who will overthrow the proud man, namely the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) risen from the dead (Hab. 2:7); and the weakness of the political structure that he will erect. Now it is revealed why his ruthless politics must fail: it is because Yahweh has a purpose that shall be fulfilled in the earth.

VERSE 12

“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity” — These words express the ruthlessness of power politics. They are particularly apt for these times when men worship power and success no matter how they are manifested or achieved. This is an age of violence, comparable to the days before the Flood. Yahweh then looked upon an earth “filled with violence,” and moved to destroy it. Christ will return in times like those of “the days of Noah” (Luke 17:26), and will bring to an end the state of things upon the earth.

VERSE 13

“Is it not of Yahweh of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire” — This statement introduces the reader to a further title of Deity: *Yahweh Sabaoth*, or *He Who Will Be Armies*. This is the militant title of Deity, used when He is exerting Himself on the behalf of His people. It is a prophetic title, pointing forward to future armies of immortals who will extend the conquests of the Lord Jesus throughout the earth. He is described as its Commander (Isa. 55:4), and Revelation 19:16 provides a word picture of the army

in action. At its head is the one described as *The Logos Of God*, and following him are the righteous, those “called chosen and faithful” (Rev. 17:14). In the past, Yahweh has manifested His power through His heavenly Elohist army, and Paul summed up its protective ability when he quoted the words of Isaiah: “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us (Jews) a seed, we had been as Sodom and Gomorrah” (Rom. 9:29). James taught that this heavenly army manifested its power through the Romans in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He warned the Jewish oppressors of the ecclesia that “the cries (of the defrauded) are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (James 5:4).

Thus, although the title itself is prophetic, and points to a future manifestation of Yahweh in military power, it also has application to the past. Portion of the Elohim comprised an army that frequently went to the aid of Israel after the flesh. Jacob had the assurance of divine protection through Yahweh’s heavenly army when he was approaching Esau. “The angels of God met him, and when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s house” (or army, for *host* is *army* in its Hebrew form, Gen. 32:1-2). He called the place *Mahanaim: two hosts*, thus linking his own following on earth, with that angelic host from heaven. Joshua’s notable victories were not won in his own strength, but through the aid of the heavenly army that supervised his conquests. Before the attack on Jericho, he was met by an angel displaying a drawn sword, who described himself as the Captain of Yahweh’s army (Josh. 5:14,15), and before whom Joshua paid obeisance. In Dothan, the servant of Elisha had his eyes opened to see “horses and chariots of fire” upon the surrounding heights, there to protect Elisha (2Kings 6:17). No wonder the prophet remained calm in the face of the surrounding fear. His faith permitted him to recognise the truth of those words later proclaimed by Hezekiah when Jerusalem was attacked by the Assyrians: “Be strong and courageous,

be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be *more with us than with him*; with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Yahweh our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2Chron. 32:7-8). Abijah of Judah warned the men of Israel of the folly of attacking the southern kingdom: "Behold, God Himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. Fight ye not against Yahweh Elohim of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper" (2Chron. 13:12).

Many similar expressions are found throughout the Word, referring to the beligerent manifestation of Yahweh's power. The Gospel call is actually a recruiting call to join the army of Yahweh. "Endure hardness," Paul counselled Timothy, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2Tim. 2:2-3). To such, Christ has issued the promise: "To him that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26). As such, they shall form part of Yahweh Sabaoth: Yahweh's army of the future. This army will re-establish the Kingdom of God in the earth, and will extend its influence throughout the world. Isaiah prophesied: "Of the increase of his government and Peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. *The zeal of Yahweh Sabaoth will perform this*" (Isa. 9:7). This is the army seen of John in Patmos, as recorded in Rev. 19:14. Zechariah saw the same army as "four chariots" that emerged from between "two mountains of brass" (Zech. 6:1). They went forth on their work of conquest, and as they did so under the supervision of the "ruler of all the earth" (v. 5), they "quieted his spirit" in the countries they conquered (cp. v. 8).

It is appropriate, therefore, in a woe

referring to the exercise of ruthless power politics, that reference should be made to Yahweh Sabaoth: Yahweh of hosts. The prophet declares that it is "of Yahweh of hosts" that the people "shall labour in the very fire," and "shall weary themselves for very vanity" or in vain. To labour "in the very fire," is to labour to put out that which will destroy them, but the prophet warned that they would do this in vain. The expression is similar to that used by Jeremiah in describing the overthrow of Babylon: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary". As historic Babylon was given over to fire and sword (Jer. 50:32; 51:30), so also will mystical Babylon. Peter predicts the fierce, consuming fury of this fire that will consume the political heavens and earth, and melt with fervent heat the political and religious elements thereof (2Pet. 3:10-13). His words had primary application to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; but they also have application to the fire of Armageddon. The people will labour to put the fire out, but they will do so in vain, for it is not according to the purpose of Yahweh that they should do so. Why? Because they will be found striving to preserve and build up that, which He has decreed should be thrown down and destroyed. Let saints beware that they are not found doing that very thing at the expense of the requirements of the Truth at the coming of the Lord.

The people labor for vanity, because it will be the purpose of Yahweh that will prevail, and that purpose is expressed in verse 14.

VERSE 14

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea" — Because this is the purpose of Yahweh, the laboring of people to preserve a system of things built upon blood and power politics must prove vain. This purpose will be

brought about by the Lord Jesus, at whose birth, the angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill toward men." It is significant that a similar statement to the proclamation of this verse, occurs five times throughout Scripture (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3; 11:9; Hab. 2:14). Five is the number of grace, and this statement proclaims the purpose of grace. It is also significant that in Habakkuk's prophecy it is found in a context of five woes.

(d) Woe To Religious Superstition and Error — Vv. 15-17

The figurative expressions of this woe relate to forms of apostate religion. The Chaldeans fought in the name of their gods; and Gog will fight with the blessing of the Papacy. Prior to his descent south "to take a spoil and a prey" in the Land of Promise, he will "cause craft to prosper in his hand" (Dan. 8:25). The Russian power and Catholicism will join forces and cause a state of religious intoxication, prior to being crushed by divine power manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ and the glorified redeemed.

VERSE 15

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink" — Babylon did this in compelling nations to submit to its pagan rule. "The nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. 51:7,57). Similar words are recorded of Babylon the Great: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication" (Rev. 14:8; 17:2; 18:3). This would suggest that towards the end, Roman Catholicism will exert an even greater influence upon the European nations. "Woe" is pronounced upon those deluded by her, for Yahweh will repay both her and her associates with His cup of fury (Jer. 25:15). The Lord, at the head of his forces risen from the dead and glorified, will "take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Thes. 1:8).

"That putteth thy bottle to him" — The R.V. renders: "that addest thy venom thereto." The reference is to "mixed wine" or wine made even more intoxicating by being drugged by poison. Wine fortified with a potion of stupefying drugs was given to criminals before execution (Ps. 75:8; Mat. 27:34,48). This highly potent wine sends the victim into a drunken stupor. The "wine" of Babylon is likened thereto.

"That thou mayest look on their nakedness" — Send them into an abject state of drunken helplessness, that leaves them quite defenceless.

VERSE 16

"Thou art filled with shame for glory" — You have gloried in those things that really witness to your shame, and which will redound to your disgrace and dishonour. The very things in which the world glories today will be the mark of shame when Christ returns.

"Drink thou also" — Babylon will drink of the wine of Yahweh's wrath. See Jer. 25:15.

"Let thy foreskin be uncovered" — The RV renders: "Be as one uncircumcised," that is, one without the covenant and thus given over to death (see Gen. 17:14; 1Sam. 17:36). This statement shows that there is no hope for Babylon the Great; that destruction awaits it at Christ's coming. That will not be the case with other powers. Many will accept the covenant offered them by Christ, and will be incorporated into the kingdom he will set up. Figuratively they will be circumcised. In Psalm 118:10 it is prophetically declared of Messiah at his second coming: "All nations compassed me about, but in the name of Yahweh surely I will make them be circumcised" (Rotherham translation). Though they may at first oppose his rule, they will be compelled to submit, and accept the terms offered them. But no terms of capitulation will be offered Babylon the Great. Daniel declares that because of her frightful blasphemies and her violence she shall be utterly destroyed (Dan.

7:11), though other nations that make up the parts of this system will continue in the kingdom to be set up (v. 12). The utter destruction of this system is predicted in Revelation 18 because of its violent behaviour towards those who have witnessed to the truth (cp. v. 24). An end will be brought to it because it has blinded men's eyes to the Truth, and sought to establish its own influence, teaching and power in opposition to that of Christ's.

"Shameful spewing shall be on thy glory" — Her humiliation will be evident to all (see Rev. 18-19).

VERSE 17

"The violence of Lebanon shall cover thee" — The R.V. renders: "For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee." Lebanon is set forth elsewhere as symbolic of Israel (Isa. 14:8; 33:9; Ezek. 17:3), and of the temple (Zech. 11:1). Historic Babylon was guilty of violence against the people and the temple, and, in turn, felt the vengeance of such (see Jer. 50:28). Babylon the Great likewise has oppressed the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), Yahweh's spiritual temple (2Cor. 6:16), and because "precious in the eyes of Yahweh is the blood of His saints," it will receive "double" at the hands of those whom she oppressed (Rev. 18:5-8).

"And the spoil of beasts" — The RV renders this: "and the destruction of beasts." Beasts are used symbolically for nations (Prov. 28:15, Dan. 7:17). Babylon the Great in conjunction with Gog, will destroy many beasts, or nations, and in doing so will set up such power as will make Israel and all people of goodwill afraid. Men's blood will be shed in the cause of ruthless political and religious power. Ultimately this will culminate in the attack upon the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem (Ezek. 38; Zech. 14), finally erupting in the judgment of Armageddon. Then the full effect of this woe will be felt by Babylon the Great.

"For the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein" — The attack on Israel will constitute the cli-

max of iniquity, and Yahweh will move, through His son, to destroy the oppressor and relieve the oppressed (Ps. 72). This happened before in regard to historic Babylon (Jer. 50:28) and will do so again upon the modern system (Jer. 30:4,11; Rev. 18:6,24).

(e) Woe To Idolatry And Popery — Vv. 19-20

The religion of pagan Babylon to which all subject nations were forced to submit (Dan 3:5) constituted a system of lies. Mystical Babylon today also has its "false prophet," who specialises in such. But woe is proclaimed upon both the system and its adherents. The final "woe" is introduced by an ironical question: "What profiteth the graven image?"

VERSE 18

"What profiteth the graven image?"

— What is the value of all the care lavished upon such? It appears ridiculous to those who have the Truth (see Isa. 44:9-10; Jer. 2:11). Rome also created its image, the Pope, and gave life and power to it (Rev. 13:14-18). But "the image of the beast" has proved to be a fake, a "teacher of lies," a "false prophet" (Rev. 16:13).

"A teacher of lies" — The papacy with its "false prophet" (Rev. 13:14; 16:13). Rome, like Babylon of old, has its "graven images" which it glamorises with gold, silver and precious stones (Dan. 11:38; Rev. 17:4). But the glory and wealth are all in vain, and ultimately the Pope will prove to be nothing but a "dumb idol."

VERSE 19

"Woe unto him" — The "proud man" of v. 5, the Gog of Ezekiel 38 will energise the papacy, but in vain. Both he and it will be overwhelmed, and an end brought to those who oppress the Israel of God.

"That saith to the wood, Awake" — The Gogian confederacy will confederate with the Papacy, and this unholy alliance of political and religious power will con-

tribute to the cry of Peace and Security, that will immediately precede the destruction that shall come upon the forces of darkness, at the hands of Christ and the saints (1 Thes. 5:2-3). Gog shall "cause craft to prosper in his hand" (Dan. 8:25). This is a rendition of the same Hebrew word translated "deceit" in Jer. 9:6, and there used in relation to false religion. The Gogian support of the papacy will give it power (cp. Rev. 13:18), or, in the terms of Habakkuk's prophecy, cause it to awake, arise and teach. At the epoch of divine judgment, "the beast and the false prophet" will be found together, and will reap a common fate (Rev. 19:20). The current trend of closer agreement between Socialism-Democracy and Catholicism is significant in the light of the prophetic scriptures, particularly this section of Habakkuk's vision.

"It is laid over with gold and silver"

— A reference to the fabulous wealth of Rome. See Rev. 17:4. These gods of gold and silver will be cast to the moles and to the bats ultimately (Isa. 2:20). Mankind will be ashamed of them, and will try to hide them in darkness.

"No breath at all in the midst of it"

— No life in it at all.

VERSE 20

"But" — In contrast to the noise and tumult of the Gentiles (cp. Isa 17:13-14 with Psalm 93).

"Yahweh is in His holy temple" — The consummation of the five woes will witness the fulfilment of v. 14, and the re-establishment of divine worship in the temple set up again in Jerusalem. See Isa. 56:6-7; Zech. 6:12-13; Ezek 43:7; Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 14:16. Yahweh will be there, manifested in the united body of the redeemed. The "glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like a noise of many waters" (Ezek. 43:2). Here is Yahweh manifested in a multitude. The same thought is expressed in Zech. 14:9, "Yahweh shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Yahweh, and His name one."

The emphasis given to the "oneness" of Yahweh is necessary because the one true God will be manifested in the glorious company of the redeemed "a great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9). Though so vast a community, they all come from One, even Yahweh, and He is manifested in them all (Heb. 2:11). They comprise His spiritual temple, in which He dwells (1Cor. 6:19; 2Cor. 6:16-18), and which will be seen in its completeness and full glory in the age to come.

"Let all the earth keep silence before Him" —

To keep silence is to be receptive to Yahweh's instructions. See Deut. 27:9; Zech. 2:13. At his return, and after the judgment of Armageddon, Christ will issue an ultimatum to the nations to submit to his rule (see Psa. 2:10-12; Isa. 14:32; Rev. 14:6-7). Those who comply will be incorporated into the Kingdom of God; those who resist will be destroyed (Isa. 60:12). Finally, peace will prevail (Isa. 9:7; 14:7; Mic. 4:4). Thus, after Gog has been overthrown, and the thunders of the "war of the great day of God Almighty" have faded, and when, from Zion's hill, the divine laws and decrees of Christ's government will issue forth, these words will be fulfilled.

In this consummation the prophet received the answer to his problem. He had been shown that Yahweh was not unmindful of folly in Israel, and would discipline the nation. Nor is God indifferent to Gentile blasphemy, but will exert Himself to vindicate His holy name.

Yet in all this punishment and judgment, the just shall live by his faith. It is faith that will obtain the victory; for faith looks beyond the present to the "joy set before us" (Heb. 12:1-3). Habakkuk had *wrestled* with his problem, and had received an answer that caused him to more joyfully *embrace* the truth, and so vindicate his name which signifies both *wrestler* and *embracer*.

The five woes of this chapter draw together five great evils that have afflicted humanity, since the Flood, and which reveal the fallacy of human endeavour

apart from the divine purpose. They witness to the vain show of man in the following ways:

First Woe (vv. 5-7) —

The way of Cain and Lamech.

Second Woe (vv. 9-11) —

The fears and ambitious endeavours of Babel.

Third Woe (vv. 12-13) —

The power politics and ruthlessness of Nimrod.

Fourth Woe (vv. 15-16) —

The shamelessness of Ham and Canaan.

Fifth Woe (vv. 18-19) —

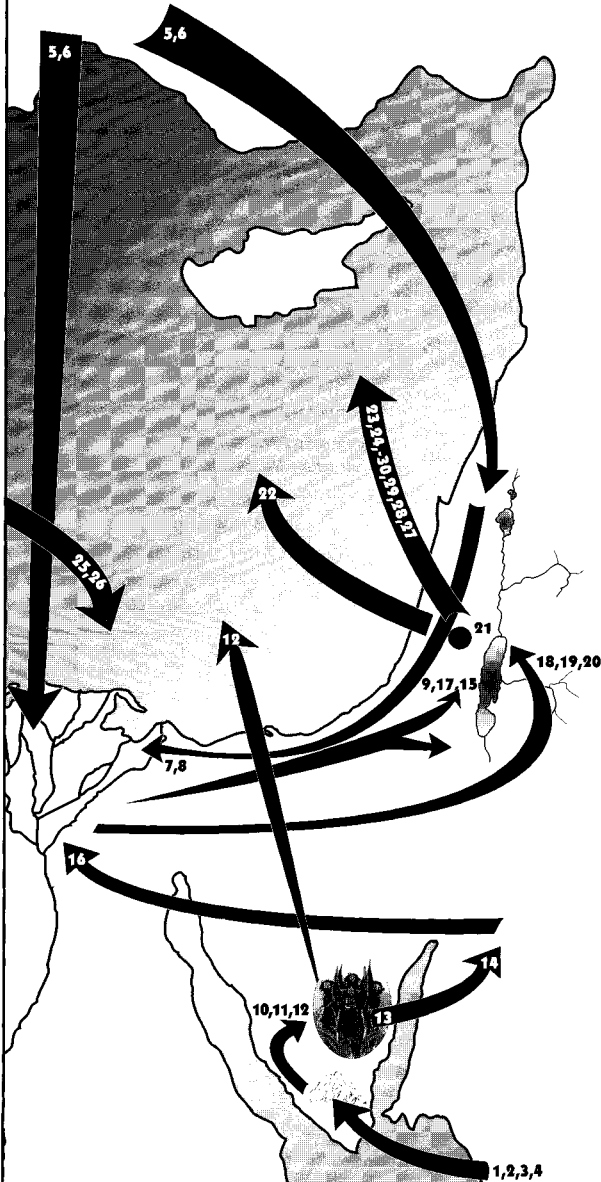
The superstitious vanity of Babylon.

All these evil ways will combine in the crisis now impending, and which will receive its quietus at the hands of the Lord Jesus when he returns to the earth, and draws to himself the Saints in glory and power.

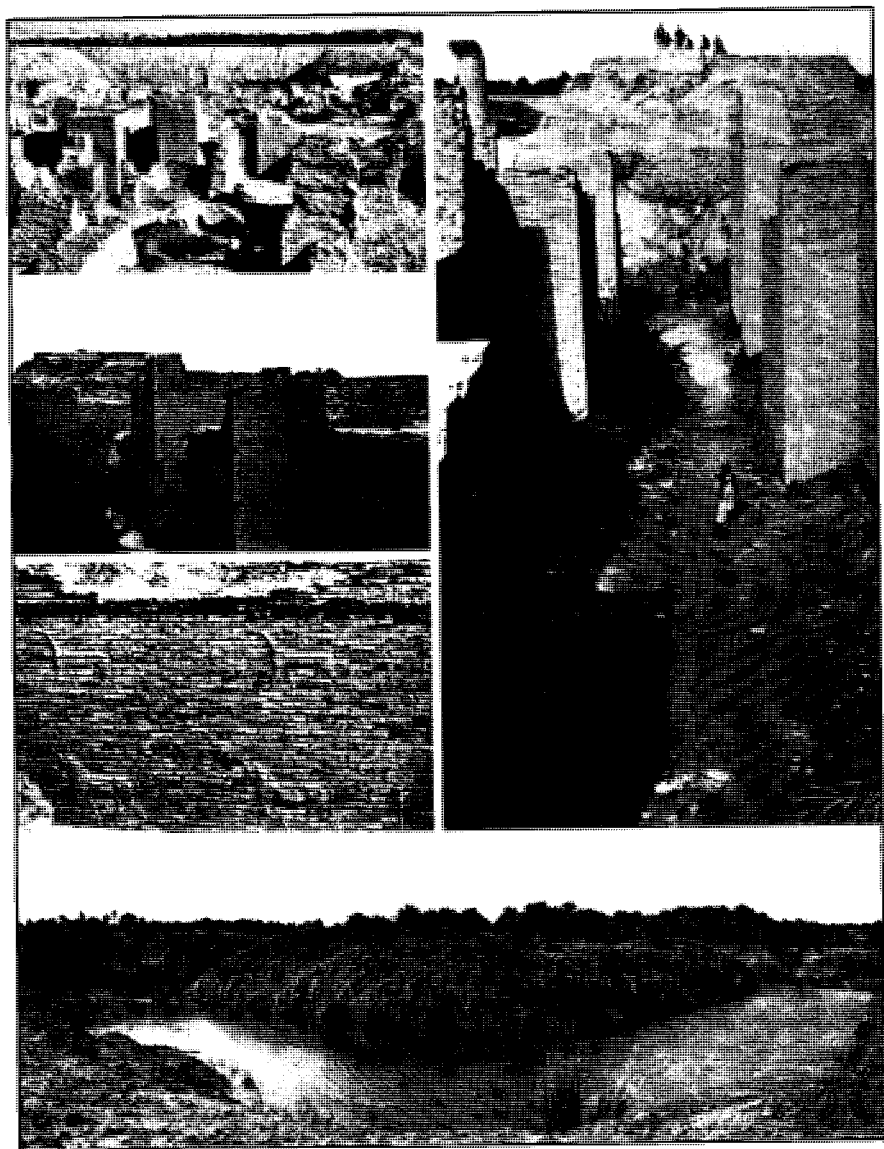
SUMMARY

Chapter 2 provides a complete answer to the prophet's dilemma. Yahweh is not only just but merciful. There is careful discrimination between the wicked and righteous. When the final scores are added up, the man of faith who has remained loyal to Yahweh will live. On the other hand, Yahweh will punish all man's arrogant pride. Woe betide those who greedily grab what belongs to others; and ruthlessly set about to establish their own power at the expense of Yahweh's will. The resurrection of the faithful remnant to life eternal (v. 7), and their elevation to power, will result in "the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh" filling the earth, as the waters cover the sea (v. 14). In that day, the temple will be erected in Jerusalem, divine glory will be manifested therein through Christ and the saints, and all the earth will be found in subjection thereto (v. 20). The prophet's dilemma will thus be solved.

Events Subsequent to Christ's Return



1. Return of Jesus Christ to the earth.
2. Resurrection of the dead.
3. Judgment Seat at Mt. Sinai.
4. Rewards and Rejections.
5. Russian overthrow of Turkey.
6. Europe confederated by Gog.
7. Russia dominates Egypt.
8. World-wide trouble.
9. Russia besieges Jerusalem.
10. Perfected Multitudinous Christ.
11. Marriage of Lamb to Bride.
12. Elijah's work of Restoration.
13. The Cherubim: Yahweh Tzvaoth.
14. Arabs subjected to Christ.
15. Western powers humiliated.
16. Smiting and Healing of Egypt.
17. Russia triumphant: Great Image.
18. Armageddon: Valley of Judgment.
19. Christ revealed; Mt. Olives splits.
20. Kingdom established in Zion.
21. Great Middle East changes.
22. Millennial Gospel proclaimed.
23. Nations reject Christ's Ultimatum.
24. Judgment; Wars of Destruction.
25. World-wide Second Exodus of Israel.
26. Established in Bonds of Covenant.
27. Nations subject to Zion's king.
28. House of Prayer for all nations.
29. Universal rule; millennium begins.
30. The Glory of Yahweh revealed.



BABYLON — THE TERROR OF JERUSALEM IN THE DAYS OF HABAKKUK — NOW IN RUINS.

Excavations have unearthed the ruins of this one-mighty city, and verify the declarations of the Scriptures concerning the divine judgment upon Babylon. Clockwise from top right: • The processional street as it stretched from the Ishtar Gate to the centre of the town • Site of the great Tower of Babel, which is now only a small island surrounded by a moat • The red figures of dragons and wild bulls stand out sharply against the glazed blue walls of the city • Another view of the Ishtar Gate • View of the centre of Babylon, showing excavations in progress.

HABAKKUK:
UPON THE WATCHTOWER

Section Three:

***THE PRAYER:
CONSUMMATION***

Chapter 3:1-19

***The Prophet's Psalm
of Conquest and Glory***

THE PROPHET'S PSALM

“Now while Nahum looked at the latter-day deliverance of Israel through the fall of Nineveh, Habakkuk contemplated the same consummation through the typical fall of Nebuchadnezzar’s dynasty. He saw Babylon in the plentitude of its power. Success would intoxicate the Golden Head, whose spirit would change, and he would transgress and offend by imputing his power to his own strength. And while Babylon triumphed, he saw that Israel and the nations were enclosed in its net, being subjected thereby to spoilation and great distress. He was desirous to know what all this would result in. He therefore besought Yahweh to reveal to him what the end would be. His petition was granted, and the consummation was represented to him in a vision which is to speak ‘at the end.’ He saw in that epoch, which is termed ‘the Day of Trouble,’ a chief of nations, proud, covetous, rapacious, and impious, as Belshazzar; who will not confine himself to his own territories, but will enlarge his desire as the grave, and will be as death, which cannot be satisfied, but will gather to his throne all nations, and laden himself with all people as with thick clay. He saw this power in vision execrated in its time as the spoiler of the nations, and the violator of the land of Israel, Jerusalem, and its inhabitants. This is the Gog of Ezekiel, the Assyrian of Isaiah and Micah, the King of the North of Daniel, the Lawless One of Paul, and the dragon of Rev. 20. Habakkuk saw that ‘the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea,’ but he saw also that this could not be the character of the times until this clay-power should be removed out of the way. It was accordingly shown to him that the power should be broken by certain who should ‘rise up suddenly’ and ‘awake;’ and that the sleepers who shall awake to life and stand upon their feet for action, shall bite, and vex, and spoil him. These are the saints he saw in vision, in whose midst is the stone of the wall, which shall cry out against him. After the prophet had seen the vision, and heard the speech accompanying it, in his hymn to Yahweh he recounts the glorious apocalypse he beheld” (Eureka vol. 1, pages 48-49).

PART THREE: A PRAYER — CONSUMMATION CHAPTER 3:1-19

The Prophet's Psalm of Conquest and Glory

Habakkuk 3 comprises a model Psalm. The late J. W. Thirtle states that it was his consideration of Hezekiah's Psalm in Isaiah 38:9-20, and Habakkuk's Psalm in his third chapter, that set him on the trail of solving the problem of the titles of the Psalms. He found that these two Psalms were each headed by a title, and concluded with a subscription. The arrangement of all other Psalms appears differently in our Bibles, for the subscription is joined with the title at the head of Psalms. An example is found in Psalm 65 where the title is: "To the chief Musician. A Psalm and Song of David." Actually the first part: "To the chief Musician" is the subscription to Psalm 64 (cp. with Hab. 3:19), whilst: "A Psalm and Song of David" is the title to Psalm 65 (cp. with Hab. 3:1). The Hebrew text shows no break between Psalms, and translators concluded that the title and subscription were one, and rendered them accordingly. The research of J. W. Thirtle has restored each to their proper place as indicated in "The Companion Bible." In Habakkuk 3, the title and subscription are shown in their proper positions.

1. A Plea For The Consummation — Vv. 1-2

The title of the Psalm is first stated, followed by the prophet's plea.

VERSE 1

"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet" — The Hebrew *tephillah* signifies *intercession, supplication*. Strictly speaking, this is limited to the request of v. 2, but obviously it is made on the background and in anticipation of the glorious promise of Ch. 2:14, 20. The prophet desires to see the consummation of the divine purpose, and inspiration sweeps him along to express the vision he was caused to see. His enthusiasm for it is shown in that it is set to *Shigionoth*.

"Upon Shigionoth" — This compris-

es instruction for how the song should be sung. It is in the plural and signifies songs that are enthusiastic and soul-stirring. The singular form of the word is found at the heading of Psalm 7. It is derived from a root *sha'ag*, to *cry aloud* either in trouble, danger, pain, or in the joy of deliverance. Obviously here it relates to the latter. The word is in the feminine gender which is appropriate, for it will be the bride of Christ who will raise their voices in enthusiastic Halleluyahs at the second advent and the glorious victories of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:1-8).

VERSE 2

"O Yahweh, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid" — This is the first line of the psalm proper. The word

shema, *speech* signifies *reputation*. It is elsewhere rendered *report* and *fame* (cp. Num. 14:15; Isa. 66:19) which suggests reputation rather than speech. Habakkuk knew the reputation of Yahweh. He knew that though He is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exod. 34:6), there is another side to His character. He is a God of love, but He is also just. His reputation is a blend of "goodness and severity," and saints are called upon to heed that fact (Rom. 11:22). He will extend mercy to those who humble themselves under His hand, but "will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of those who hate Him" (Exod. 34:7; Deut. 5:9-10). Knowing this, and cognisant of the evil conditions in Israel, Habakkuk feared for the future of the nation, and "was afraid." Since then, however, he had received the assurance that "the just shall live by his faith."

"O Yahweh, revive Thy work in the midst of the years" — To "revive" is to quicken a thing, to make it live, or preserve it alive (see mg.). What is Yahweh's work that the prophet prayed may be "preserved alive in the midst of the years"? It is the glorification of His name in the earth, as the prophet had already been reminded (Ch. 2:14). Israel was called out of Egypt for that purpose: "I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel saith Yahweh; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11). The name of Yahweh was named upon the people of Israel (Num. 6:27), and it was expected that their characters should conform to the name they bore. "Every one that is called by My name... I have created for My glory" is the declaration of Yahweh (Isa. 43:7). The glory is first mental (doctrine), then moral (character), and finally physical (change of nature).

However, Israel did not bring honour but dishonour to Yahweh: "Mine holy

name have ye profaned among the nations, whither ye went" (Ezek. 36:22). Nevertheless, Yahweh has "preserved alive" His work, by turning to the Gentiles, and through the preaching of the gospel "taking out" a people "for His name" (Acts 15:14). Isaiah predicted that at a time when Israel would "profane the name," Gentiles would separate themselves from their fellows to glorify it. "Thus saith Yahweh, Who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, *the work of Mine hands*, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the Elohim of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine" (Isa. 29:22-24).

The prophet's words take us into the future, when Israel after the flesh (the house of Jacob) shall see Yahweh's true children, gathered out of both Jews and Gentiles, raised from the grave, granted divine nature, and given the status of the Elohim (mighty ones) of Israel. By them shall Yahweh be glorified, and mankind shall see in them the "work of Yahweh's hands". See also Isa. 60:21; 1Pet. 2:9. The Truth is the means devised of Yahweh to sanctify men for His purpose (John 17:17). It is designed to change characters, and not merely to instruct. It will energise and motivate a person to do the will of God, and therefore becomes the power of God working in him to effect the divine purpose: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2Cor. 4: 6-7).

This means that we must become pliable to the influence of the Word, and so allow God to work in us, to change us for the Kingdom. We must not be hardened, but malleable to the divine moulding,

responding to the effects of both circumstances and the Word, to purify our characters before Him. Paul taught that God had selected humble men and women for a great future (1Cor. 1:26-29), "that no flesh should glory in His presence." And he concludes: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (vv. 30-31).

These are the four steps to glory: *Wisdom*: a knowledge of the truth (John 15:3); *Righteousness*: justification through baptism; *Sanctification*: separation for divine use; *Redemption*: glorification of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

Yahweh has "preserved alive" His work in the midst of the years by calling Gentiles to His truth. He has also done so in preserving the identity of Israel after the flesh, and reviving the nation in these last days.

"In the midst of the years make known" — The RV renders this: "make it known." Yahweh has fulfilled the request of the prophet by causing the gospel to be proclaimed among all nations to "take out a people for His name."

"In wrath remember mercy" — This is a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6; Isa. 54:7-8); it is a request that in disciplining Israel, to allow mercy to prevail, and restore them to their land.

2. The Manifestation Of The Mighty One In Glory — Vv. 3-4

The prophet depicts in majestic language the coming of the Mighty One to judge the world, and its effect upon mankind. He describes him as the Sun of a new political day, destroying the forces of darkness that enshroud the earth.

VERSE 3

"God" — The word is *Eloah*, *mighty one*. But though in the singular number he is representative of a mighty host whom he leads into battle. The Mighty One is the "Prince of princes" (Dan. 8:25), and is

representative of the multitudinous Christ who marches to battle in the name of its Commander (Isa. 55:4).

"Came" — This should be rendered in the future tense in accordance with the R.V. margin. *Eureka*, vol. 3, p. 180, has this comment: "The prophet did not write 'Eloah came from Teman'. The word rendered *came* is not *bah* as in Deut. 33:2, where it is correctly translated, but *yahuo*, the future of the same verb, and, therefore, to be rendered 'shall come in'. The text should be rendered thus: 'Eloah shall come in from the South, and the Holy One from mount Paran.' *Eloah* is the word used for the setter up of the Kingdom, in Dan.2:44. It signifies *The Adorable One*, or *The Strong One*. It is the Deity made flesh and justified by spirit, and equivalent to the 'Holy One' or 'Messiah'." The RV mg. supports this statement by setting the whole chapter in the future tense.

"From Teman" — The margin renders this as the *south*, which is what *Teman* signifies. Christ will move up from the south to Jerusalem. But from what part of the south? Moses described him as coming "from Sinai" with "ten thousands of saints" (Deut. 33:1-3). Obviously this is after the judgment of the household, for "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1Pet. 4:17). When their judgment is completed, the glorified saints will go forth in company with Christ to pour out divine judgments upon the nations (Ps. 149:1-9). Some find a difficulty in accepting this, inasmuch as *Eloah* is in the singular number, and there is no specific reference to the saints. But the reference is to Christ personally and multitudinally. A similar treatment is given the same subject in Zechariah 14. Yahweh is described as going forth to fight (Zech. 14:3), but later, it is stated that the saints are one with Him (vv. 5, 9).

At Christ's return, the resurrected and living saints will be "gathered together unto him" (2Thes. 2:1) for the purpose of judgment (Psa. 50:5). It is obvious that they are gathered to a specific place (2Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10), and it appears from

Hab. 3:3; Deut. 33:1-3; Psalm 68:17-18; Song of Solomon 3:6; and Jude 14, that Sinai is the place of the judgment of the saints. It is appropriate for that purpose. It is sufficiently isolated from the world to provide insularity from mankind; and is sufficiently connected with significant manifestations of divine power in the past to provide the necessary atmosphere. The question is sometimes asked how such a large company could be kept hidden from the world — but a little thought will dissolve this problem as it will to all others advanced. Yahweh could draw a thick cloud over the whole scene of judgment, of sufficient depth to completely hide it from prying eyes. In fact, some such protective cover would seem to be necessary in such a location (see Isa. 4:5-6 mg.). That Christ will move from Sinai to Jerusalem was predicted by David when he summarised the future movements “Yahweh among them (i.e. the chariots of God) hath come from Sinai into his Sanctuary” (Ps. 68:17 — Companion Bible, Rotherham, etc.).

Teman was a descendant of Esau, and was thus an Edomite. Prophetically, Edom speaks of the flesh in political manifestation. The Gogian confederacy will comprise the Edomites of the last days. Obadiah predicts: “Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter” (v. 9). Again: “They of the south shall possess the mount of Esau” (v. 19), “for as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been” (v. 16). A complete end will be brought to such political and religious organisations of the flesh (of Edom) as the Gogian confederacy and Babylon the Great. They shall be completely destroyed. Teman was situated between Sinai and Paran; its association with Edom gives added interest to Habakkuk’s usage of the term, for Christ’s attack will be mainly against modern Edom.

“**The Holy One**” — This title of Deity, here applied to the Lord Jesus as the manifestation of the Father, is frequently used by Isaiah. It is from a root signifying *to be clean*, and therefore denotes one who cannot look on unmoved at blasphemy and wickedness. See notes on Ch. 1:12. In the verse before us, the Lord is described as both *the Mighty One* (Eloah) and *the Holy One*. The former title is expressive of his power, and his ability to conquer; the latter title refers to his character; implying that he will not let iniquity pass unpunished.

“**From Mount Paran**” — Paran is from a root signifying *to gleam, reveal beautify, glorify*. It is thus a fitting place to suggest the appearance of regal majesty on the part of the one moving towards Jerusalem. Paran is situated in southern Palestine, a little south of Beersheba. It was from this place that the spies were sent out in the days of Moses, and returned with their disastrous report (Num. 12:16). It is appropriate therefore, to mention this name in conjunction with the victorious movements of the Mighty One in the age to come who will right all the evil that the foolish spies brought upon the nation then and since.

“**Selah**” — Some see this word which signifies *to pause, to consider* as merely a musical notation, giving instruction to the players or singers. But it is obviously more than that. The Companion Bible refers to it as a thought-link, connecting two passages, instructing the reader to pause and consider what has been said in relation to what is about to be stated.

There will be a period of pause for the saints in Sinai after the judgment, before Christ shall move against a world enshrouded in “thick darkness” (Isa. 60:2). This will provide time for fraternising among those of “like precious faith,” who shall then be clothed upon with divine nature, and for the words of Revelation 19:7 to be fulfilled: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” The Mosaic

law provided a period of exemption from warfare for newly wedded bridegrooms (Deut. 24:5), and this doubtless will be observed at Sinai. It will give opportunity for the saints to get to know one another; for them to rejoice together in grand reunions; of thrilling conversations with grand heroes of the faith such as Noah, Moses, Enoch, David, Jeremiah, Paul, John, Peter, and others; for "seeing the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17), and personally conversing with him. Meanwhile, the world will be given over to its own resources. "Darkness will cover the world and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:1-2). Russia will invade the Middle East, and with a lightning thrust will drive down the coastal plains of the land in an attack on Egypt (Dan. 11:40-45). Subsequently, troublous tidings will perturb the Russian Gog, and, leaving an occupying force in Egypt, he will make his way to Jerusalem. The western world will also be entrenched there, in an attempt to destroy the power of Gog, so that "all nations shall be gathered to Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2).

"His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise" — *Selah* as the thought-link, has joined this statement with the previous one: "The mighty one shall come in from Teman". It describes the ultimate result of such a theophany: a new political heavens, and a new political earth in which will dwell righteousness (2Pet. 3:13). "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy" (Isa. 65:17-18). The result of the Mighty One coming in from Teman is the establishment of a new government in Jerusalem that shall hold sway over all the earth, fulfilling the requirements of this statement. See also Isa. 60:3; Mal. 1:11; Ps. 19:1.

VERSE 4

"His brightness was as the light" — Or, "the splendour shall be as the light" (J.

Thomas). The Hebrew word for "light" signifies the light of the sun. It is rendered *shine* in Ps. 80:3,7, which speaks of it as shining forth to salvation. The figure of light is appropriate to the Lord, who is described as the Sun of Righteousness by Malachi (Ch. 4:2). As with the natural so with the spiritual. The shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness will destroy the forces of darkness as effectively as the sun in the heavens drives away the shadows of the night (Isa. 60:1-2). Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12), and as such, he is the destroyer of darkness (see John 1:8-9). His appearance is necessary for the manifestation of glory during the millennial day of a thousand years (2Pet. 3:8). The Psalmist likens the sun to a strong man and to a bridegroom, emerging from his chamber (as from the darkness of night), and shining forth in such splendour that "nothing is hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. 19:6). Christ will fulfil the figure, for he is both bridegroom and warrior. David spoke prophetically of him as the Sun that shall shine forth brightly out of a cloudless dawn of a new day (2Sam. 23: 3-6).

"He had horns coming out of his hand" — Horns are projections that on a beast symbolise power (Dan. 7:7). But the Hebrew word also denotes rays of light such as flow from the sun and are visible at its rising and setting. The RV renders it as "rays coming forth from his hand." Others have rendered it: "Beams of light coming forth", "rays streamed from his hand." As the horns of an animal are used to attack, so the beams of light that stream forth from the sun, destroy the darkness of night. In the symbology before us, they represent the saints who will form an extension of Christ's power and glory, and into whose hands there is committed the judgment of the nations (Ps. 149).

The word *hand* in Hebrew is *yad* and represents an *open hand*, a hand ready for action, and symbolic of power and direction. The angelic Elohim constituted the hand of Yahweh extended in action (Ps. 10:12, 144:7), but in the age to come they will be replaced by the glorified saints, as

the "hand of Yahshua" extended in action to control, discipline, and direct. See Isa. 62:3; 66:14. The hand is also symbolic of the spirit, Yahweh's power by which He accomplishes His will. A hand (the spirit) took hold of Ezekiel (Ch. 2:9); and later, wrote upon the palace wall of the impious Belshazzar (Dan. 5:5). "Beams of light coming out of his hand," therefore, speak of illumination and action on the part of spirit-energised saints who will manifest the Light of the world unto the nations.

"There was the hiding of his power"

— The RSV renders: "There He veiled His power." Both strength and majesty are combined in the Hebrew word rendered "power." The *shekinah* light in the Most Holy constituted the hiding place of the divine glory; it veiled Yahweh's majesty and glory, the full manifestation of which would be too much for flesh to gaze upon (1Tim. 6:16). Yahweh clothes Himself with light as with a garment (Ps. 104:2), and the splendor of His presence is such that the eye of man cannot behold it (Exod. 24:17). Even the manifestation of that glory in the angels was such as to cause Roman soldiers to "shake, and become as dead men" (Mat. 28:4). The angel told Moses: "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live" (Exod. 33:20). Thus the full shining forth of divine glory, even in a created, glorified being, is beyond what mortal man can look upon (see v. 23). In the early stages of the conquest of the nations by Christ and the saints, the divine glory will be restrained, and they will appear as mortal men (see J. Thomas' translation of Zech. 14:6-7). Later, the glory will be made more openly manifest (Isa. 66:19).

In that day, the name of Yahweh will be manifested in all the earth (Zech. 14:9), for it will be exhibited by the redeemed saints. That Name (the family Name of the Father) will be bestowed upon all who have overcome (Rev. 3:12). Clothed upon with divine nature (2Pet. 1:4), and manifesting "the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), they will be united as one by the spirit (John 17:21; Zech. 14:9). This multitude

of glorified ones will comprise the complete and perfect Man of the future, so frequently referred to in the Word. It will constitute the symbolic man of many metals as seen by Daniel (Ch. 10), and John (Rev. 1); the multitudinous Christ, spoken of by Paul (Eph. 4:15-16), and the multitudinous Yahweh Name described by Isaiah as moving belligerently against the nations (Isa. 30:27-28). This One Man of many parts, is variously described as the hands (Isa 62:3), feet (Zech. 14:4), arm (Isa. 52:10), eyes (Zech. 4:10), and name (Isa. 30:27), of Yahweh. These references are not to an individual, but to Yahweh in multiplicity. In this multitudinous man with the name of Yahweh, there is the veiling of the divine power of El. See *Phanerosis* for further thoughts upon this theme.

3. Surveying The Work Of Conquest — Vv. 5-6.

The Mighty One from Teman is shown surveying the work of conquest before him, and considering the means whereby the nations will be brought into subjection. Doubtless, in the isolated fastnesses of Sinai, these matters will be discussed by Christ and those in charge of operations, before launching his attack upon the world. The first work to be done after the resurrection, judgment and glorification of the household, is to send forth Elijah and his associates to prepare those Jews left in dispersion for their return home (cp. Mal. 4:5-6).

VERSE 5

"Before him went the pestilence" — Disobedient Israel was punished with pestilence in the past (Deut. 28:21; 2Sam. 24:15; Jer. 24:10), and stubborn Gentile nations will be similarly punished in the future (Ezek. 38:22; Zech. 14:12, 15, 18; Mal. 4:2). Yahweh has declared "I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished" (Jer. 25:29). The prophet implies that the Gentiles will be treated to the same form of

discipline as Israel experienced.

“And burning coals went forth at his feet” — The RSV renders this: “And plague followed close behind.” Zechariah makes reference to the “plague” that will decimate the forces that move against Jerusalem to battle (Zech. 14:12). However, the Hebrew word is *resheph* which Strong defines as signifying “a live coal, by analogy, lightning, figuratively an arrow as flashing through the air.” He gives the root as *saraph*, *to be on fire*, and from whence is derived *seraphim* (Isa. 6:2). In Rev. 4:8 the seraphim are defined as the saints in glory. Their function as seraphim, is to consume and destroy that which is antagonistic to the holiness of Yahweh. *The English And Hebrew Bible Student’s Concordance* gives the meaning of *resheph* as a *quick, rapid motion, as an arrow shot from a bow, lightning*. It is rendered “arrows” (Ps. 76:3), “burning heat” (Deut. 32:24), “hot thunderbolts” (lightning — Ps. 78:48). It is therefore expressive of divine judgment in war, of the fiery consumption of the spirit when directed against the enemy. The “one like unto the Son of Man,” representative of the multitudinous Christ, is described as having feet “as if they burned in a furnace” (Rev. 1:15). The feet of this multitudinous man, carry the divine army into enemy territory, to destroy opposition to Christ’s rule. Malachi declares that the day is coming “that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Yahweh of armies, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal. 4:1). The fire of the seraphim (saints in glory) will accomplish this. The nations will not be able to stand against the means that Christ and the saints will launch against them. Pestilence and war will reduce their belligerency to ashes. The effect of the spirit launched against the enemy will be similar to a nuclear attack. See Zech. 14:12.

VERSE 6

“He stood and measured the earth”

— These words seem to suggest that before proceeding to battle, the Mighty One from Teman will survey the “work before him”: “Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him” (Isa 40:10). Some nations, because of their extreme wickedness and refusal to submit, will be “measured” for destruction, others for continuance under his rule. Daniel reveals that the nations will be subjected to a judgment (Dan. 7:10-11), and because of Rome’s blasphemies, the city and system will be given over to complete destruction, though the individual nations will find a place in the kingdom. John in Patmos suggests similarly (see Rev. 17:1; 18:5-6, 24). David provides a type. In his conquests, he “measured” some for death, and others for captivity (2Sam. 8:2), and Christ will do similarly. He will also “measure” the Promised Land to divide it among the twelve tribes as described in Ezekiel 48.

“He beheld, and drove asunder the nations” — This describes the effect his conquests will have upon the nations. The expression is from the Hebrew *nathar* and signifies *to be violently agitated, to terrify*. Rotherham renders it “he caused nations to tremble”. Haggai refers to a terrible shaking of the political heavens and earth that will remove them from their present situations, and so “overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the nations” (Hag. 2:22).

“The everlasting mountains were scattered” — J. Thomas: “the mountains of antiquity were dispersed”. In Bible symbology, mountains represent empires, and hills smaller nations (cp. Jer. 51:25). Christ will disperse the former. An end will be brought to them, no matter how ancient they may be. Babylon the Great will be among these.

“The perpetual hills did bow” — Or, “the hills of Olahm did bow.” The *hills of Olahm* who submit to Christ represent those nations that will be incorporated into the kingdom of God.

“His ways are everlasting” — J. Thomas: “the goings of Olahm are his”. R.V.: “His goings were as of old”. Yah-

weh will not only manifest His power through Christ "as when *He* fought in the day of battle" (Zech. 14:3), but at the conclusion of this work of conquest, will order the affairs of the nations, legislating for them (Isa. 2:2-4). The kingdom of God will be restored in its glory, and will embrace all nations. Thus "the ways of Olahm will be His," for His laws will go forth to all the world. Whereas the Gentile mountains of antiquity will be dispersed, the kingdom of God will become a mountain filling the whole earth (Dan. 2:35,44).

4. Subduing The Arabs — v. 7.

The first to feel "the judgments written" (Psa. 149:5-9) will be those peoples in close proximity to Sinai: the Arabs. They will be brought into subjection to Christ, in preparation for providing a refuge for the Jewish people fleeing from the Gogian oppressor. In this regard, the vision of Habakkuk should be considered in conjunction with Isaiah's prophecy of Arabia (Isa. 21:13-15). Isaiah predicts that the normally antagonistic "inhabitants of the land of Teman, shall bring water to him that is thirsty, they shall meet with bread him that fled" (R.V.). This is an act of kindness (Deut. 23:4), and a sharp contrast with the present belligerent attitude of the Arabs (Gen. 16:12). This change will be brought about by the disciplinary action of the Mighty One from Teman, referred to by Habakkuk (cp. Isa. 43: 19-20). See Eureka, vol. 5, p. 252.

VERSE 7

"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction" — He saw them trembling in fear. "Tents of Cushan" imply a nomadic people. "Cush" was originally Cushan or Ethiopia, situated to the north (modern Iraq; Gen. 2:13); but Cushites migrated south to Ethiopia (modern Abyssinia). There was a third Cushan identified with the land of Midian adjacent to Teman. Moses' Midianitish wife, Zipporah (Exod. 2:16-21), is styled a Cushite, or Ethiopian, in Num. 12:1. In Ezekiel 38:13, Sheba and Dedan can be identified with Arab peo-

ples, and also with Cush. In Genesis 25:3, they are described as descendants of Abraham, whilst in 1Chron. 1:9, they are traced from Cush. Evidently, somewhere along the line of descent, descendants of Abraham through Keturah intermarried with those descended from Cush.

"The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble" — Brother Thomas comments (*Eureka*, vol. 5, pp. 252): "The original and appropriate district of the Midianites was on the east side of the Elanitic Bay of the Red Sea. They spread themselves northward along the desert east of Mount Seir, to the vicinity of the Moabites; and on the other side also, they covered a territory extending to the neighborhood of Mount Sinai.

"Midian had a terrible day when, by a panic from Yahweh, they destroyed themselves in the presence of Gideon and his three hundred torch-bearing trumpeters. Another similar day is in reserve for Midian and Cushan, when 'Eloah shall come in from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.' 'From before him shall go the pestilence, and flaming fire shall go forth from his feet. He stood, and shall shake the earth; he beheld, and shall cause the nations to tremble; and the mountains of antiquity shall be dispersed; the ancient hills were humbled; the ways of Olahm are for him'.

"In consequence of this terrible manifestation of supernatural power, Habakkuk informs the reader, saying, 'I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.' The lands of Cushan and Midian being within the limits of the land granted to Abraham are among the first to feel the sword of the king who begins his conquering career in Teman. Like his father David, he executes judgment upon the inhabitants of the South, before he obtains the sovereignty over the house of Judah in the midst of the land."

Again from *Eureka*, vol. 5, p. 251, commenting upon Isaiah 42:11 —

"It must be evident to every one, that before the wild untamed marauders, who

inhabit Arabia Deserta, Arabia Petraea, and Paran, Horeb, Sinai, and the tents and villages of the Kedarite Arabs, can glorify Yahweh, and rejoice with joy and singing, and become the intelligent, happy, and contented population of this newly created paradise, they must have been subjected to the severe discipline of the sword, to subsequent instruction as to the true character of the new power so recently developed in Teman; and made witnesses of the wonderful transformation of their section of Asia from an arid, sandy and rocky wilderness, into a well watered park of choice, odoriferous trees and shrubs."

Christ and the saints will first discipline the Arabs, and bring them into subjection to his rule. One of the terms of their capitulation will be to cease their age-long hostility towards Israel. Subsequently they will be converted, to offer their thanks and praises on the altar on Zion's hill (Isa. 60:6-7; Ps. 72:9). The prophecy of Isaiah 21:13 refers to the previously nomadic Arabs as lodging in a land of forests. This will take place when the desert shall blossom as the rose. At that time, and in fulfilment of the type expressed in Gen. 25:6, these other sons of Abraham will be sent eastward to dwell in Arabia proper, whilst Isaac inherits the land itself.

To summarise: the Arabs will be disciplined and brought into subjection to Christ; their ancient enmity against Israel will be brought to an end; ultimately they will be resettled in Arabia proper to the east of the land of promise; this present desert-country will be caused to flourish; the Arab peoples will be converted to the true worship, and will present themselves at Jerusalem for that purpose.

This destiny of the Arabs, as plainly taught throughout Scripture, is quite different from that of the Edomites. The latter were to be completely cut off, and "shall be as though they had not been" (Obad. 16). That was the fate of the ancient nation, and it will be the fate of typical Edom: the flesh in political manifestation. On the other hand, the Arabs

will be incorporated into the kingdom of God. Prophecies concerning Edom and the Edomites should not be confused with those relating to the Arabs.

5. Initial Conquests Of Gentile Power — Vv. 8-10

Under the figures of rivers, sea and mountains, Gentile power is symbolised, and its conquest is illustrated by the power that the Mighty One from Teman exercises over them. In verse 8, the prophet asks what is the motive of the belligerent Mighty One, the apocalypse of His wrathful power? The answer is given in verse 9.

VERSE 8

"Was Yahweh displeased against the rivers?" — In Isa. 18:2, Israel is defined as a people "whose land the rivers have spoiled" (cp. v. 7). The Middle East is dominated by two great rivers: the Nile and the Euphrates (see Isa. 27:12), and they are used as symbols for Gentile power. Israel was denounced by the prophets for "drinking of the waters" of those two political streams (i.e. for seeking the assistance of Egypt and Assyria), rather than being refreshed by the *Fountain of Living Waters*, even Yahweh (see Jer. 2:18; 17:13). In Isa. 8:7, the invasion of Assyria is symbolised as the flooding of the Euphrates. The same symbol is used in Rev. 9:14, whilst Ch. 16:12 records the familiar symbol of the drying river, representing the evaporation of Turkish power. The two great rivers of the Land of Promise, therefore, symbolise the two great national divisions that dominated the world in ancient times: Assyria-Babylonia and Egypt. At the time of the end, those two great antagonistic powers will be replaced by the Gogian confederacy and the West. The *Mighty One of Teman* will show His displeasure against those confederacies, and for the reason stated in verse 9, Isaiah 17:12 illustrates the crisis of the last days as the roaring of a mighty river in flood.

"Was thy wrath against the sea" — In Scripture the sea symbolises Gentile

power (Isa. 57:20-21). The Apocalypse represents the sea in three stages: "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Rev. 15:2), speaking of the peace Christ will establish following the Armageddon judgments; "a sea of glass like unto crystal" (Rev. 1:6), emphasising the purified state of the nations when the law goes forth from Zion; "no more sea" (Rev. 21:1), at the end of the millennium, when all national divisions will cease, and the earth will be entirely peopled by immortals.

In Hab. 3:8, the sea is represented as the nations (Isa. 57:20), against which the anger of Yahweh is about to blaze forth through the *Mighty One of Teman*.

"That thou didst ride upon thine horses" — In Scripture, the horse is a symbol of war, for, invariably, the war-horse is described (Job 39:19). To ride upon horses is to go forth to war (see Zech. 10:3). In Rev. 19:14, the saints are represented as following the Lord "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" to battle against the nations. In the verse before us, the Lord is described as wading across the rivers upon his "warhorse". They present no barrier to the progress of his conquests.

"Chariots of salvation" — The *Mighty One* is figuratively represented as driving his chariots of war against the forces of darkness, to bring salvation to his people. The chariot is a familiar figure of Yahweh in manifestation. The Mercy Seat over which Yahweh's glory shone forth, and which was overshadowed by the Cherubim, is styled the *chariot of the cherubim* in 1Chron. 28:18. The prophets were sometimes described as "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2Kgs. 13:14), because the spirit of Yahweh "rode" and directed them. Again, the heavenly army, sent to defend Elisha, assumed the appearance of "horses and chariots of fire" around about Dothan.

In the verse before us, the chariots represent the saints in glorious, but warlike manifestation, guided by the spirit of Yahweh, and led by the Lord Jesus Christ. David, in vision, saw them moving up

from Sinai to Jerusalem (Ps. 68:17). Isaiah predicted "as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of Yahweh shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation towards His enemies. For, behold, Yahweh will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will Yahweh plead with all flesh; and the slain of Yahweh shall be many" (Isa. 66:13-16). Isaiah thus pictured the chariots of Yahweh driving towards Jerusalem to punish the enemies of Israel, and bring the comfort of national salvation to His nation.

Eureka, vol. 5, p. 310 states: "When Habakkuk saw Eloah 'come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran', he had a glimpse of the military armament of Apoc. 19. He enquires in Ch. 3:8, saying: 'Was Yahweh displeased against the rivers? Was Thine anger against the rivers? Was Thy wrath against the sea that Thou didst ride upon Thy horses, Thy vehicles of salvation? Thou didst march through the sea with Thine horses, through the mire of great waters' (v. 15). The time of this movement against the nations he terms 'the day of trouble,' and prays that he may rest in it; and adds concerning it, 'when he cometh up against the people, he will cut them in pieces with his troops.' Moses, also, in Deut. 33:26 alludes to the same military display of power, saying, 'there is none like the El of Yeshurun riding the heavens in thy help, and in His majesty the clouds. A refuge is the Elohim of old, and underneath the powers of Olahm; and He shall thrust out the enemy; and shall say, Destroy'.

"Here then we have a complete army exhibited for the conquest of the nations, and the salvation of the twelve tribes of Israel: the Lord Jesus Christ the Commander: 'the called, chosen, and faithful' his brethren and companions, filling all the offices of the army".

VERSE 9**“Thy bow was made quite naked”**

— A bow is made naked when it is drawn from its sheath, and this suggests an act of war. In Isa. 49:2, Zech. 9:13, the bow is used as analogous to the spirit. Thus, in Zech. 4:6, the prophet declares: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith Yahweh of armies.” In Habakkuk’s statement, we have a declaration of war against the powers that be, in which the spirit will be used as the secret weapon of the army from Teman.

“According to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy word”

— Earlier the prophet had enquired as to the motive of the belligerent action on the part of the Mighty One from Teman: here is the answer. It is a response to the “oaths of the tribes, even the word, that the Mighty One will move against the Gentiles, Yahweh’s word, confirmed by oaths to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession (Gen. 22:16; 26:3; Ps. 89:34-37)”. When Abraham and his seed (the true Commonwealth of Israel: Eph. 2:12) emerge from Sinai, they will find a hostile army in occupation of the land, and military action will be necessary to eject it therefrom, that they “whose right it is” may enter into their inheritance.

“Selah” — See note on verse 3.

“Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers”

— The margin renders this: “Thou didst cleave the rivers of the earth”. The expression suggests that the Mighty One will control the raging waters of the angry rivers, referred to earlier.

VERSE 10**“The mountains saw thee, and they trembled”**

— The prophet uses graphic language to describe the theophany of glory that shall emerge from Sinai, and manifest itself belligerently against the forces of darkness. Mountains tremble, the heavens pour down rain, the mighty ocean roars a protest, the sun and moon are eclipsed. These expressions can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. Earthquake, storm, tempest, and lightning,

on an unprecedented scale will terrify the embattled forces in the Holy Land when Christ makes his appearance there (Joel 2:11; Zech. 14:4; Ezek. 38:22; Isa. 2:19). The contour of the land will be changed. Zion will be elevated (Ps. 48:2; Zech. 14:10), the surrounding country will be depressed to a plain, and a vast underground river of living water will burst forth from the holy mount to flow eastward to the Dead Sea, bringing life to its waters (Ezek. 47:1). Figuratively, *trembling mountains* symbolise empires in convulsion (Jer. 51:25-26), the *roaring deep* pictures peoples in turmoil (Isa. 57:20; Luke 21:25); *flooding rivers* speak of the ruthlessness of nations at war (Isa. 17:13); *sun and moon in eclipse* symbolise the overthrow of political and religious organisations.

“The overflowing of the water passed by”

— The RSV renders: “The raging waters swept on”. See Luke 21:25; Psa. 93; Isa. 17:13. The ruthlessness of a mighty river in flood is used to describe the nations at war.

“The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high”

— This suggests the roar of the ocean as it protests against the shaking to which it is subjected. The “hands” of such are the waves, held high as though petrified. The figure goes back to the dividing of the Red Sea when Israel marched out of Egypt (Exod. 14:22; 15:8), and, indeed, the latter-day restoration of Israel is described as a second exodus (Isa. 11:11; Jer. 16:14-15). Having disciplined the Arabs, Christ will next turn his attention to Egypt. Meanwhile, that nation will have fallen under the domination of a “cruel lord and a fierce king” (Isa. 19:4), which is Isaiah’s description of Gog. Daniel declares that “the king of the north shall have power over the precious things of Egypt” (Dan. 11:43), but that “tidings out of the east and north shall trouble him” and shall cause him to move the bulk of his forces from Egypt to Jerusalem (v. 44). Sinai is east of Egypt, and Jerusalem is to the north. The “tidings” that trouble Gog could well be

the activity of the Mighty One from Teman in disciplining the Arabs, and the fortifications of Jerusalem by the western powers. In any case, he removes his army to the latter city, which falls to his attack (Zech. 14:1). Meanwhile Christ will move against the remnant of his forces in Egypt, and will occupy that country prior to moving north. Ultimately the Egyptians will be converted to the true worship (Isa. 19:18-22), and returning Israelites will be granted access to the country en route to the Promised Land (Isa. 27:13). There seems to be a hint to the Lord's attack on Egypt in the words of Habakkuk's prophecy .

6. Divine Authority Established On Earth — Vv. 11-13.

In verse 11 the ultimate picture is presented, and the means whereby this will be brought about is expressed in the subsequent statements.

VERSE 11

“The sun and moon stood still in their habitation” — Sun and moon are used as symbolic figures of political and ecclesiastical orders. The prophet describes them as transfixed in amazement at the manifestation of power and glory by the Mighty One. The idea goes back to Joshua's attack upon the Canaanites by which Jerusalem was delivered into his hands. He prayed, “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.” The prayer was granted, and the day extended to permit final victory upon his enemies (Josh. 10:12). In Habakkuk's prophecy the forces of the Gentiles are represented as being held spellbound at what they see. The following comment is from *Eureka*, vol. 2, pp. 285-286: “But Israel's was not the only political universe on earth. Their sun has been turned unto darkness and their moon into blood; but ‘the great and notable day of the Lord’ has not yet quite come. When it arrives, there will be a sun, moon, and stars shining in all their glory; and concerning them, the spirit says: ‘The Moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed,

when Yahweh Tz'vaoth shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously’ (Isa. 24:23). These are the sun and moon of the Gentile Heavens; the same sun upon which the fourth angel poured out his vial (Apoc. 16:8); the sun which shines in the firmament, or aerial expanse, through which flash the lightnings and roll the thunders in that tempestuous time when men are plagued with a storm of hail ‘exceeding great,’ in the outpouring of the seventh (vv. 17-21). These are the sun and moon which ‘shall stand still’ in their habitation, when Yahweh, the Commander like to Joshua, ‘shall march through the land in indignation, and thresh the nations in anger’ (Hab. 3:11-12). Then, also, in retribution for what the Gentiles have done to Israel in putting out the lights of their heaven, shall ‘the sun and the moon be darkened; and the stars shall withdraw their shining’. ‘Yahweh also,’ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, ‘shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but Yahweh will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel’ (Joel 3:16)”.

“At the light of Thine arrows they went” — The sun and moon fled away eclipsed by the glory of the arrows of the Mighty One, the beams of light that streamed from his hand (v. 4). And well they might. The Gentile sun and moon are to be replaced by those of Yahweh: divine political power and worship.

Isaiah refers to the complete shining forth of glory and power by Messiah's political and ecclesiastical organisations of the age to come. “The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Yahweh bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound” (Isa. 30:26). In ch. 51:6, he describes the fate of the Gentile heavens, and his expressions accord with those of Habakkuk.

“At the shining of Thy glittering spear” — cp. 2 Thes. 1:8.

VERSE 12

“Thou didst march through the land in indignation” — Following the occupation of Egypt, the Mighty One from Teman, will move north to embattled Jerusalem, to supervise the outpouring of the judgments of Armageddon. The RSV renders the verse:

*“Thou didst bstride the earth in fury,
Thou didst trample the nations in
anger.*

*Thou wentest forth for the salvation of
Thy people,
For the salvation of Thy anointed.”*

This describes the work of Christ (the anointed) and the saints, moving against the nations for the deliverance of national Israel. Similar language, by which the Lord is represented as “threshing” the nations, is found in Mic. 4:13; Joel 3:13-14; Rev. 14:15-20. It speaks generally of the judgments of Armageddon. *Eureka* (vol. 5, p. 239) comments:

“The Eternal Spirit incorporate in the saints, to whom judgment is given, is the justifier, rectifier, vindicator, and redeemer of the holy land and nation. Habakkuk, in his vision of this time, saith in ch. 3:13, ‘Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, for salvation with Thine anointed.’ This Anointed One is the *Christ in fulness*: the One Body consisting of the Lord Jesus and his brethren ‘glorified together.’ Developed in the South as a body of kings, laying special claim to the land of Israel, and to the world in general, and commencing their enterprise for the conquest of their rights from Teman, they constitute a power, styled in Dan. 11:40, *melech ha-negev*, ‘king of the south’. Zechariah says in ch. 9:14, ‘whirlwinds of Teman.’ He goes forth thence for the salvation of his people, ‘in the time of the end.’”

VERSE 13

“Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people” — See notes above.

“Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked” — The RSV renders: “Thou wilt crush the head of the

wicked.” This is the promise of Gen. 3:15, and in the defeat of Gog, it will be accomplished in a political sense. The word for “head” is *rosh*, linking the thought with Ezekiel 38: 2.

“Discovering the foundation unto the neck” — Or, by making naked the foundation unto the supports. The very foundation of the house of the wicked will be destroyed by the judgments of Armageddon and its aftermath (see Ps. 18:37-50; 68:21; 74:13-14; 110:6; cp. Prov. 12:7; 14:11; 15:25).

7. Extending The Kingdom — Vv. 14-15

The means whereby the power of the Gentiles will be brought to an end are now described. It will be by mutual slaughter. That identifies the destruction with the overthrow of Gog (Ezek. 38:22). Most commentators, obsessed with the idea that Hab. 3 relates to the Exodus, believe that the text should be amended. Adam Clarke states that “his staves” should be “God’s staves” because Pharaoh’s hosts were not destroyed by mutual slaughter as the A. V. implies. The RSV translates: “pierce with thy shafts”, but notes that the Hebrew is “his staves.” The vision relates to the future, not the past.

VERSE 14

“Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages” — The heterogenous forces of Gog will be destroyed by mutual slaughter (Ezek 38:21). Instead of “villages” the RSV has *warriors*.

“They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me” — The overthrow of Gog will not immediately end all resistance to Christ’s rule. Following upon his victory at Jerusalem, Christ will issue an ultimatum to the nations to submit to his rule. (Ps. 2; Isa. 14:32; Rev. 14:6-7). Some will accept it, and lay their authority at his feet (Psa. 72:10); others will have to be compelled to do so (Isa. 60:12). The Catholic countries of Europe will coalesce against the Lord’s rule, and prepare their forces to attack him (Rev. 17:14). But without

awaiting for the attack to materialise, he will “rebuke strong nations afar off” (Mic. 4:3; Zech. 9:13-14), forcing them into subjection, and destroying all Catholic influence (Rev. 14:8). Thus there are two phases in Christ’s conquest of the nations: Armageddon, and its aftermath. This dual development is exhibited by the prophecy of the Image contained in Daniel 2. The Image was first broken to pieces by the stone power, and afterwards ground into powder, and blown away into obscurity by the wind (Dan. 2:35). Armageddon will be followed by a lull during which Christ’s ultimatum will be directed to the nations, and then the resumption of war, as he moves into the area of conquest.

The dual pronouns, *thou* and *me* of this verse are significant. In using “me” the prophet personally identified himself with the work of the Mighty One, and in so doing, represented glorified saints generally.

“Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly” — Obviously, in resisting Christ, the nations will have no conception of the person and power of the Mighty One from Teman, and will imagine that their might will be adequate for the task of destroying his influence. Doubtless they will misinterpret the amazing divine judgment that will reduce Gog to impotence as mere fortuitous circumstances unrelated to Christ, and, fortified with nuclear weapons and such like, will prepare, confident in their ability to destroy the rising power of Israel.

VERSE 15

“Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses” — In more literal language, “He shall rebuke strong nations afar off” (Mic. 4:3). Christ will not wait to be attacked, but will assume the offensive (Zech. 9:13-15).

“Through the heap of great waters” — The Hebrew word for “heap” is *chomer*, and is derived from a root signifying *to boil up, to ferment*. The margin renders as *mud*. The idea is that of roaring, foaming waves: “Raging waves of the sea,

foaming out their own shame” (Jude 13). The RSV renders: “the surging of mighty waters.” It suggests the tumultuous raging of Gentile nations who gather together to resist Christ, and refuse the yoke of obedience to him and to Yahweh (Psalm 2). Isaiah describes the wicked as a “troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20 — but a different word in Hebrew). The Mighty One will part these nations as the waters of the Red Sea were parted by the rod of Moses.

8. Habakkuk’s Confidence, Vow and Assurance — Vv. 16-19

In the explanations and revelations that Habakkuk received from Yahweh, he had complete answers to his problems. He now clearly saw that wickedness does not go unnoticed, nor virtue unrewarded, and that in the ways of Providence there is careful discrimination of both. His experiences revealed that “the just shall live through his faith,” and the revelation he received showed beyond all doubt that ultimately “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). Though he had always known this as a basic truth, its reality was now made evident. He had come to learn the difference between academic and practical knowledge, and realised that the former must be developed into the latter before it has any true value. This experience changed attitude of the prophet. He replaced his sighs with a song; his self-pity was converted into praise for Yahweh. Like Paul he was able to confidently affirm, “all things work together for the good of those who are the called.” Moved by hope, faith and love, he completed his psalm and his short book.

VERSE 16

“I heard, my belly trembled” — This anxious inward trembling had been consequent upon the initial message he had received (Ch. 1), which described the terrible punishment to be justly inflicted upon his disobedient people.

“Rottenness entered into my bones”

— A hyperbolic expression, denoting that the supports of his body were relaxed and weakened with fear.

“That I might rest in the day of trouble” — The prophet had received the answer to the fear and trembling that had previously afflicted him, when he considered the condition and fate of his people. The RSV renders the latter portion of this verse: “I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us”. Habakkuk could do this, because he saw the day of trouble as a prelude to better things. In our day, the “time of trouble” (Dan. 12) will lead to the joy when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

We learn to “wait” for that time (Rev. 2:19), knowing that Yahweh does also (Isa. 30:18); and that in so doing, there is communion between ourselves and Him. Let us learn to lean upon Yahweh, always bearing in mind His grand purpose, and that we, like the prophet, have the real answer to all the fretting anxieties and pin-pricking experiences of life. Let the future be a reality to us, and we will not be overwhelmed by the dark shadows of the night: “Whoso hearkeneth unto Me,” declared the spirit, “shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from the fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33). “The name of Yahweh is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). See also Exod. 14:13; Lam. 3:26; Isa. 30:15. However, let us also recognise how difficult it is to say, “*I will quietly wait...*” Flesh is impatient and naturally faithless. It lacks trust in Yahweh, and puts its confidence in its own ability and power; and because of that, many fall by the wayside.

VERSE 17

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom” — Having learned the lesson of patient waiting for Yahweh, and having come to realise that though trials can be severe in their toll upon us, yet, ultimately,

the just shall live by his faith.

Thus, the prophet expressed his determination that he would permit nothing to deflect him from the path of duty. He uses six figures to illustrate this; figures that are constantly used in Scripture as symbols of Israel: fig tree, vine tree, olive tree, grain, flocks, herds. Each expresses a feature of spiritual development that will give Yahweh pleasure. The fruit of the fig tree speaks of strength and sweetness; that of the vine, gladness and new life; that of the olive, light and illumination; that of the fields, food to sustain; that of the flock, nourishment (milk), and clothing for others; that of the herd, labor in the field. In Christ, these attributes grow one upon another. The strength and sweetness of the truth leads to gladness and a new life; and that in turn to light and illumination; and so on. These are the attributes that Israel, in the days of the prophet, should have manifested, but did not. This concerned the prophet previously, but now he had learned the lesson of looking within. Though Israel might yield no fruit, he would do so. Salvation is a personal matter. Men of faith are individuals, and will be justified by their individual approach to the means that Yahweh has made available to them to develop the spiritual qualities He desires to see.

Meanwhile, the Israelitish *fig tree* was barren (Joel 1:7), the *vine* was not yielding fruit (Ezek. 15), the *olive* was unproductive (Rom. 11:17); the *field* was weed-infested (Heb. 6:8; Jer. 4:3) and *flock* and the *herd* were poor and scattered (Ezek. 34:2). Why? Largely because of famine: “not of water, nor of bread, but of hearing of the word of Yahweh” (Amos 8:11).

VERSE 18

“Yet I will rejoice in Yahweh” — Habakkuk was determined to render back to God fruit in due season. There would be no more sighing, but rather singing. Rejoicing in Yahweh is always in season to saints. They are exhorted to do so (Psa. 33:1; 118:13-14; Phil. 4:4). Let them consider their privileges, let them count their

blessings, and realise that despite the evil circumstances that may surround them they have much in which to rejoice. Yahweh does not exempt them from trouble, but, on the contrary, it is "through much tribulation they will enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). He provides the strength to endure, the power to conquer, and the hope to see beyond the present to the "joy set before us" (Heb. 12:2).

As a changed man, Habakkuk found that he could rejoice in Yahweh, and joy in the God of his salvation. The evils that surrounded him only emphasised the extent of the joy.

VERSE 19

"The LORD God (Yahweh Adonai) is my strength" — This is the only place in Scripture where Adonai has been rendered "God". It is normally translated "Lord". *Yahweh Adonai* signifies *He Who Will Be Rulers*. It is a prophetic name, pointing forward to the time when Yahweh will be manifested in rulers who will be united as one in Him (Rev. 5:9-10; Zech. 14:9).

The divine names and titles in these two verses: *Yahweh Elohim of Salvation*, and *Yahweh Adonai my Strength*, are expressions taken from Moses' Song of Deliverance (Exod. 15:2). It was the deliverance then effected that revealed the significance of the name of Yahweh (Isa. 63:12). These are names and titles in which the saints will rejoice in the Age to come, and in praise of which they will raise their voices. See Isa. 12:1-2; Rev. 15:3. Yahweh should be our strength; (Psa. 18:2; 27:1; 46:1). If He truly is our strength He will vindicate us (Ps. 45:2, 4), and will be glorified in us (Isa. 60:21). Paul learned the lesson of divine strength, and saw it revealed in the channel of grace. He was told that Yahweh's strength is made perfect in weakness (2Cor. 12:9-10). It will enable those compassed with the weakness of flesh, to rise above their state, and develop attributes to the glory of the Father above their normal ability (Eph. 3:16; Phil. 4:13). Divine strength will cause us to manifest patience and longsuf-

fering with joyfulness (Col. 1:11), as, indeed, the prophet had done.

"He will make my feet like hinds' feet" — The hind is noted for its surefootedness and fleetness. The expression is drawn from David's messianic psalm (2Sam. 22:34), so that here the prophet is looking forward to the time when he will be the associate of the Lord Jesus.

"He will make me to walk upon mine high places" — He expresses his confidence that he will find a place of exaltation by the side of the conqueror at the time of his manifestation upon earth. The expression is used to denote the victorious possession and government of a country (Deut. 32:13; 33:29). The mind of the prophet takes in the future when the kingdom will be established in the earth by the conquests of the Mighty One from Teman. He sees the temple erected in Jerusalem, with all the earth silent before Yahweh enthroned therein in the person of His Son (Ch. 2:20). He sees the righteous rule of the Lord Jesus extended throughout all the earth, so that the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, covers it as the waters cover the sea (Ch. 2:14). He sees the just living eternally before the glorified Word of God for whose coming they have waited (Ch. 2:3-4). He sees them as a royal priesthood reigning with Christ to the glory of God and the wellbeing of humanity (See Isa. 58:14; Amos 4:13).

This comment ends the Psalm, the final statement being its subscription.

"To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" — The singers in the temple service "prophesied" in their singing. The chief singer led the song, and so guided the other singers. Jewish commentators claim that whilst it has primary application to a contemporary singer, it looks forward to One that should come. Some revisions of the Septuagint translation render: "To the Giver of Victory." Other versions make the subscription part of the Psalm. The Septuagint renders: "He maketh me to mount upon high places, that I may conquer by his song."

The title: *The chief singer* points for-

ward to the Giver of Victory, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will lead in the singing of this song, in that he will enact the prophecy that it proclaims. The Psalm, therefore, is dedicated to the One who will come, and for whom the prophet was exhorted to “wait” (Ch. 2:3).

The Hebrew for “stringed instruments” is *neginoth*. It signifies *smittings*, and relates, primarily, to a percussion instrument which implies a smiting down. The word is used in the Psalms (See Psalms 4, 6, 54, 61, 67, 76 where they appear as superscriptions, but actually should be shown as subscriptions to the previous psalms).

“Smiting” is appropriate for such a psalm, because the Mighty One from Teman will smite down his enemies. The psalm reveals the sharp, strong, decisive notes of action, by which the wicked will be overthrown, and their power destroyed.

What are some of the lessons that

Habakkuk’s experience teaches us? Surely it is the vanity of all human endeavour apart from Yahweh; the need of faith in awaiting the coming of the Just One; the sweetness of divine comforts even now; the need to seek the divine way, and place confidence in divine guidance from day to day; the importance of not being cast down by evil, for matters are never as bad, nor quite as good, as we sometimes imagine — the certainty of final glory, and the triumph of Yahweh’s way in all the earth.

The experience of the prophet can teach us much, elevating us from a state of despondency and sighing into one of enthusiastic hope and faith, which enables us to sing aloud with joy in the privileges we enjoy today, and the glorious hope of the morrow.

Soon the Sun of Righteousness will rise into the political heavens, and the darkness of night will be driven away.

SUMMARY

The musical form of this prayer-psalm has led some to believe that Habakkuk was a Levite, attached to the Temple. That may well be so. The apocalypse of glory revealed in this chapter taught the prophet, and teaches us, that the best way to solve problems such as he experienced, is to fix our vision upon the "joy set before us," and so anticipate the coming of the Mighty One from Teman, and the glory then to be revealed. The prophet saw it as the shining forth of the sun from the heavens; he saw the world trembling before the divine wrath to be revealed through that Mighty One; he saw the inevitability, the fury of the divine judgment that is yet to be seen in the world. He saw more. He saw that these experiences are necessary to the revelation of full glory in the Age to come. The only way to save the world is to destroy the evil; and that wonderful work the Mighty One will do. Finally, glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and goodwill toward men, will prevail. Let us profit from the problems of the moment by setting our spiritual vision upon that future, then we, like the prophet, will be able to proclaim:

"Though... Yet I will rejoice in Yahweh; I will joy in the God of my salvation."