

God shakes the earth

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[0:00] Taylor Swift is in the UK at the moment. She's in London.

! Apparently she's caused the earthquake.! At least her fans did, up in Edinburgh.

In fact, I think my sister-in-law was at one of those Taylor Swift concerts when the earth apparently was shaking in various places around.

Here's a graph that I don't quite understand, but at various points during the concert, this is what the effect had.

Very little earthquakes, but Taylor Swift is so big and so popular that she can make the earth shake.

[0:59] At the beginning of our passage this evening, we see Habakkuk telling the Lord, I have heard of your fame.

The Lord is hopefully even more famous than Taylor Swift is. And have a look in verse 6, because the Lord too can make the earth to shake.

Verse 6, he stood and shook the earth. He looked and made the nations tremble. And the earth can make the earth to shake.

And this evening we join Habakkuk to lift up our eyes to his God.

The almighty God. Like him, as he's doing here, we can pray to him. And we can sing of him. This prayer of Habakkuk, it's been turned into a song.

[2:14] We saw that in the very last bit. It's for the director of music on my stringed instruments. It's a prayer, it's a song. And we can sing of the Lord.

We can sing of his mighty acts in our world. Let's just remind us again of what we've seen in Habakkuk.

We heard way back in chapter 1. It was only two chapters ago, but it feels like a while ago since we were there. Habakkuk complained about the state of the Lord's people.

Violence and injustice were his complaints. How long, Lord, must this go on for? Are you even listening? Are you even seeing what is going on here?

And as the book goes on, the Lord reveals to Habakkuk that he is doing something. That he has seen what's going on. And so he's raising up the Babylonians to judge his people.

[3:15] And Habakkuk and we ourselves, we try to get our minds around this. How can a good God allow evil? But we noted as we were trying to answer that question that the Lord's holiness.

The Lord is so holy. Habakkuk says, your eyes are too pure to look on evil. The Lord has to act in judgment on sin in some way.

This time around, he was raising up the Babylonians to do that. But what about the Babylonians? Because they are evil too. They are even more evil, Habakkuk said to the Lord.

But Habakkuk hears from the Lord again. And we see that the Lord sees the evil of the Babylonians as well. And in his time, in his good timing, he will deal with them.

He is patient. But in his time, the judgment will come. And Habakkuk now stands here in awe of the Lord, he says in verse 2.

[4:27] And his big request of the Lord is, repeat your acts of long ago in our day. In our time, make them known.

And in wrath, remember mercy. Before we get into the passage, just good to not just hear from my voice.

In the evenings, we're more tired. It's good to get ourselves chatting about some of these things. So first question, just turn with people around you.

Can you think of any times in the Bible where we see God's judgment, but where we also see mercy? Have a chat for a couple of minutes with the people around you. What comes to mind? And then we'll share a little bit. And then we'll get into this. Anyone want to grab the microphone? So we all hear and tell us something.

[5:31] Our summer's straight in. Thank you. Well done. What did we say? What did you say?

Is this on? I think it is on, yeah. What did we say first? The Red Sea. Well, we're gone. It's two voices by the side of you.

I'm so sorry. I can't remember our first one. Crossing the Red Sea. Crossing the Red Sea. Excellent. How do we see judgment and how do we see mercy? Judgment was Pharaoh's family and friends were killed.

Yeah. The Israelites escaped. So that was judgment and mercy. Excellent. Shall we pass it to another group? Anybody else?

Abel and Kate. Abel and Kate, tell me more. They're the murder of the brother. I'm struggling to hear you. Can you bring the microphone up? Sorry. Yeah. It doesn't like this.

[6:35] Cain killed his brother. Cain killed his brother. Uh-huh. And still God looked after him. He said he just, Cain was so scared. He killed his brother. He was hiding away.

Yeah. The Lord said, yeah, wherever you go, I'll be there. It's just, yeah. Yeah. Keep him safe. You see, just. Yeah, there was judgment. There was mercy there, wasn't there? Mercy. On Cain as well. Yeah.

Yeah. Interesting. Thank you. Thank you. Others? Jerome? Noah and the flood.

Noah and the flood. Explain. Well, God was bringing certain judgment on the earth. Cataclysmic judgment. And Noah and his family were spared.

Absolutely. So there's certainly a mercy in that. Sodom and Gomorrah. Yeah. Lot. Yeah. I was going to say Lot's wife, but not Lot's wife.

[7:34] Not Lot's wife, no. Not Lot's wife, but Lot's. No. Yeah. Thank you, Jerome. Maybe one more. Corin? The most obvious one.

The cross. The cross. Absolutely. We'll get there. Sorry. Good job. I'm glad you said that. Let's have that a bit in the back of our minds.

We'll see some of God's deeds mentioned here of judgment and of mercy as we go through the passage. Two points, two big points.

First of all, the God of splendor from verses three to seven. And I think particularly Habakkuk is showing us how does God appear in the world?

Well, he appears full of splendor. Verse three to four in particular. God came from Timan, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

[8:47] His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from his hand where his power was hidden. Our God is full of splendor and glory.

We saw that in the psalm that we looked at just earlier. We sang it in the first song. God of majesty and splendor. He is glorious. And Habakkuk here sort of pictures his glory.

He particularly mentions sunrise there in verse four. His splendor was like the sunrise. On the radio, Radio Sussex the other morning, the presenter on there was saying, you should have been up very early in the morning.

Five o'clock in the morning or something. When the sun was rising, it was a real treat. It was beautiful. And of course this week at Stonehenge, something like 15,000 people.

Okay, there's sorts of weird things that go on there. But they came to watch the sunrise. The glory in it. Because it's splendid. It's amazing that in the nighttime when it's full of darkness, when there's no light at all other than the light of the moon, suddenly light fills the sky.

[10:05] Rays flash forth. It's a glorious scene. And that's a way that Habakkuk helps us to picture our God. There in verse four, his splendor was like the sunrise.

Rays flashed from his hand where his power was hidden. And this God of splendor, he is working in this world.

Verse three, God came from Timan, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

What's that all about? I think it shows that God is on the move. So Timan, if my understanding is right, is sort of around the south, on the east side of the land of God's people.

Ish, my geography is terrible, so please correct me if I'm wrong. In other words, it's on the east side of the land. And Paran, associated with Mount Sinai, is where the Lord moves to.

[11:18] And he came on the Mount Sinai, didn't he? In majesty and splendor. And after that, they moved around Paran, this area that nobody quite knows, apparently.

But it's mentioned quite a few times in the early books of the Bible. In other words, Habakkuk is saying, God is on the move.

God came from Timan, the Holy One from Mount Paran. He's on the move, he's working. And these words, they echo words from Deuteronomy 33, verse 2.

Words of Moses. The Lord came from Sinai and dawned, more sunrise language, over them from Seir. He shone forth from Mount Paran.

He came with myriads of Holy One from the south, from his mountain slopes. Again, the Lord is glorious and he's on the move. He is working in the world.

[12:23] That's what we should be understanding from there. Like the sun appears to move from east to west. So God is moving.

He is working in his world. And his work is light, like the sunrise. It brings light in darkness. I think as we've moved through Habakkuk, where Habakkuk started in Habakkuk 1, verse 2, he begins in darkness in the land.

The evil that's going on, the wickedness, it's darkness. But as we move through the book and we see God coming, shining through, as though it's hard, we see God and his works on display.

We see that he sees evil. He is dealing with it. And he is good. He is holy. He is perfect. He is light. His work is light. His work is good.

But then we come to verse 5. And we see plague went before him. Pestilence followed his footsteps. As he works in judgment, he brings plague and pestilence.

[13:37] And so we go back to scratching our heads with Habakkuk and thinking, why does God work in that way? What's God doing? Well, plague and pestilence, a particular place we might think of, is again in the book of Exodus, when God sends those plagues upon the Egyptians, revealing his splendor, revealing his control over creation.

Being able to make it hail and be able to make it hail and send boils and frogs. He is sovereign. He is powerful. There's also pestilence and plague mentioned around the time of Habakkuk and the Babylonians coming in.

Be good to turn to Jeremiah 21, verses 4 to 7 briefly. Talking of the judgment of the Babylonians that Habakkuk hears about from the Lord.

Verse, chapter 21 of Jeremiah, verse 4. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are outside the wall besieging you.

And I will gather them inside this city. The Babylonians, they're going to get in. I myself will fight against you, fight against his people with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath.

[15:39] I will strike down those who live in this city, both man and beast, and they will die of a terrible plague. So plague the Lord is sending in judgment.

After that, declares the Lord, I will give Zedekiah, king of Judah, his officials, and the people in this city who survived the plague, sword, and famine into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and to their enemies who want to kill them.

He will put them to the sword. He will show them no mercy or pity or compassion. But Habakkuk prays to the Lord and says, in wrath, remember mercy.

We see here the Lord's wrath expressed. People will suffer plague and sword and famine. But verse 8, he's the mercy in the judgment.

In the wrath, he is remembering mercy. This is what the Lord says, see, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine, or plague.

[16:56] The Lord will send plague and pestilence. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live. They will escape with their lives.

I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the Lord. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.

There is judgment, lots of judgment going on there, but there is also mercy. If you surrender to the Babylonians, if you go into exile with them, you will live.

The Lord is being clear with his people. As he is rightly angry with his people's sin. The Lord is working.

The Lord is on the move in his wealth. The Lord is at work. And he is full.

[18:01] And that exile in Babylon as well, where the people could live, it wasn't forever. The defined period of time, it wasn't going to be forever.

70 years or so. The Lord is merciful even in judgment. In wrath, remember mercy, Lord. That prayer was being worked out, as Jeremiah helps us to see.

So the Lord is full of splendor and might. That's shown in his acts of judgment and in his acts of mercy, even in pestilence and plague. And so full of splendor is he that his work just seems quite effortless.

Verse 6. He stood and he shook the earth. He looked and made the nations tremble. The Lord is not doing anything other than standing and looking.

And it happens. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. But he marches on forever. Habakkuk is showing us the great power and might of our God, who is full of splendor.

[19:16] Exodus 19, verse 18. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace.

And what happened to the mountain? It trembled violently. This really did happen. And maybe Habakkuk has this in mind as he's writing these words.

Our God is a God of splendor and might and power. The mountains, which seem so permanent and stable, they can go into the sea.

If the Lord makes that happen, it will happen. And it says, he marches on forever. This great God, he is on the move and he is eternal and he goes on forever.

He marches on forever. His work does not stop. And I think we see here that God's presence really makes a difference in the world.

[20:17] God works in this world. He's not passive at all. And Habakkuk has heard of all of his deeds, of his works. And he's amazed by him, this God of splendor.

Notice as well of God in verse 3. Habakkuk refers to him as God.

And then verse 8, the language changes to Lord. I think that's significant. God being God generally. There, verses 3 to 7, God generally working in the world. But verse 8 gets more specific. He calls him Lord, Yahweh. God's personal covenant name for his people.

The Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See, this God of majesty and splendor, he is known to people.

[21:20] He has a people. He can be known personally by the people of Judah who have gone away from him that Habakkuk is so distressed about.

And this is the same God that we gather to worship this evening. And his presence makes a difference in the world today. He marches on forever. He is working.

And we see in the Bible that he can still be made known today. In a way that he could not be in Habakkuk's time.

As we've seen in this, as we've seen in the book of Acts, the Lord of glory and splendor ascends upon his people. And the fire and the sound of the violent wind on that day of Pentecost.

The Lord is present with us even now. Who are we to sing his praises? Who are we that God would do that? Isn't it amazing that we can?

[22:22] We can know him. That Jesus has taken on God's wrath for sin for us. He's faced that judgment for us so we can know him.

And so we move to the second bit that we're looking at this evening. The Lord of mighty acts. And we see in this section that the Lord, he's at work in the world, but he's at work particularly for his people.

I think that's what Habakkuk is focused on. Now, in preparing to preach and the training I've had over the years, you're often told to look for repeated words or repeated phrases.

And I think in verses 8 to 15, we see a repeated word time and time again. So have another chat in groups and look through verses 8 to 15.

What word is repeated through those verses? And what does that help us to see? Have another chat in your little groups and then we'll feed back again.

[23:35] Anyone want to help us? Hello. I don't think that's on, is it? It's on now. It is on. Great. Not very loud.

Rivers and water come up a lot. Yep, they do come up a lot. Yes, absolutely. Yes, I realised as soon as I asked the question, there could be more than one word.

They do come up a lot, absolutely. And I think that's significance and hopefully we'll see that in a moment. You and yours.

You and yours. Yes, that's particularly what I was after. It's great to spot other things as well and they will help us. How, spotting you and your, how does that help us as we read through this passage?

It's all about the Lord. Yeah. It's all about what the Lord is doing. Absolutely. Yeah. And was there anything else that people spotted that there was maybe one?

[24:49] Wrath and anger. Yeah. Yeah. And I think, I mean, like bows and arrows are anger. Yeah. Wrath. And any thoughts on why that might be significant?

Well, judgement. Judgment, yeah. What's Habakkuk prayed to the Lord in verse 2? What's he asked? In wrath, remember mercy.

Yeah, he's asked in wrath, remember mercy. And so we're going to see here that the Lord shows wrath.

He is a God who is rightly angry with sin. But he's also, as we'll see, we'll see the mercy in this little passage as well.

And he's also full of splendor and might and he has control over his creation. We mentioned lots of sea and rivers there. He shows his power, his glory over creation as well.

[26:00] Let's get into it. The Lord of mighty acts.

They've called this. So we spotted the word you a lot. You do this for your people and it happens. And particularly the focus that I think Habakkuk has in mind is of his people being free from the Egyptians.

We mentioned that the Red Sea and sea is mentioned a lot in these verses. And that was, of course, the obstacle that stood in the way of the Lord's people.

Escaping from slavery from the Egyptians. The Red Sea was in the way. They were doomed to destruction from Pharaoh and his army. And yet the sea was nothing for the Lord.

For the Lord who just turns up and mountains fall into the sea. Verse 10. The mountain saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by.

[27:11] The deep roared and lifted its waves on high. For the Lord who just stands and mountains fall into the sea.

This was just barely lifting a finger. This was light work. For our great God of splendor and majesty. Splitting a little bit of the Red Sea.

And that's what he did. And he did it again, didn't he? As Joshua was leading his people into Canaan, into the promised land. It says in Joshua, they put their feet on water.

On the water and it just piled up. A great distance away. And so they were able to cross. The Lord is amazing in his deeds for his people.

And this isn't the only work of the Lord mentioned by Habakkuk. Verse 11. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens.

[28:17] Anyone remember where that may have happened? David. Joshua. Joshua. Yes. Can we turn there, actually? It'd be great to read it for ourselves.

Joshua 10. And again, to have a break from my voice. Does someone, when we're there, can someone read Joshua 10?

I think it's verses 12 to 13. Maybe stick up your hand and someone pass the microphone. Phil's there. Excellent.

Joshua 10. Joshua 10. Joshua 10. 12. 12 to 13. Yeah.

Well, you could read verse 14 as well, actually. That'd be great. Okay. On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel, sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you moon over the valley of Aijalon.

[29:24] So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped till the nation avenged itself on its enemies. As it is written in the book of Jashar, the sun stopped in the middle of the day and delayed going down about a full day.

There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel.

Isn't that amazing? Habakkuk wondered if the Lord was even listening, if the Lord would do anything for his people. He did a marvelous deed on that day, stopping the cycle of the earth, 24 hours.

Our God is full of splendor and power and might, and he does wonderful deeds for his people. And so Habakkuk, who must have been thinking at some points, does God act for his people?

He meditates on the Lord's deeds of old and realizes, yes, he does. That's an encouragement for us. Does the Lord care for us? Does he act for us?

[30:42] The Lord does. He does great things for his people. It's good for us to look back in the Bible. It's good for us to look back in our lives at the way he's led us and provided for us so far.

So can he not do it again? These verses, as I've mentioned, captured the imagination of William Cooper.

A great hymn writer, poet, who wrote the hymn that we sang just earlier.

A man who suffered deep, dark depression. Several times tried to take his life. But the Lord provided so well for him. Provided friends around him, a family to live with.

And he particularly, as we know, I think Barnaby mentioned this on the away day. He had a great friendship with John Newton. Man who wrote hymns himself.

[31:46] Amazing grace being one of them. And the hymn, God moves in a mysterious way. Cooper even took inspiration from these words in Habakkuk.

Particularly in verse 1. God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform. He plants his footstep in the sea and rides upon the storm.

If you read verses 8 to 10. You can sort of see how Cooper may have been inspired from Habakkuk in that. He was also inspired by the words of the end of Habakkuk.

With another hymn that we'll mention next week. Maybe we'll even sing it. But that's for next week. We're in this week. And in that hymn that we sang of Cooper's.

He's sort of wrestling in a way with the Lord's sovereignty. But he also, he knows that God is his own interpreter.

[32:52] And he will make it play. As time went on for Habakkuk in this little book. It became clearer. And it becomes even clearer, I think, as we read through the rest of the Bible.

How God is working in his world for the good of his people. And when it comes to sin and to violence and injustice, which were Habakkuk's particular complaints, the Lord acts.

The Lord acts. Verse 12 to 13. Again, maybe Habakkuk was particularly thinking of the Exodus.

God came out and delivered his people. He saves his anointed one. That anointed one often refers to kings or leaders of God's people.

And he crushed the leader of the land of wickedness. He crushed Pharaoh and his army under the Red Sea.

[34:16] But in wrath, as we've thought about already, he remembered mercy. And he delivered his people. And so Habakkuk says, show your mighty works again.

Repeat them in our day. In wrath. In your acts of judgment, remember mercy. Remember to be merciful to your people, just as you have been. Please continue to be.

And where is the place we particularly find the Lord acting in judgment, but also a mercy for his people?

Maybe even most clearly, I think we see that on the cross. As Corinne mentioned, maybe others have you chatted about that. On that day that Jesus died when darkness came over the world. On that day, God was freeing his people from slavery to sin. He crushed the leader of the land of wickedness. Not Pharaoh, but Satan.

[35:30] In his wrath on our sin, the Lord remembered mercy. For at the cross, God was making a way for sinful people to know God.

This God of majesty and splendor. And we continue to see in verses 14 to 15 how the Lord continued...

Habakkuk continuing to talk about the Lord's work for his people. 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 are in hiding. You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.

The Lord's great acts again. And more mentions of sea.

And sea in the Bible is often a picture of chaos and wickedness. Nakedness and trouble and evil.

[36:39] Look at what God is doing for his people as he leads us to the new creation. Revelation 21 verse 1.

Maybe words that are very familiar to us, but we can rejoice in them again. Revelation 21 verse 1.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. There will be water in the new creation.

There will be rivers. But sea particularly, if we're thinking of it as trouble, as chaos, as evil. There will be none of that in the new creation.

God is working for us. He's leading us to that. He's doing wonderful deeds for us. He's done wonderful deeds of the cross for us, and he's leading us to this. A new creation without any evil, any violence, any injustice.

[37:46] God is working. And he's working in this world now. Even in wrath, he is remembering mercy.

He's had mercy on us. He's sitting in this room this evening. And say, why don't we just take a minute or so, just to respond to God quietly in our hearts.

And then maybe once we've done that, if a few of us could lead us in prayers of praise to our mighty God, full of splendour and majesty and power, that would be great.

But let's have 30 seconds or so of us responding to the Lord in our hearts. Thank you.