

Daily devotions Monday 3rd August

Habakkuk 3 vs 3-15 (esp. 3-4)

Hab. is now blown away by a vision from God. He is in awe in verse 2 and after witnessing the vision he ends up overwhelmed in verse 16.

Hab. has already stated his awe of God's past deeds and if we look closely at these 13 verses we can see how Hab. is referring to the events surrounding the release of The Israelites from captivity in Egypt. More of this to come but it's as if God is reminding his people in captivity under the Babylonians, 'I've done it once, I will do it again!'

Verse 3 speaks of God coming. Whenever he visits earth there is a display of his power and glory. Here he comes from Teman, Mount Paran. This is an area in Edom associated with Mount Sinai on which God appeared to Moses in the burning bush then again when he gave the 10 commandments to Moses. Fire was involved in both those occasions, first from the bush then from within a cloud covering the mountain.

In visions witnessed by Ezekiel, Daniel and John, fire and radiant light are both evident. God is such a source of energy that we mere humans are restricted to describing it in terms we know.

Hab. sees God's radiance as a sunrise that floods the whole earth. He sees God's glory hovering over the Earth from which praises rise to God. Rays come from his hands. Some versions say horns, some suggest lightning. Many different types of rays exist in our universe but no doubt these are unique to God. His hands are the source of power. The same hands that created the world, the same hands on which our names are engraved (Is 49 v 16), the hands that heal but also the hands into which it is a dreadful thing to fall (Heb. 10 v 31).

In Hab's vision the glory of God is witnessed by the whole world and it points us to that day in the future when Jesus will come (Mat. 24 v 27, 30). It will be a day of judgement and of deliverance, wrath and mercy. Jesus will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire. (2 Thess. 1 v 7) Every eye will see him. (Rev. 1v7) Every knee will bow. (Rom. 14v11)

Nothing in the Bible has ever been proved untrue because God does not lie. Why would these verses be any different?

Habakkuk wasn't given solutions but was given a greater view of God. As we go through life may our view of him also be broadened and may we live knowing that Jesus will come again!

Daily devotions Tuesday 4th August

Habakkuk 3 vs 5-7

As I stood on the summit of Lord's Seat in the Lakes recently I felt very secure. I was 552m above sea level but knew the mountain was strong! It had been there for a very long time and most likely would outlast me too without budging!!

In this reminder of God's power over nature we are told of ancient mountains crumbling. When God appeared to Moses on Mt Sinai in Exodus 19 v 18 we read of the whole mountain trembling. If Lord's Seat had even wobbled my confidence would have been shattered!

The plagues and pestilence in v 5 are a reference to the calamity God brought on Egypt during his actions to bring about the release of his people from captivity. Re assuring no doubt to those who would end up in Babylonian captivity.

Verse 6 reminds me of a 'look' described in the New Testament. Peter had betrayed Jesus 3 times just as Jesus had predicted. Not much is recorded about the incident but Luke 22 v 61 records Jesus turning and 'looking' at Peter. In an instant the penny dropped for Peter. He wept, no doubt very upset but possibly also fearing that Jesus would cut him off.

Here God 'looks' and the nations tremble. As we read yesterday, there will come a time for all nations when 'the penny will drop' and they will tremble at the thought of not having trusted God. They will fall to their knees. Cushan and Midian were two countries bordering Egypt who would have witnessed God's deliverance of the Israelites and would have trembled in distress and anguish.

Every chemical element has a melting point. Imagine a fire of greater temperature than the melting point of any element (Carbon and Tungsten melt at around 3,500 Celsius).

Imagine what that would do to the mountains!

2 Peter 3 v 12 predicts that is exactly what will happen when God decides to end this present earth. On that day the rocks on which we feel now so secure will melt away.

It only takes the result of a blood test, a freak accident or the death of someone close for our worlds to crumble. Then we realise we are not in control over our circumstances. What seemed so sure suddenly disappears!

Praise God that when he says, 'he set my feet on rock' (Psalm 40 v 2) that it is a rock (Christ) that will endure forever. 'His ways are eternal' v6.

Let us put our trust in the only thing that will last forever!!

Daily Devotions Wednesday 5th August

Habakkuk 3 vs 8-15

God in these verses is described as a warrior who is warring against those oppressing his people. There is a positive air about the verses that would have comforted Hab. We hear of victorious chariots (v8), deliverance (v13) and the wicked leader being crushed in his arrogant attempt to conquer. God is pictured actually riding with the chariots and striding through the earth. A 'hands on' God! His power over nature is portrayed once again as various waters respond to him, mountains writhe and even the sun and moon stand still.

There are many reminders of God's previous deeds (v2). The waters of the Red Sea parted under God's power for Moses and the River Jordan parted for Joseph. Both incidents promised a better future for his people. I think the plague of darkness is referred to when Hab. poetically says, 'the sun and the moon stand still'. (Poetry!! So no emails please telling me that the sun doesn't move!)

Remember how Hab. started this book? 'How long O Lord must I call for help but you do not listen'. Here is the proof that he was listening. 'You came out to deliver your people' (v13). This is the answer to the very prayer Hab. was making.

The word 'anointed' was sometimes used of the kings of Israel (e.g. David) and even of pagan kings like Cyrus who was used by God to deliver his people.

This, however, is a reference to Christ who is often called God's anointed one.

Once again I marvel at God's word. In these verses we see the consistency of God's war against sin. In the same passage the release from captivity in Egypt, the release from captivity in Babylon and the future release from the captivity of sin are all tied in!

On the cross, Christ delivers God's people and, as predicted back in Genesis 3v15, the chief of all wickedness, Satan, is crushed (also Hab. 3 v13).

Jesus has won the ultimate battle over evil through his sacrifice. Then having delivered us by his death, God raised him to life. The anointed one himself was saved!

I'll say no more - let this sink in!

Daily Devotions Thursday 6th August

Habakkuk 3 v 16

Phil was telling me recently of a saying his mum had, 'You don't miss the water till the well runs dry'. (I've an image of Phil being sent as a child to the village well with a bucket!!) Another way of saying it is, 'We don't miss it till it's gone' or more extremely, 'Familiarity breeds contempt'.

If we are not careful we can sub-consciously trivialise God as we become swamped by our daily lives and fail to see him as he really is.

Hab. has not only heard from God but also experienced him. The result is almost a physical melt down. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest, he went weak at the knees, he was speechless and he felt like his bones could break! He'd realised the fear of the coming judgement combined with the vision of God's awesome power as the Creator Warrior God.

On Tuesday we thought about the 'look' that Jesus gave Peter and the shame he subsequently felt that moved him to tears. Imagine if Jesus was to look at us with his 'all knowing' eyes. If he was to gaze past the facade that we present to other humans to see the deep secrets of our souls. How would we feel? Then imagine a look from the God of heaven. The look that could make nations tremble and mountains crumble (v6). In the presence of a blindingly holy God would our knees tremble and our hearts race as he sees our arrogance and selfishness?

Job's response in the presence of God was, 'I am unworthy'. (Job 40 v4) Isaiah's response was, 'Woe to me!..... I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips' (Is. 6 v 5). John in his vision of God says, 'When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead'. (Rev. 1v17). Saul fell to the ground and became blind when Jesus appeared to him. (Acts 9v4)

This is the same God that we serve and worship!!

Our reverence and awe for this mighty all powerful God have often been replaced by a yawn of familiarity. We prefer the illusion of a limited safer God so we have pared him down to manageable proportions.

Let's renew our vision of God. Let's replace the view of him of our own making with the one described in his word.

It will put us in our place!!

Daily Devotions Friday 7th August

Habakkuk 3 v 16

This verse is worth another look. After his physical reaction to his experience of God, Habakkuk changes quickly to another attitude. He says, 'Yet I will wait patiently!'

Nothing has really changed much since Habakkuk's day. Nations still rage against one another, The arrogant and self centred still rule, the poor still suffer, the enslaved still labour for next to nothing and false god's are still worshipped.

But Hab. has seen beyond present circumstances to the God who is working out his purposes. He knows God's word can be trusted and his promises will be fulfilled. (2v3)

Like Hab., we are in the waiting room. We need to take example from him.

How was it that he could be patient and wait? It was his faith in the word of God! Both he and Jeremiah had been told that the people would be taken into exile. In this verse he states his certainty of judgement on the Babylonians. History demonstrated his belief was born out as God dealt with Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire.

Hab. had been on a mental journey. He started off wondering about God's purposes and if God was really in control! (Have we ever thought that in the last 4 months?) But then he heard God's word and his attitude changed. God's word is available to us and we now know God's ultimate purposes in a way that Hab. would have loved to have known.

We too are called to wait patiently for God to work out his purposes. His word will give us the confidence to know that all is in safe hands and that one day he will bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head, even Christ! (Eph. 1 v 10)

Here's what Charles Spurgeon had to say on this.

'We have been assured by people who think they know a great deal about the future that awful times are coming. Be it so; it need not alarm us, for the Lord reigneth. Stay yourself on the Lord ...and you can rejoice in His name. If the worst comes to the worst, our refuge is in God; if the heavens shall fall, the God of heaven will stand; when God cannot take care of His people under heaven, He will take them above the heavens and there they shall dwell with Him. Therefore, as far as you are concerned, rest; for you shall stand...at the end of days.'

Daily Devotions Saturday 8th August

Habakkuk 3 vs 17-18

A month ago when I read through the whole book of Habakkuk, these verses stood out for me! After all he's been through; he now has such a positive attitude.

The Israelites relied almost exclusively on the land for their living. They were dependent on cultivating crops and grazing cattle. Figs, grapes and olives were luxury crops but Hab. also speaks of the loss of crops, sheep and cattle. Hab. is picturing a potential situation where he, along with his fellow nationals, have lost everything that would normally give them peace, security and wealth. This would be enough to bring depression down on the most positive among us but not Hab. 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.' His encounter with God has given him a different perspective.

I'm reminded of Job. He once told his wife off. (Brave bloke!!) She'd told him to, 'Curse God and die.' Job's response was, 'Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?' (Job 2 vs 10) He went on to suffer tremendously and lose everything. He found himself in the same situation as Hab. did at the start of Chapter 1. He prayed, 'I cry out to you, oh God, but you do not answer.' (Job 30v20) God eventually challenges Job. 'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. (Job 38 v4) Like Hab., Job also gets a new and positive perspective. He replies in apology, 'I spoke of things I did not understand.' (Job 42v3) 'My ears have heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.' (42v5)

Do we have this complete faithful confidence in God? If we lost everything would we still rejoice in the Lord like Hab. did? Think about it for a minute and be honest. Does our joy come from earthly things or from knowing that God will always be faithful to his people? Are we really ok with the fact that his ways are not our ways?

When Paul asked God to take away his 'thorn in the flesh' he was told by God, 'My grace is sufficient for you.' (2 Cor. 12 v 9). Is God's grace sufficient for us in all circumstances?

When we become Christians we don't become immune from the hardships of the world. We feel pain, we suffer, we face disappointments and broken relationships, we lose people to death and we suffer material loss. But none of these can separate us from the love of God. He will not let go of his people and he is in control. (See Ro. 8 vs 35-39)