

wide for your enemies to come in. Fire has destroyed the wooden bars across the gates.

<sup>14</sup>Get water and store it inside your city, because the enemy soldiers will surround your city. Make your defenses strong! Get clay to make more bricks and mix the mortar. Get the molds for making bricks. <sup>15</sup>You can do all these things, but the fire will still destroy you completely. And the sword will kill you. Your land will look like a swarm of grasshoppers came and ate everything.

Nineveh, you grew and grew. You became like a swarm of grasshoppers. You were like a swarm of locusts. <sup>16</sup>You have many traders who go places and buy things. They are as many as the stars in the sky. They are like

locusts that come and eat until everything is gone and then leave. <sup>17</sup>And your government officials are also like locusts that settle on a stone wall on a cold day. But when the sun comes up, the rocks become warm, and the locusts all fly away. And no one knows where.

<sup>18</sup>King of Assyria, your shepherds fell asleep. These powerful men are sleeping. And now your sheep have wandered away on the mountains. There is no one to bring them back. <sup>19</sup>Nineveh, you have been hurt badly, and nothing can heal your wound. Everyone who hears the news of your destruction claps their hands. They are all happy, because they all felt the pain you caused again and again.

# Habakkuk

## *Habakkuk Complains to God*

**1** This is the message that was given to Habakkuk the prophet.\*

<sup>2</sup>LORD, I continue to ask for help. When will you listen to me? I cried to you about the violence, but you did nothing! <sup>3</sup>People are stealing things and hurting others. They are arguing and fighting. Why do you make me look at these terrible things? <sup>4</sup>The law is weak and not fair to people. Evil people win their fights against good people. So the law is no longer fair, and justice does not win anymore.

## *The Lord Answers Habakkuk*

<sup>5</sup>Look at the other nations! Watch them, and you will be amazed. I will do something in your lifetime that will amaze you. You would not believe it even if you were told about it. <sup>6</sup>I will make the Babylonians<sup>a</sup> a strong nation. They are cruel and powerful fighters. They will march across the earth. They will take houses and cities that don't belong to them. <sup>7</sup>The Babylonians will scare the other people. They will do what they want to do and go where they want to go. <sup>8</sup>Their horses will be faster than leopards and more dangerous than wolves at sunset. Their horse soldiers will come from faraway places. They will attack their enemies quickly, like a hungry eagle swooping down from the sky. <sup>9</sup>The one thing they all want to do is fight. Their armies will march fast like the wind in the desert. And the Babylonian soldiers will take many prisoners—as many as the grains of sand.

<sup>a</sup>**1:6** *Babylonians* Literally, “Chaldeans,” a tribe of Arameans who gained control in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar was from this tribe.

<sup>10</sup>“The Babylonian soldiers will laugh at the kings of other nations. Foreign rulers will be like jokes to them. The Babylonian soldiers will laugh at the cities with tall, strong walls. They will simply build dirt roads up to the top of the walls and easily defeat the cities. <sup>11</sup>Then they will leave like the wind and go on to fight against other places. The only thing the Babylonians worship is their own strength.”

## *Habakkuk's Second Complaint*

<sup>12</sup> LORD, you are the one who lives forever! You are my holy God who never dies!<sup>b</sup>

LORD, you created the Babylonians to do what must be done.

Our Rock,\* you created them to punish people.

<sup>13</sup> Your eyes are too good to look at evil. You cannot stand to see people doing wrong.

So why do you permit such evil?

How can you watch while the wicked destroy people who are so much better?

<sup>14</sup> You made people like fish in the sea.

They are like little sea animals without a leader.

<sup>15</sup> The enemy catches all of them with hooks and nets.

The enemy catches them in his net and drags them in, and the enemy is very happy with what he caught.

<sup>b</sup>**1:12** *LORD, you are ... never dies* Or “LORD, you have been my holy God forever! Surely we will not die.”

- <sup>16</sup> His net helps him live like the rich and enjoy the best food.  
So the enemy worships his net.  
He makes sacrifices\* and burns incense\* to honor his net.
- <sup>17</sup> Will he continue to take riches with his net?  
Will he continue destroying people without showing mercy?

**2** <sup>1</sup>I will stand like a guard and watch.  
I will wait to see what the LORD will say to me.  
I will wait and learn how he answers my questions.

### God Answers Habakkuk

<sup>2</sup>The LORD answered me, "Write down what I show you. Write it clearly on a sign so that the message will be easy to read."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This message is about a special time in the future. This message is about the end, and it will come true. Just be patient and wait for it. That time will come; it will not be late.

<sup>4</sup>This message cannot help those who refuse to listen to it, but those who are good will live because they believe it.

<sup>5</sup>"Wine can trick a person. In the same way a strong man's pride can fool him, but he will not find peace. He is like death—he always wants more and more. And, like death, he will never be satisfied. He will continue to defeat other nations and to make those people his prisoners. <sup>6</sup>But soon enough, all those people will laugh at him and tell stories about his defeat. They will laugh and say, "It's too bad that the man who took so many things will not get to keep them! He made himself rich by collecting debts."

<sup>7</sup>"Strong man, you have taken money from people. One day they will wake up and realize what is happening, and they will stand against you. Then they will take things from you, and you will be very afraid. <sup>8</sup>You have stolen things from many nations, so they will take much from you. You have killed many people and destroyed lands and cities. You have killed all the people there.

<sup>9</sup>"Look at you people! You get rich by cheating people, and it hurts your own family! You build your houses high on the cliffs to protect yourself from danger. <sup>10</sup>You planned shameful things, and that will bring shame to your own family. You have done wrong, and it will cost you your life. <sup>11</sup>The stones of the walls will cry out against you. Even the wooden rafters<sup>b</sup> in your own house will prove that you are wrong.

<sup>12</sup>"Look at them! They kill people to build their city and do wicked things to make their walled city strong. <sup>13</sup>But the LORD All-Powerful

<sup>a</sup>**2:2** Write down ... easy to read Or "Write the vision clearly on tablets so that the person who reads it can run and tell other people."

<sup>b</sup>**2:11** rafters Boards that support the roof.

has decided that a fire will destroy everything that those people worked to build. All their work will be for nothing. <sup>14</sup>Then people everywhere will know about the Glory of the LORD.\* This news will spread just as water spreads out into the sea. <sup>15</sup>It will be very bad for those who become angry and make other people suffer. Like an angry drunk, they knock others to the ground and strip them naked, just to see their naked bodies.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>16</sup>"But they will know the Lord's anger. It will be like a cup of poison in the LORD's right hand. They will taste that anger, and then they will fall to the ground like drunks.

"Evil ruler, you will drink from that cup. You will get shame, not honor. <sup>17</sup>You hurt many people in Lebanon and stole many animals there. So you will be afraid because of the people who died and because of the bad things you did to that country. You will be afraid because of what you did to those cities and to the people who lived there."

### The Message About Idols

<sup>18</sup>Their false god will not help them, because it is only a statue that someone covered with metal. It is only a statue, so whoever made it cannot expect it to help. That statue cannot even speak! <sup>19</sup>Look at them! They speak to a wooden statue and tell it, "Get up! Rescue me." They talk to a stone that cannot speak and say, "Wake up!" Don't you know those things cannot help you? That statue may be covered with gold and silver, but there is no life in it.

<sup>20</sup>But the LORD is in his holy temple, so the whole earth should be silent in his presence and show him respect.

### Habakkuk's Prayer

**3** <sup>1</sup>The Shiggayon prayer of Habakkuk the prophet.<sup>d</sup>

- <sup>2</sup> LORD, I have heard the news about you.  
I am amazed, LORD, at the powerful things you did in the past.  
Now I pray that you will do great things in our time.  
Please make these things happen in our own days.  
But in your anger, remember to show mercy to us. *Selah*\*

- <sup>3</sup> God is coming from Teman.\*  
The Holy One is coming from Mount Paran.\* *Selah*

The Glory of the LORD\* covers the heavens,  
and his praise fills the earth!

<sup>c</sup>**2:15** Like an angry drunk ... bodies The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

<sup>d</sup>**3:1** Or "The prayer of Habakkuk on the Shiggayon." The meaning of the Hebrew word "Shiggayon" is not known.

- 4 Rays of light shine from his hand, a bright, shining light.  
There is such power hiding in that hand.
- 5 The sickness went before him, and the destroyer followed behind him.<sup>a</sup>
- 6 The LORD stood and judged the earth.  
He looked at the people of all the nations, and they shook with fear.  
For many years the mountains stood strong, but those mountains fell to pieces. Those old, old hills fell down. God has always been able to do that.
- 7 I saw that the cities of Cushan were in trouble and that the houses of Midian trembled with fear.
- 8 LORD, were you angry at the rivers? Were you angry at the streams? Were you angry at the sea? Were you angry when you rode your horses and chariots to victory?
- 9 Even then you showed your rainbow. It was proof of your agreement with the families of the earth.<sup>b</sup> *Selah*
- And the dry land split the rivers.
- 10 The mountains saw you and shook. The water flowed off the land. The water from the sea made a loud noise as it lost its power over the land.
- 11 The sun and the moon lost their brightness. They stopped shining when they saw your bright flashes of lightning. That lightning was like spears and arrows shooting through the air.

<sup>a</sup>3:5 This probably refers to the diseases and the Angel of Death that God sent against the Egyptians when God freed Israel from slavery.

<sup>b</sup>3:9 *rainbow ... earth* See Gen. 9.

- 12 In anger you walked on the earth and punished the nations.
- 13 You came to save your people and to lead your chosen king<sup>c</sup> to victory. You killed the leader in every evil family, from the least important person to the most important in the land.<sup>d</sup> *Selah*
- 14 You used Moses' walking stick to stop the enemy soldiers. Those soldiers came like a powerful storm to fight against us. They thought they could defeat us easily, as robbing the poor in secret.
- 15 But you marched your horses through the deep water, stirring up the mud.
- 16 My whole body shook when I heard the story. My lips trembled. I felt weak deep down in my bones and stood there shaking. But I will wait patiently for destruction to come to those who attack us.

### *Always Rejoice in the Lord*

- 17 Figs might not grow on the fig trees, and grapes might not grow on the vines. Olives might not grow on the olive trees, and food might not grow in the fields. There might not be any sheep in the pens or cattle in the barns.
- 18 But I will still be glad in the LORD and rejoice in God my savior.
- 19 The Lord God gives me my strength. He helps me run fast like a deer. He leads me safely on the mountains.

To the music director. On my stringed instruments.

<sup>c</sup>3:13 *chosen king* Literally, "anointed one."

<sup>d</sup>3:13 *You killed ... in the land* Literally, "You struck the head from the wicked house. From the foundation to the neck they were laid bare."

# Zephaniah

**1** <sup>1</sup>This is the message that the LORD gave to Zephaniah. He received this message during the time that Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah. Zephaniah was the son of Cush, who was the son of Gedaliah. Gedaliah was the son of Amariah, who was the son of Hezekiah.

### *The Lord's Day for Judging the People*

<sup>2</sup>The Lord says, "I will destroy everything on earth.<sup>e</sup> <sup>3</sup>I will destroy all the people and all the animals. I will destroy the birds in the air

<sup>e</sup>1:2 *earth* Or "the land" or "the country." Also in verse 18.

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Telephone: 1-817-595-1664

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