

## AWESTRUCK Habakkuk 3:1-19

We go through phases of popular expressions that sometime are overdone. One expression that is perhaps past its prime is “That’s Awesome!” It sort loses its significance if everything is described as “awesome.” There are truly some things that we observe or hear about that are so “out of the ordinary” or unexpected that they deserve such a label as being “awesome.” We see a beautiful sunset or sunrise, the majestic views of the Rocky Mountains, the intricacies of tiny flowers, and we are at a loss to find adequate words to describe what we see.

When we think about the phenomenon of this tiny planet on which we live and the fact that it has life that is dependent upon a delicate balance of environmental conditions in a hostile (to life) universe that is beyond our imagination in its enormity; we should conclude that is truly awesome.

Of course, we do encounter things that happen that are awesome in a very negative sense. Tsunamis, devastating earthquakes, out-of-control fires, and floods trigger such a negative reaction that fits into the category of being awesome.

What should our response be when we are “awestruck?” How do most people handle being confronted with either positive or negative awesome events? Many will simply ignore such things, some will be discouraged in somewhat of a fatalistic interpretation of events, and others will see the influence of God in warning us, encouraging us, and letting us know Who is in control.

After Habakkuk’s conversations with God about the judgment that was to come upon Judah and eventually on the Babylonian empire, his faith was strengthened. He was inspired to write a prayer hymn. Our study passage is part of that psalm. The essence of these verses is that we can put our trust in God regardless of what happens around us in the physical world. Even if a famine comes and the economy fails, our faith in God should lead us to rejoice in the Lord because God is our strength. As a popular hymn states it, “He’s all I need.”

As we implement the concept of “living by faith” (the just shall live by faith) then God will provide means to lift us up above the strife and trouble and we will soar above the problems. Habakkuk pictured this as moving higher up the mountain.

### Stand in Awe – 3:1-2

<sup>1</sup> A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. <sup>2</sup> LORD, I have heard the report about You *and* I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. Habakkuk 3:1-2 (NASB95)

In 1:5 of the prophecy of Habakkuk we find these words in *The Message* - “Look around at the godless nations. Look long and hard. Brace yourself for a shock. Something’s about to take place and you’re going to find it hard to believe.” What followed was a description of what God had in store for the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Here Habakkuk essentially said, I hear You and I am astonished, amazed, and frightened – in today’s vernacular we might say, “we are scared to death of what is coming.”

Awesome may not be adequate to describe what God was going to do and awestruck may not be sufficient to say what the impact was on Habakkuk. Today we talk about things happening that are of “Biblical Proportions.” The one event that Habakkuk could think of that qualified as being of “Biblical Proportions” was the account of the Lord leading the Children of Israel though the wilderness and into the Promised Land. This was “the work” to which

Habakkuk referred in the middle of verse two where he prayed “revive your work in the midst of the years.” This was an acknowledgment that God was still powerful as in times past and that Habakkuk got the message that God was going to show His power again in much the same way as had happened centuries before.

In the previous example of Israel coming into the Promised Land, there were blessings and rewards that followed. In this case, Habakkuk saw that there would be correction and chastisement. At least on a temporary basis there was going to a loss of their way of life, the land, their home and possession and their freedom. At this point in what was coming about, God’s message through Habakkuk did not offer an escape from what was coming even if His people would repent and turn back to God. The only thing that was available was what Habakkuk requested in the third part of verse two and that was mercy. Some commentators think that this call for mercy was to be applied to the situation that happened in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

### Tremble in His Splendor – 3:3-6

<sup>3</sup> God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. <sup>4</sup> *His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing* from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power. <sup>5</sup> Before Him goes pestilence, And plague comes after Him. <sup>6</sup> He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting. Habakkuk 3:3-6 (NASB95)

These verses are a poetic description of the awesome majesty of Jehovah as was demonstrated when God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt, led them to Mt. Sinai, met with Moses on the mountain, and eventually brought them into the land He had promised to give to Abraham and his descendants.

The specifics of verse three appear to be very similar to what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 33:2 which states “The Lord came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.” Seir is another name for Edom in which we find the area of Teman. The reference to the brilliant light is probably related to the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that occurred in the exodus experience. Of course, the mention of pestilence and plague could be directly applicable to what happen in Egypt before Pharaoh agreed to set the Children of Israel free. Rays flashing are likely the lightning what was described at Mt. Sinai when Moses went up as the dark clouds covered the top of the mountain.

The obvious purpose of this recitation of God’s awesome power was to remind those who read or listened to this psalm that their God was more than adequate to carry out His purposes in the affairs of mankind on the earth. Habakkuk, then moved from describing God to recalling the miracles that had happened on behalf of His chosen people.

### Celebrate His Victory – 3:11-13

<sup>11</sup> Sun *and* moon stood in their places; They went away at the light of Your arrows, At the radiance of Your gleaming spear. <sup>12</sup> In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled the nations. <sup>13</sup> You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah. Habakkuk 3:11-13 (NASB95)

The obvious reference at the beginning of verse 13 is with regard to the battle with the Amorites in which Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still as we find in Joshua 10:12-13. Habakkuk, of course, gave credit to God for the victories that the Israelites had. God acted on behalf of His people as if He were shooting arrows at their enemies and using His spear against them.

All this divine intervention of God for His covenant people was needed so that God's great plan of salvation would be implemented for His people. We know that God's plan would culminate in the coming of the Messiah for salvation.

The reference to the leader of the house of evil being struck or wounded and uncovered could be applied to what happened to Pharaoh, what happened to others who opposed what God was doing in His plan of salvation and to what would happen in the future to the anti-Christ during the end time.

Habakkuk was apparently making the argument that since God had already done so much on behalf of His people to make sure that His will and purpose would be accomplished, then the Jews should have hope that God would continue to act on their behalf even during the coming troubled times at the hand of the Babylonians.

### Rejoice in Faith – 3:16-19

<sup>16</sup>I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise *who* will invade us. <sup>17</sup> Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, *Though* the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup> Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup> The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' *feet*, And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments. Habakkuk 3:16-19 (NASB95)

The words "I heard" can be related to the statement in verse two "I heard the report." As was mentioned earlier, Habakkuk was awestruck and frightened. Just how much he was frightened is mentioned here.

Can you imagine being so emotionally impacted that you literally shook as your body reacted to what was going on in the imaginations of your mind? It could be something like being caught in a situation of having a tornado coming toward you. If you've ever had your life threatened or sense some imminent danger, then that could produce such a rush of adrenalin that it causes trembling. In such situations, even the ability to speak is impaired and your strength goes away. This was the kind of reaction Habakkuk had when he learned what God was going to do.

Several different translations handle the last part of verse sixteen in different ways. For example, the New American Standard attributes the trembling to the fact that he had to patiently or quietly wait for the trouble that was coming. The King James Version renders this as something that in addition to being "all shook up," he had to quietly wait for the predicted coming day of distress. The NIV takes a somewhat different approach and gives the meaning that in spite of trembling and fear, Habakkuk would patiently wait for the day of calamity when the invaders would come. This last idea seems to provide a natural segue into the verses that follow regarding the fact that God would see them through the coming tribulation.

Starting in verse seventeen, we read an excellent statement of faith in the faithfulness of God to provide for His own people. If famines arise and economic collapse comes and whatever hardship we might encounter, we can be confident that God is in control and can praise Him even in the middle of the turmoil.

The idea that God had made his feet like that of a deer or a mountain goat meant that he would be able to rise above the trouble times and have peace in the midst of the storm.

As we see what is developing in the world today, there seems to be threats and danger all around. Sometime it causes us to tremble, but we as God people can rest (have quietness) because of our faith in God and His awesome ability.