

Sermon #30 — Habakkuk Series

Title: **THREE GREAT WONDERS**
 OF GRACE

Text: Habakkuk 3:3-16

Subject: *Wonders of Grace*

Date: Tuesday Evening — May 25, 2011

Tape # *Habakkuk #30*

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Introduction:

My subject is **THREE GREAT WONDERS OF GRACE**. You will see these three great wonders of grace marked in our text (Habakkuk 3:3-16) by the word “*Selah*.” In fact, I thought about titling this message, not “**THREE GREAT WONDERS OF GRACE**,” but “**THREE GREAT SELAHS**.” Look at Habakkuk’s use of this word “*Selah*” in his song.

(Habakkuk 3:3) “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. **Selah**. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.”

(Habakkuk 3:9) “Thy bow was made quite naked, [according] to the oaths of the tribes, [even thy] word. **Selah**. Thou didst cleave the

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earth with rivers.”

(Habakkuk 3:13) “Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, [even] for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. **Selah.**”

No one really knows the meaning of this word, “*Selah.*” It is a musical or poetic pause. It is found only in the Psalms and these three times in Habakkuk 3. But it is certain that there is more in the word than merely a pause.

Some tell us it means, “LIFT UP,” — “Lift up the strain — sing more loudly — pitch the tune upon a higher key — there is nobler matter to come, therefore retune your harps.” Wherever we read the word, “*Selah,*” we should look upon it as a note of observation, reading the passages immediately preceding it and following it with great care. **“Selah” indicates that there is something extraordinary and marvelous before us** which calls for us to rest and pause and meditate, something which ought to

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cause us to lift up our hearts with grateful praise of our God.

Others tell us that **“Selah” is very much like the word “AMEN,” or “VERILY,”** again indicating assurance that the thing spoken of is true and indicating a call for praise and thanksgiving.

Still others tell us that **“Selah” means “THE END.”** Yet, it is often used in the middle of a passage, or in the middle of a psalm, rather than at the end. **If the word Selah means “the end,” though it is found in the middle of a verse, or in the middle of a psalm, perhaps the reason for that might be to tell us that its use is more spiritual than poetic.**

I am sure we come closest to the mark when we understand that **“Selah” includes all three meanings. It means “lift up and exalt,” “amen,” and “the end;”** and the three meaning put together point us to our Savior. **Every time we read the word “Selah” in the Book of God, the Holy Spirit is calling for us to stop and think on the Lord Jesus**

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Christ, our blessed Savior. Selah points us to Him who is “*the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,*” and of whom the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, all spoke. Selah points us to Christ who is the End of all the law (Romans 10:4), the End of all the Psalms, the End of all the Prophets (Luke 24:44.), the End of all the purpose of God, the End of all the Scriptures, and the End of all things! as the end. In His mediatorial character as our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, of all the creation of God, the Amen, and the Faithful Witness of heaven. (Revelation 3:14).

With that in mind, I want us to look at these three great wonders of grace, marked by this word “Selah” in Habakkuk 3.

GLORY REVEALED

First, the prophet sings about the wonder of God’s glory revealed (vv. 3-4)

(Habakkuk 3:3-4) “God came from Teman, and

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the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 And [his] brightness was as the light; he had horns [coming] out of his hand: and there [was] the hiding of his power.”

Who can imagine what Moses saw and experienced when the Lord God came to make Himself known to His servant and His people in the Holy Mount?

- *“His glory covered the earth!”*
- *“The earth was full of His praise!”*
- His brightness was as the bright shining of the noon day sun!
- He held and showed horns of omnipotence in His hand.
- *“And there was the hiding of His power!”* — What God has revealed and made known to us of His power is so small, so little in comparison to what His power really is that what we see is but the hiding of His power!

It was there, in the Mountain of God, that the Lord God showed Moses His Glory in the Pattern of the Tabernacle — Christ! In Christ crucified we have the

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revelation of the glory of God and the power of God in the lawful purchase and gracious salvation of chosen sinners.

PROVIDENCE WORKING

Second, Habakkuk teaches us to stand in awe of God's providence working (vv. 5-9).

(Habakkuk 3:5-9) “Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.”

- “**Pestilence**” — Disease and Death
- “**Burning Coals**” — The Devil — The Fiery Darts of the Devil — Deadly Inflammation

“6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways [are] everlasting. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: [and] the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? [was] thine anger against the

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rivers? [was] thy wrath against the sea, **that thou didst ride upon thine horses [and] thy chariots of salvation?** 9 Thy bow was made quite naked, [according] to the oaths of the tribes, [even thy] word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.”

When the Lord God brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and stretched out arm, — when He brought them into the Land of Promise, measured out their inheritance, and divided to them the land of their inheritance, — when He drove out the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Jebusites, — when He by the sword of Gideon and the Judges overthrew Israel’s enemies and delivered His people from the hands of their enemies again and again, His judgments upon the earth were not displays of God’s anger with the mountains that quaked, the rivers dried up, or the sea divided. — The Lord God was riding through the earth (as He always does) in His chariots of salvation, performing His great works of deliverance in the earth, for the everlasting salvation of His elect.

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ZECHARIAH 6

Turn to the 6th chapter of Zechariah's prophecy. Habakkuk prophesied to Israel during the time when Israel was being taken away into Babylonian Captivity. More than seventy years after Habakkuk, the Lord God raised up Zechariah. He prophesied to the children of Israel after their return from Babylon. — But both prophets spoke of that which transpired (the captivity and the return from captivity) as being accomplished by God's chariots of salvation.

(Zechariah 6:1) “And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains [were] mountains of brass.”

When trouble comes, where do you look for comfort? When everything seems uncertain, what keeps you going? When there are no billboards advertising what you can expect around the next curve, where do you turn? What do you trust? When everything seems confusing, where do you turn to find stability? When your life is turned upside down

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and everything seems to be utter chaos, what do you have to fall back on for comfort and peace?

God's prophet Zechariah and the faithful in Israel were in what must have been to them a time of terrible confusion, just as Habakkuk had been before him. They had been sent back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and reestablish the worship of God in Jerusalem. But the task appeared impossible. Their hearts overwhelmed by the difficulties facing them. It appeared that the work would never be accomplished. So the Lord appeared to Zechariah in a series of visions to encourage him and the children of Israel to go on with the work for which the Lord had sent them back to Jerusalem, assuring them of the success of their labors, assuring him that God's purpose and promise are sure. **Zechariah chapters 1-5** record the first seven of those delightful, instructive, comforting visions, by which the Lord God assures us that His purpose shall be accomplished and stabilizes our souls in the midst of trouble.

- **1:7-11** — He saw a Man riding a red horse, standing in a grove of myrtle trees. The grove of

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myrtle trees represents God's Church. It is found in a piece of bottom land, surrounded by oppressing mountains. But all is well, because that Man riding the red horse is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is always standing in our midst, riding forth conquering and to conquer.

- **1:18-22** — Zechariah saw four horns and four carpenters. The four horns represented the powers of the world (political and ecclesiastical) constantly opposing God's people. But all is well, because the four carpenters are Gospel preachers by whom the horns are frayed.
- **2:1-5** — The prophet saw Christ as a Man with measuring line in His hand, who measures and determines the dimensions of his holy city, Jerusalem (the Church), proclaiming that she shall be complete, fully inhabited by a great multitude. In a word, all is well! Christ shall build His house. Then he heard the Lord God declare, "*I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her*" (v. 5). — And the Lord Jesus declared in verse 8, — "*For thus saith the*

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LORD of hosts; After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.”.

- **3:1-15** — The Lord showed Zechariah a vivid picture of the redemption and grace that is ours in and by Christ in the cleansing of Joshua the high priest, with the Foundation Stone (Christ) laid before him. All is well. God is saving His own.
- **4:1-14** — Zechariah saw the Church of God portrayed as a candlestick, constantly supplied with the oil of grace by God the Holy Spirit, who is constantly given to us by Christ our Savior. All is well. God’s grace is unceasing. Our mighty Zerubbabel, the Lord Jesus Christ, will complete His house (vv. 6-10).

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who *art* thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain: and he shall bring forth the

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headstone *thereof* with shoutings, *crying*, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; they *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

- **5:1-4** — Zechariah’s 6th vision was a huge roll, flying over the earth, pronouncing God’s curse upon guilty sinners scattered over all the earth. But all is well, because the curse and the judgment following it is according to the justice and righteousness of God.
- **5:5-11** — In his 7th vision God showed Zechariah a woman sitting in a basket, representing the wickedness of the whole world (false religion), and telling us that the wickedness is always under our Savior’s absolute control and shall be brought to

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everlasting destruction at God's appointed time. All is well, for even the wrath of man is under the dominion of our great King.

Remember, throughout these visions, our Lord's purpose is to assure us that all is well, no matter how bad things may appear. Now, we come to Zechariah's 8th vision (6:1-8).

When everything appears to be out of control, when our hearts are heavy, when our soul's are distressed, when our mind's are confused, our Lord here tells us to fall back to the comfortable, stabilizing mountains of brass.

(Zechariah 6:1-8) "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains *were* mountains of brass. (2) In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; (3) And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. (4) Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What *are*

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these, my lord? (5) And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. (6) The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. (7) And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. (8) Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

(v. 1) — “**And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked.**” —Zechariah said, “*I turned,*” as if to tell us that Christ is to be seen everywhere. First he saw Him on one side, then another. — Read on..

“And, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were

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mountains of brass.” — ¹We do not have to guess what these chariots and the horses pulling them represent. The Scriptures tell us plainly. **These four chariots are the angels of God, God’s warriors, by whom He executes His wise decrees.** (2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Habakkuk 3:8; Psalm 68:17).

(2 Kings 2:11) “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

(2 Kings 6:17) “And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire

¹ “Some have concluded, that those four chariots with different colored horses, represent the four monarchies, which were to succeed one another, until Christ should come. But, however ingenious this may seem, I am inclined rather to believe the vision hath a full respect to the Church. Indeed, I do not hesitate to consider all monarchies, and all empires, together with their rise, progress, and fall, as designed for no other purpose, but to minister to the Church of Jesus.” (Robert Hawker).

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round about Elisha.”

(Habakkuk 3:8) “Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? *was* thine anger against the rivers? *was* thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses *and* thy chariots of salvation?”

(Psalms 68:17) “The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.”

The angels of God are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to and for God’s elect, those who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). Habakkuk said, “*Thou didst ride upon Thine horses and Thy chariots of salvation.*” Readily and speedily, with joy and delight, they serve Christ and His people, day and night, throughout the earth.

While we must never fail to recognize and give thanks to our God for those mighty angels He created to be our constant protectors, I am certain (as I have

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often shown you) that the angels of God most commonly refer to **Gospel preachers**. Gospel preachers are men who have their commission from Christ. They are sent forth into all the world by Him, carrying His name and His Gospel to the four corners of the world. By the labors of such faithful men, the Lord Jesus gathers His elect out of the nations, giving them life and faith by His almighty Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel (Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23-25). **Like chariots of war, they go forth, being set for the defense of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God our Savior.** Fighting the good fight of faith, they are always made triumphant by Christ and are more than conquerors through Him.

It is by the angels of God (both those heavenly creatures that encamped around Elisha and his servant and those men who are God's appointed messengers to His people) that our great God and Savior constantly ministers to, directs, and protects His elect in this world, accomplishing His sovereign, eternal purpose, which He purposed in Himself.

MOUNTAINS OF BRASS

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The chariots came out from between two mountains of brass. There are two of them. **They are described as “mountains of brass.” And the work of these chariots, the angels of God, runs in a valley between the two mountains.** What are these mountains? What are these things intended of God to represent? What does He teach us by them?

Mountains represent that which is immense, high, solid, and immoveable. **Brass** represents that which is hard and enduring. I cannot imagine these mountains representing anything except **the purpose of God and the providence of God.** The valley between them represents all the ages of time in this world of woe.

GOD’S PURPOSE

On one side Zechariah saw a mountain of brass representing God’s sovereign, eternal purpose of grace in predestination (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-12).

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The decrees and purposes of God, like a “mountain,” are ancient, more ancient than the everlasting hills. They are both high and deep. That is to say, they are dark, obscure, and hidden, until they are performed. **And they are firm, solid, and immovable, lasting and durable, like “brass.”**

- That simply means God’s purpose, His decree, can never be broken, revoked, or made null and void. It stands upon His unalterable will, upon the basis of His infallible wisdom, and is supported by His uncontrollable power.
- God’s sovereign purpose of grace in predestination can never be disannulled, or set aside by men on earth and devils in hell combined.

GOD’S PROVIDENCE

Surrounded by the wickedness and the curse of the earth, enduring with his brethren the trials and troubles of God’s saints in this world, facing all those who constantly make war with the saints, Zechariah saw on one side the brass mountain of God’s sure and steadfast purpose. On the other side he beheld another mountain of brass that looked in every way

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exactly like the other. **This other mountain of brass represents the providence of God. It is an exact copy of the purpose of God.** It is according to God's fixed and immutable decree that all things come to pass in time (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11).

(Romans 8:28) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

(Ephesians 1:11) “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of **him who worketh** all things after the counsel of his own will.”

It is as though the Lord God had said to His prophet and to us His people, — “There is no cause for alarm or fear. Everything you have seen and experienced, everything you are experiencing, and everything you shall experience, the good and the bad, is exactly according to My eternal purpose of grace toward you. *‘It shall be well with the righteous!’*” **These mountains of brass are our**

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security and comfort (Isaiah 40:10, 21-23, 26-29; 45:11-13, 17, 19; 46:8-10; Psalm 36:6-10).

All the events of time come forth from between those mountains of brass, the unalterable purpose and providence of our God. If so much as one purpose should fail to be accomplished, all might fail. If even one soul could be blotted out of the book of life, all might be blotted out of it. **Take away the absolute certainty of God's providence mirroring and fulfilling His purpose, and faith in God is an absolute impossibility.** The Word of God, and its countless promises could not be trusted. It would become as useless as wastepaper! But, blessed be His name, that cannot be, because **God's purpose and His providence are one unbreakable chain of grace, mountains of brass!**

The two are bound together, as links in a great chain. Break one link, and the whole chain becomes useless. **God's providence, by which all things work together for good to them that love God, is but the outworking of His purpose, according to which we are called.** According to that purpose, all whose

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names were written in the Lamb's book of life were predestinated. All who were predestinated are justified. All who are justified are called. And all who are called shall be glorified (Romans 8:30). Therefore the purpose of God according to election must stand (Romans 9:11). **God does not decree the end without the means, nor the means without the end. Both are fixed together in His eternal purpose.** In predestination, the means of our salvation was no less absolutely decreed than salvation itself. — "*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed*" (Acts 13:48). If that were not the case, the foundation could not stand sure. If God did not absolutely decree to give and bestow faith and perseverance to His elect, no one would ever enter into heaven's everlasting glory. But our God declared from eternity, "*I will be your God, and ye shall be My people,*" that is to say, "I will make you be My people" (Psalms 65:4; 110:3).

FOUR HORSES

Pulling the four chariots of salvation Zechariah saw four horses (vv. 2-3).

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(vv. 2-3) “In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.”

Again, we are not left to guess what these horses represent. The Lord, the Angel who showed His servant this vision, told him plainly what the horses represent (vv. 4-7).

Zechariah asked, “*What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.*” — The four chariots are the angels of God, by which He accomplishes His purpose. But the **chariots do not accomplish anything**. Chariots might be pretty and impressive to look at, but **they are utterly useless until horses are harnessed in them**. So it is with the angels of God and the preachers of the Gospel. **The power, the horses, by which the chariots of God are pulled through the valley of time, accomplishing His purpose, are “the four spirits of heaven.” They**

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represent God the Holy Spirit, here called “four spirits,” because He performs God’s purpose everywhere, all the time, throughout all the earth, North, South, East, and West (Isaiah 43:5-7).

(Isaiah 43:5-7) “Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; (6) I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; (7) *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”

By the power of God the Holy Spirit, His angels are made instruments of judgment upon the reprobate, binding up the tares for the burning. And by the power of the Spirit they are made instruments of mercy, gathering His wheat into His garner.

- Sometimes God sends His angels as red horses, proclaiming grace and salvation by the blood of Christ.

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- Sometimes He sends them as black horses of judgment.
- Sometimes He sends them as speckled horses, “*grisled and bay*,” executing both judgment and mercy.
- But, He always sends them forth as white horses of triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Isaiah 66:20).

(Isaiah 66:20) “And they shall bring all your brethren *for* an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.”

CHRIST’S SATISFACTION

Now, look at Zechariah 6:8. Here our great Savior, the Angel who spoke to Zechariah declares that when all the purpose of God has been accomplished by the providence of God, “**He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.**”

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(v. 8) “Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

He shall be quieted in His spirit forever, completely content, thoroughly satisfied and glorified, when He has, at last, made the restitution of all things, and reconciled all things to God. — “**And His rest shall be glorious**” (Isaiah 11:10; Zephaniah 3:17).

(Zephaniah 3:17) “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.”

SALVATION ACCOMPLISHED

Alright, let’s go back to Habakkuk 3, and I’ll wrap my message up when I have shown you this *third* and last great wonder of grace. — Habakkuk calls for us to adore to wonder of salvation accomplished by God our Savior (vv. 9-16).

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(Habakkuk 3:9-15) “Thy bow was made quite naked, [according] to the oaths of the tribes, [even thy] word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. (**CHRIST THE SMITTEN ROCK**) 10 The mountains saw thee, [and] they trembled: (**AT SINAI — AT CALVARY!**) the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, (**CROSSING JORDAN**) [and] lifted up his hands on high. 11 The sun [and] moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, [and] at the shining of thy glittering spear. (**ALL THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE OBEY THE CREATOR’S VOICE AND PERFORM HIS WILL!**) 12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. (**CANAAN AND BABYLON**)”

Now, watch this...

“13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, [even] for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the

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neck. Selah.”

- Genesis 3:15 — John 12:31
- Psalm 68:18 — Ephesians 4:8
- Colossians 2:15 — Romans 16:20

“14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing [was] as to devour the poor secretly. 15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, [through] the heap of great waters.”

When Habakkuk saw and understood these things, these three great wonders of grace...

- God’s Glory Revealed...
- God’s Providence Working...
- And God’s Salvation Accomplished...

He fell on his face and worshipped God. And, if ever you see and understand these things, you will too.

(Habakkuk 3:16) “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble:

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when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.”

Amen.