

attacked. Though the people of Nineveh should make themselves as numerous as these insects were, yet they were to be attacked and destroyed by the invading forces which will be still more numerous.

Verse 16. Nineveh had grown in her business and political interests until it was compared with the stars of the heaven. But in spite of all this apparent strength, the *cankervorm* (invading enemy) will present great numbers to attack the city and *flee away* or make a success in the operation.

Verses 17-19. There is nothing new in these verses that has not been set forth in other verses of the book. The subject is the utter defeat of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with not a possibility of a "come-back." (See the historical quotation at chapter 2: 10.)

HABAKKUK 1

Verse 1. See Nahum 1: 1 for comments on the word *burden*. Habakkuk was given something to say and it was to be written in this book.

Verse 2. The prophet laments the corruption and violence that were being practiced by the people of Judah. Habakkuk was not responsible for the wickedness of his people but he felt a personal interest in their fate. *Thou wilt not save* means that Judah had gone too far in her abominable course to be spared the judgment of God.

Verse 3. *Why dost thou show me iniquity* is a continuation of the prophet's lament at the low ebb of spirituality among his people. He specifies some of the evils that the nation was committing; violence and strife and contention.

Verse 4. *The law is slackened* means that the people had become careless or even positively disobedient regarding its requirements. *The wicked doth compass about the righteous* was true in more than one sense. The wicked leaders hindered those who would have been righteously carrying out the law. Also the leaders' wicked conduct in general was so bad that it covered up or counteracted what things they did that would have otherwise been acceptable. (See the long note in connection with Isaiah 1: 10, volume 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 5. Some prophecies in the Bible had a twofold bearing, or were destined to be fulfilled twice, and the present verse is one of them. It first

refers to the marvelous work of the Lord in which the heathen were to behold the judgment of God against his nation. *Not believe, though told*. They would rush heedlessly on in their evil course although they had been plainly and authoritatively told about it. The same kind of experience was threatening in Paul's day as he cites it in Acts 13: 41.

Verse 6. The Chaldeans were a special race of people who got in the lead in the land of Babylon, hence the terms Chaldeans and Babylonians are used in the same sense. From this verse through 11 is a prediction of the great captivity that God was going to bring upon Judah. *Hasty* is from a word that is defined "prompt" in the lexicon. The Chaldeans were prompt in their movements, especially when they were induced thereto by *bitterness* as they were against Judah. They were to come through the land of God's people and take possession of the whole country.

Verse 7. *Dreadful* is from the same original word as "reverend" in Psalms 111: 9 where it is applied to the name of God. It shows us therefore that many words in the Bible are to be interpreted according to the connection in which they are used. *Shall proceed of themselves* means the Chaldeans were independent in disposition and followed their own inclination regardless of all others.

Verse 8. The horse was a prominent means of warfare in ancient times, both for the drawing of chariots and carrying of cavalymen. The Chaldeans possessed some of the finest specimens of that noble creature. *Evening wolves* is a figure denoting the viciousness with which they would lunge into battle. A wolf that had been fasting through the day would be hungry and ravenous by evening. The fact is used to illustrate the activities of the Chaldeans when their cavalry operated in the battle. *Fly as the eagle* is another figure of speech that means the same as the above comments.

Verse 9. The pronouns "they" and "their" stand for the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) who will be using the horses in the action. *Shall come for violence* means that when these forces come against Judah it will be with the intention of getting what they want even if they have to use violence in getting it. *Sup up* is from one word and it is explained in the lexicon to mean "to accumulate by impulse."

Gather as the sand indicates that the Chaldean army will sweep all before it as the east wind would drive the sand ahead of it and pile it up in great heaps.

Verse 10. The gist of this verse is that the Chaldean army will have no fear of kings or other men in official position. They will be treated as if they were only a heap of sand that had been drifted by the east wind.

Verse 11. *Change* means to be active and move promptly toward the objective. *Offend* is from *ASHAM* and defined by Strong, "To be guilty." The thought is that, though the Chaldean army was to be the instrument in God's hand in this great event, yet they will make a serious mistake in giving the credit for their achievement to their god.

Verse 12. Dropping the predictions of the captivity and the characteristics of the Babylonians, the prophet addresses the Lord on behalf of the people of Israel. He draws a contrast between Him and the Babylonian army. The latter was a mighty force but was destined to be overthrown. But the Lord is *from everlasting* and will be able to care for His people even though they are suffered to go into captivity. *We shall not die* means that Judah will not cease to be although she must be severely punished. It was *ordained* that they have the experience of *judgment* for the purpose of *correction*.

Verse 13. *Behold evil* is said in the sense of approving it, and *looking on iniquity* is used in the same sense. God actually sees everything that is going on but He does not favor the evil. The latter part of the verse represents the anxiety of the prophet over the situation. He is more impatient than the Lord, and seems to think that He should deal more harshly with the wicked and treacherous enemy.

Verse 14. This verse is a further description of the kind of enemy that the Lord's people had to endure. *Makest men as the fishes of the sea* means that the Babylonians had no more regard for men than they did for the dumb creatures.

Verse 15. Continuing his figure of the fishes, the prophet represents the Babylonians as dealing with the people of God in the same way they would the fishes which they caught in a net to be consumed upon their own appetites.

Verse 16. The *net* is now used to represent the idolatrous god of the heathen. Since the *net* had contributed gain to its owners, they concluded that it was a god and worthy to have worship paid to it.

Verse 17. The prophet asks in a deploring attitude, if the Lord will suffer these heartless fishermen to continue their cruel business. A fisherman empties his net so that he may use it to take more fish. The complaint of the prophet really is a prediction that the enemy (Babylon) will not be permitted to continue the wicked dealing with God's people.

HABAKKUK 2

Verse 1. The preceding chapter closes with the plea of the prophet to put a stop to the wicked business of the enemy. This verse represents him as waiting at his post of duty and listening to hear what the Lord will say to him in response. *Watch* is a short term for watchtower, because prophets were regarded as watchmen on the walls of Zion and looking out for the welfare of the people (Ezekiel 3: 17). The prophet is watching and sees the enemy approaching (with his prophetic eye) and has reported it to his great Commander-in-chief and wants to know what is to be done about it.

Verse 2. This verse begins the Lord's answer to the prophet's inquiry. He is instructed to *make it plain* which is from *BAAR*, defined in the lexicon, "A primitive root; to dig; by analogy to engrave." *Tables* is from *LUACH* which Strong defines, "To glisten; a tablet (as polished), of stone, wood or metal." The means of advertisement were not very plentiful in ancient times, and public notices were supposed to be so arranged that all could know about it. The verse means that Habakkuk was to select a writing tablet or plate and engrave the announcement upon it. He was to engrave the words on this plate and display it in a conspicuous place. Then a man running by could read it as he was passing very much as a traveler today can read the road signs as he is driving along.

Verse 3. The gist of this verse is that some time will pass by before the prediction is fulfilled, but it is sure to come and the people should be expecting it.

Verse 4. *Lifted up* is said in the sense of pride, something that the

Lord abhors as not being the proper spirit of an *upright* man. Such a principle will not direct anyone in the way pleasing to Him. Instead, the man who will live or be in the favor of God is one who *shall live by faith* and who is not prompted in conduct by pride.

Verse 5. This and a number of verses following describe some characteristics of the Chaldeans who were destined finally to come against Judah. *Neither keepeth at home* indicates the practice of that heathen nation in seeking further territory to subdue. In the pursuit of such a desire it *gathers unto him all nations*. This explains the motive that Babylon had in subduing Judah although it was the decree of God that his people be taken into that captivity. But since the motive was wrong, the Lord was determined to punish that heathen nation, which accounts for these verses against it.

Verse 6. After the Babylonians have been overthrown the nations that were mistreated by them will rejoice in their downfall. They will refer to the covetous practices of which they had been victims and consider them as reasons why the dreaded nation was itself conquered. *Thick clay* in the original is *ADAMT* which Strong defines, "Something pledged, i.e. (collectively) pawned goods." Moffatt renders it "what he must repay." The passage means that when the Babylonian king seized the property of all these nations he was taking on a load that he would not always be able to carry. It is likened to a man who obligated himself by pawning something that he would not be able to redeem. That was because God was going to bring the King of Babylon to account and he would not be able to meet it.

Verse 7. This verse is in question form, but it is a prediction that the nations that Babylon had depressed would rebound and take vengeance on it.

Verse 8. *Spoiled many nations* refers to the plunder that the Babylonians took from the helpless countries.

Verse 9. The prophet now turns his writing into a general discussion of certain principles pertaining to the conduct of man and of God's attitude toward the same. *Coveteth an evil covetousness* means to desire that which would be wrong to have. That which would make it wrong is his

evil motive, namely, that he might *set his nest on high* which means the act of self-exaltation or pride.

Verse 10. Concerning such a person described in the preceding verse, the prophet charges him to have *consulted shame* which means that his conduct will bring on his house the shame of defeat. He has really sinned against his own soul or life because in the end he will be the loser.

Verse 11. *Stone and beam* are inanimate objects and are used figuratively to represent the miraculous judgment that will come upon the man guilty of these wrongs.

Verse 12. It is right to build towns for habitations of needy people, but it is wrong to do so by violence against other helpless men.

Verse 13. The Lord has decreed that all who pursue such wicked courses for gain shall find themselves laboring in vain. Their own practices will turn out to be as a fire about them that will destroy all their evil labors.

Verse 14. The general knowledge of God's glory was to come to the nations when He brought the mighty Chaldean power into subjection. But we can see a greater fulfillment of the prediction in the universal distribution of the Gospel (Matthew 28: 19; Mark 16: 15; Romans 10: 18; Colossians 1: 23).

Verse 15. The Bible teaches that a drunkard will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6: 10), so that such a character will be condemned for his own act. And our present verse condemns those who encourage or induce others to drink. It is especially to be condemned when the motive is as low as indicated in this verse. The statement gives us an additional thought, namely, that when a man is drunk his mentality is depressed and he is rendered unreliable in his actions and judgment.

Verse 16. As a degrading suggestion befitting the character of such a tempter, he is told to drink with his intended victim and thus be induced to expose his own nakedness. *Shame for glory* is rendered "more with shame than with glory" in the margin which is evidently correct. The tempter intended to get glory from the shame of his victim, but instead he was destined to bring shame upon himself. The *cup* is figurative and means the cup of God's wrath against such an evil character. He was to be forced to drink of it and be thereby induced

to vomit out his own filth instead of glorying over the debauched condition of his victim.

Verse 17. *Violence of Lebanon*. The violence of Lebanon or the city of Jerusalem means that which was intended against the holy territory. But such violence was to rebound and cover the wicked nation or king who designed such drastic actions.

Verses 18, 19. The weakness and foolishness of idolatry is the subject of this paragraph. *Teacher of lies*. Every expectation that an idol seems to offer its maker is a lie. Man made the idol and therefore it could not possess any wisdom or power that man does not already have and so it could contribute nothing to him.

Verse 20. *Silence* is defined as "hush" in the lexicon. The servants of God are everywhere encouraged to sing and speak their praises of Him which would not seem like silence. The thought is to show a contrast with the foolishness of idolatry and the wisdom of an intelligent Deity. An idol is only a *teacher of lies* and should not be listened to. The Lord is in his rightful place, the temple, and on the throne of the universe. Therefore when He speaks it is the truth and all the earth should be hushed and with reverent ears receive the divine words.

HABAKKUK 3

Verse 1. *Shigionoth* is the name of a certain poetic metre, and this prayer of Habakkuk was composed in accordance with that.

Verse 2. Habakkuk acknowledges the threatening predictions of the Lord and declares that he is dreading them. *Revive thy work* is rendered "preserve alive" in the margin which expresses the thought in the original. It means that while the Lord must execute vengeance upon the wicked yet He is implored to temper justice with mercy.

Verse 3. *God came from Teman*. This place was near enough to Sinai to be associated with the giving of the law. It was through this document that God came to the people of Israel. *Selah* is a musical and poetic term and means a pause in the composition. It is not to be pronounced but only observed as a punctuation mark in literature.

Verse 4. *Horns* is a figurative symbol of power and glory and it is ascribed to God.

Verse 5. God controls pestilences

and all the elements of the earth. If such forces are needed to carry out His plans they will be used.

Verse 6. *Measured* is defined "to shake" in the lexicon. That agrees with the verse in general which describes the Lord as having complete control of the earth.

Verse 7. *Cushan* or Cush refers to Ethiopia, a country near Egypt, and the prophet saw the Lord in control of that territory. *Curtains* is defined "A hanging (as tremulous)." The sentence denotes that the Midianites were caused to tremble by the might of the Lord as they beheld its manifestations against their weakness.

Verse 8. The questions asked in this verse should have a negative answer. God has controlled these parts of the earth and many times has disrupted their usual functions, but it was for the purpose of showing His wrath against the evil inhabitants. *Horses* and *chariots* signify the forces of war and the Lord is always at war with evil influences that He might effect salvation for the righteous.

Verse 9. The power and greatness of God, whether in war or peace, is the subject of this verse. *Bow made naked*. A bow was an instrument of war and to be made naked denotes that it is uncovered and ready for action. *Oaths of the tribes*. God had sworn that He would protect the tribes of Israel against their many foes. *Selah* is explained at verse 3. *Cleave the earth with rivers*. One of the most wonderful and artistic works of God is the river system of the earth. These streams of water ever flowing on and on, century after century, through rich or infertile countries, until they reach at last the sea, demonstrates the unchanging law of gravitation. And it all adds up to the conclusion that the God of the universe is all-wise and all-powerful.

Verse 10. The inanimate things of creation are said to praise the Lord because he controls them by the dictates of His will.

Verse 11. This refers specifically to the event recorded in Joshua 10. *Arrows* and *spears* are instruments of war, and when mentioned figuratively indicate God's power to overcome all conditions that might be a hindrance to the divine will.

Verse 12. *Didst* is past tense in form but means that God is always able to overcome the heathen nations in whatever land they may be dwelling.

Verse 13. The events of rescue mentioned here are both history and prophecy. God redeemed his people from Egypt and promised to rescue them from Babylon.

Verse 14. This verse has special reference to the events in Egypt when the children of Israel were about to be delivered. The pronouns are used in a rather indefinite manner; they stand for Egypt or the Lord or for his people. The thought is that God overthrew all forces of Egypt that had been arrayed against Israel.

Verse 15. This event is recorded in Exodus 14.

Verse 16. *When I heard* is said for the general report that was heard of the marvelous passage through the Red Sea which followed the judgments upon the Egyptians. The *trembling* and *quivering* denotes the impression that was made upon the nations when they heard about the dreadful occurrence. (See Joshua 2: 8-11.)

Verse 17. The misfortunes described in this verse were sometimes brought upon a country as a punishment for the sins of its people. He even sometimes visited his own people with like chastisements.

Verse 18. These judgments did not weaken the faith of the prophet in his God.

Verse 19. Habakkuk gives honor to God as being the source of all strength and success. The chapter ends with a reference to rhythmic measures similar to the term used in its beginning.

ZEPHANIAH 1

Verse 1. *Word of the Lord came unto Zephaniah* denotes that the prophet wrote by inspiration of God. *Days of Josiah* definitely gives us the date of the book which was near the end of the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 2. *Utterly consume* means to remove the things from the land.

Verse 3. *Consume* still means to remove, although it is used somewhat figuratively with reference to dumb creatures, for we know from history that there was no actual disturbance of such things. But by removing the people from the land it removed them from all use of them. The idols were the chief stumblingblocks of God's people so that is what is meant that would be removed. History shows that Israel never committed idolatry after the return from captivity.

Verse 4. Jerusalem was the capital

of Judah and it was doomed to be taken into captivity. *Cut off the remnant of Baal* refers directly to the idols and they were to be cut off even before the people were removed. (See 2 Kings 23: 4, 5.)

Verse 5. *Host of heaven upon the housetops* refers to the worship of the stars, and the people went to their housetops for that practice. *Swear by the Lord* and by *Malcham* (national idol of the Ammonites) means they tried to mix the idolatrous worship with that of the true God of Israel.

Verse 6. *Cut off* is still the verb that tells what is to happen to certain evil characters. *Turned back from the Lord* means those who proved unfaithful to Him and directed their attention to idols. These persons did not seek information from the Lord nor even make any inquiry after Him.

Verse 7. *Hold thy peace* has about the same force as the bid for "silence" in Habakkuk 2: 20. *Day of the Lord* means the day of judgment against Judah when she was to be taken into captivity. *Prepared a sacrifice* is figurative and refers to the turning over of Judah to the Babylonians. *Bid his guests*. When a man makes a feast he invites a number of guests, and in like manner the Lord bids the whole world to behold the judgments about to be sent upon a disobedient people.

Verse 8. The leaders in Jerusalem were chiefly responsible for the corruptions of the nation and they are given special notice here.

Verse 9. *Leap on the threshold* means those who enter the houses of their abominable masters and thus endorse them in their evil way of life.

Verse 10. The gates and hills are mentioned which indicates that the tumult to be caused by the invasion would be general.

Verse 11. *Maktesh* was a spot in Jerusalem that was evidently a commercial center. The traffic had become questionable and the merchants were to be punished for it which is the reason they are told to howl.

Verse 12. *Candles* should not convey the thought of a weak light because such articles in ancient times were not made as they are today. The original word means something that would furnish a searching light. *Lees* are the settlings of wine that has become fixed and undisturbed. It is used figuratively to indicate the feeling of satisfaction that the leading men in Jerusalem had in spite of the