

35-03-01 The Worship of the Waiting
worship, waiting, praise, God-centeredness
Hab.3

The high notes of praise have a God-centered gaze.

INTRODUCTION:

- Ch.1, *on the watchtower* with *why* questions: “**The Whys . . .**”
- Ch.2, *in the heavenly temple* with *woes* pronounced: “**The Woes . . .**”
- Ch.3, after a time of silence: “**The Worship of the Waiting**”
- Silence before prayer gives time for God to change our focus. Main focus of Habakkuk: “*I want Babylon over with: now!*” God wanted him to learn that *God-centered worship is how to wait on His salvation.*
- [root of shigionoth is “wild”; perhaps the *wild tune* Ch.3 was sung with] a “wild” song focused on the *God of salvation* and not the *benefits of salvation.*

I. The Habits of Pre-school Prayer

- A. [In kindergarten & elementary grades, we learned *basics*; but God wants us to keep moving up a grade, especial in prayer]
- B. The basics of prayer in v.2 are good, but not the best way to pray:
 1. *LORD, I have heard of your fame* (focuses on past stories about God)
 2. *I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD* ([*fear*] focuses on God’s fearful deeds—what He can do; this may be “the beginning of wisdom,” but He wants us to move from *fear of wrath* to *relational awe.*)
 3. *Renew them in our day...in wrath remember mercy* (focuses on *revival*—in Babylonian wrath, have *mercy* by giving a Josiah-like reformation)

TRANS: Prayer is divine communication that should move us beyond our status quo or our present view of things. Habakkuk, as we often do, started with a Pre-school focus, but God was about to take him on a visionary journey to learn a higher grade-level lesson in worship: **The high notes of praise have a God-centered gaze.** In the next verses (v.3-15), Habakkuk a vision of God’s actual presence in all that past *fame* and those mighty *deeds*. We see...

II. The Help of a Present Protector

- A. God isn’t a deistic God, distant and aloof, but *the God who comes down!* (*Theophanic!*)—God showed Habakkuk the *supra-history* behind *visible history* (what if He showed us ours) read v.3-15,

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal. I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish. Were you angry with the rivers, O LORD? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots? You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations. You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah.)

1. Poetry often weds *feelings* to *facts* by plucking our God-given emotional heart-strings. (Descriptive verse set to music can paint mental impressions that surpass the best intellectual arguments.)
 2. Before his visionary eyes, Habakkuk saw not just past history, but God’s direct involvement in past deliverance.
- B. These “Creator-Warrior-Deliverer” songs are throughout the Bible (Moses’ Song, Deborah’s, Hannah’s, Mary’s, Zechariah’s)

TRANS: Think what it was like to be a seer? Habakkuk was *in awe of the fame of God’s deeds*. Then he saw the God behind salvation history. It shook him up and got his eyes off the benefits of salvation and onto the Source of those benefits. Habakkuk’s lesson is also ours: **The high notes of praise have a God-centered gaze.** Now he could reach....

III. The High Notes of Patient Praise (How do we reach them?)

- A. Get a new vision of Christ (v.16a, my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled)— get shook up by Jesus in Rev.1:14-18, His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (We don’t need *a revival*; a true vision of God IS REVIVAL!)

B. Redirect prayer energy into patient waiting (v.16b, I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.)— leave the fall of Babylon—or any other troubles we face—for God to deal with.

C. Elevate the focus of our praise (v.17-19a, ESV, *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength;*)

1. Our focus isn't just to enjoy all in God, but to enjoy God in all

[My own contemporary rendition of the “Habakkuk Song” from Chapter 3:

Though the pocketbook is empty,	And the car just ran out of gas,
And there be no food in the fridge,	Yet will I rejoice in the Lord (x2)
The bank account is in the red,	I will joy in God as my Provider,
And the credit cards maxed out,	God the Lord is my Strength!
Though the juice is cut off from the house	

2. [a little girl misquoting Ps 23] was on target: “The Lord is my Shepherd, and that's all I want...”] It's not about what we have but Who we have.

3. Our focus isn't on where we've been, but on where we're going (v.19b, *he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights*) [Deer's back feet hit exactly where the front ones had been.] (Our forward focus gets us in sync spiritually, and our upward focus on God takes us to “Higher Ground” where God wants us.)

CONCLUSION:

–The high notes of praise are reached by a God-centered gaze. It's the gaze we need for Higher Ground in this life as we prepare for the next. The wrath of Babylon—or any other trials we face—has this one redeeming feature: helping us learn to wait patiently in worship.

– The God we worship is a God who appears, a God who comes down. He came down in the ultimate way in Christ, by the Incarnation. He comes down and resides within us by His Holy Spirit, and our very bodies become a temple sanctuary for worship.

–God's deliverance is Himself. Our objective in salvation is not Heaven; it's Him! Heaven will be heavenly only because He is there.

Habakkuk 3:1-19 (NIV)

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth.
 2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.
 3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.
 4 His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.
 5 Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps.
 6 He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.
 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish.
 8 Were you angry with the rivers, O LORD? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious chariots?
 9 You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers;
 10 the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.
 11 Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.
 12 In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations.
 13 You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah.
 14 With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding.
 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.
 16 I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.
 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.
 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.