

# RELIGION

## Rest in the assurance of Jesus Christ

### Habakkuk 2:1-14

It is important for us to understand the difference between questioning God and asking God a question.

The first of these situations is based upon human wisdom being used as a standard, attempting to determine if divine wisdom might be inferior.

The second of these situations is the result of our going to God, while needing some answers to some pressing circumstance, and then allowing the divine answer to still our troubled soul.

Even though the prophet, Habakkuk, gave not direct indication concerning the time of his ministry, it seems that the sin of the nation of Judah was about to come under the judgment of God. This prophet could not understand why God would use the brutal, pagan nation of the Chaldeans — Babylonians (Habakkuk 1:6) — as his instrument of judgment against the chosen nation. The mind of the prophet, Jeremiah, must have been filled with wonder when God referred to “Nebuchadrezzar the king

of Babylon, my servant...” Jeremiah 43:10. Thus, “hard questions” seemed to have been the “order of the day.”

The prophet, Habakkuk, knew the care that God had — and continues to have — for the chosen nation. This godly man declared, “Art thou not from everlasting, O lord my God, mine holy one? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.” Habakkuk 1:12.

The prophet made a pledge, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.” Habakkuk 2:1.

In this conversation between the prophet and God, the dialogue shows the human desiring answers from the divine, not attempting to persuade God to see the prophet’s point of view. “And the Lord answered me, and said, write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” Habakkuk 2:2. The prophet

### Sunday School Lesson



Rev. James Temples

is assured, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, and will not tarry.” Habakkuk 2:3.

God showed the prophet that there is a vast difference between the heart of the invading king and that of the people of God. “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him...” — the contrast is clear — “but the just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:4. This thought is expressed in various ways throughout the New Testament. John 3:36; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.

The Babylonian king is pictured as one who is ruthless, and cares for nothing except that which will increase his power and

authority.

“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?” Habakkuk 2:5-7.

Judgment would, eventually, be poured upon this wicked king. “Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of man’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.” Habakkuk 2:8.

It is easy for the oppressed to see the conquerors as being without difficulty. Yet, the judgment

of God is sure. “Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.” Habakkuk 2:9,10. From the divine perspective, even the building materials will make an appeal to God. “For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” Habakkuk 2:11.

As God continued to give some answers to the prophet, warnings were included. “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!” Habakkuk 2:12.

God asked the prophet a question that would cause him to reassess his own attitude. “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” Habakkuk 2:13.

The Babylonian king served many gods, and the people had been made

aware of his praise to the structures of vanity. The prophet — and the people — needed to be reminded of the nature of the one whom they served, and who had delivered them, when they continued to follow him.

From the perspective of the trembling nations, it would seem that the “presence” of this invading army had “filled” all of that region of the land. The Lord reminded them, “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Habakkuk 2:14.

Even with the threat of the invading army, the people who kept their trust in God could continue to know hope. Hope is not based upon what is seen. Romans 8:24,25. This fact must be coupled with faith. Hebrews 11:1. This is not whistling in the dark, but an assurance of divine care and concern for those who trust in Jesus Christ as lord of life.

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## ‘Blessed are those who mourn sin ...’

For the next few moments I want you to throw out any preconceived notions of Jesus Christ and biblical Christianity and let the power of paradox pervade your soul.

Nowhere is this power any plainer than in the paradox of the second “beatitude,” where only the sad are said to be truly happy. Read Matthew 5:4.

### “Blessed are those who mourn ...”

Christians are blessed because Christians know how to cry. But not all crying, not all mourning, is under this particular banner of Christ’s blessing. Remember that Jesus’ words in this sermon are spiritual. They are deep and richly rewarding. But they require some digging.

Jesus is not promising blessedness to those who cry crocodile “Tammy Faye tears” of selfish pride or material loss. He will not bless those who grieve without hoping in him (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Keeping things in context, Jesus is pronouncing spiritual blessedness to those who are deeply saddened

and concerned over spiritual badness.

The short word for such spiritual badness is “sin.” Blessed are those who mourn over sin, who see sin the way God sees it, who are distressed about the offense it gives to the lord and the effect it has upon the human race. This mourning can be broken down three ways:

Blessed are those who mourn over personal sin A disciple is a person who is painfully aware of his or her own sin. The more you grow in grace, the more you know you need it (note Paul’s progression and John’s advice). True conviction and concern — another definition of “mourning” in this verse — makes no excuses and asserts no blame. And, it leads to blessing.

Blessed are those who mourn over corporate sin and dysfunction. There must be no delight when a brother or sister falls, only a shared sense of disgrace that pleads for fresh grace. There can be no satisfaction when the church steps outside the parameters of scripture, only a desire for

### The Gospel Truth



Dr. Charles F. DeVane Jr. First Baptist Church

godly correction. Such conviction can lead to blessing.

Blessed are those who mourn over sin in the world. How do you really feel about abortion, abuse, divorce, homosexuality and other societal sins? Why do you feel that way? God is dishonored and people are hurt. Therefore we must mourn. This mourning, too, leads to the blessing of a new morning.

Jesus is teaching that hearts that are broken are hearts that will be blessed. He himself was a “man of sorrows ... familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3). He looked old for his age (John 8:57), often mourned, and actually wept (John 11:35). He was more than qualified to say, “Blessed are those who mourn,” because he knew what he would do for them.

### “... for they will be comforted.”

The promise is not that we will be comfortable, but comforted. The Christian life is not supposed to be comfortable, as many presume. But there are deep and abiding blessings, even comforts, for those who risk it all to follow Jesus Christ.

Here the power of paradox kicks in for faithful followers. We know of the bigger picture that tells of the agony of the cross and the adoration of the crown. We know of the struggle of conviction that comes with the splendor of conversion. Now we must know with confident assurance that for every drop of mourning there will be a vast ocean of comfort.

There is comfort for those who mourn over personal sin. It is called repentance and it results in forgiveness. Think of verse two of the towering hymn, “It Is Well With My Soul” states: My

sin — oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! — My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! Think of the power of 1 John 1:8-9 in the daily Christian life. Excuses will not bring about this blessing. Blame will not bless, either. Only mourning over personal sin leads to the blessedness of repentance and forgiveness.

There is comfort for those who mourn over corporate sin in the church. There is the comfort of discipline and restoration, reformation and truth. A church is not a true church when it is unwilling to lovingly confront members living in sin. If we care, we will mourn. If we mourn, we will act. If we act, we will be comforted to know that we are honoring God, protecting the purity of the church and providing a purer and more powerful witness to the world.

The status quo is not equipped with blessing. Only those who mourn and dare to discipline, dare to change, will be blessed.

There is comfort for those who mourn over worldly sin at large. There is the comfort of the power of the gospel and the promise of the return of Christ. There is the comfort of knowing that God is sovereign. There is the comfort that he is and he will make everything right. Progress can be made now, but perfection is coming for the true believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Revelation 21:4.

Church, we need to learn the value of spiritual crying, of mourning as Jesus commanded.

We need to stop sweeping sin under the rug. We need to confess to God something is wrong. We need to be forgiven. We need to be held, helped and loved by the Lord. Then, we will be “blessed.”

### CHURCH NEWS

#### New Hope

“Cornerstone,” a praise and worship band from Center Grove Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., will perform at New Hope Baptist Church Saturday, July 21 at 6:30 p.m.

Ice cream and finger foods will be served after the program. Everyone is invited to attend.

#### Faith Holiness

Faith Holiness Church of Edison will sponsor a health fair and clothing give-away Saturday, July 21 at 9 a.m. at 25866 Blakely Highway.

All services are free to the public. For additional information call 229-835-3068, leave message.

#### Midway

Midway Church in Jakin will have revival July 30 through Aug. 3 at 7:30 p.m. Rev. Tieg will be the guest speaker.

The youth choir will cele-

brate their sixth anniversary July 22 at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

#### Zion Watch A.M.E.

Zion Watch African Methodist Episcopal Church will celebrate their family and friends day Sunday, July 22 at 11 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

#### Good Hope A.M.E.

Good Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church will celebrate their 142nd homecoming Sunday, July 29 with guest speaker

Rev. Henry Wilson of Albany.

Everyone is invited to attend.

#### Josiah Mission

Debra Snipes and the Angels will perform at Mangham Auditorium Sunday, July 29 at 4 p.m. Other guest include Pastor Ronald Hayes, Chosen Disciples, Bright Stars and the Cuthbert Community Choir. For more information call Minister Cheryl Watson at 334-738-5625. Everyone is invited to attend.

### THANKS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our family and friends for the acts of kindness and loving attention given to mother during her illness, and to the family at her passing.

For the food, flowers, cards, visits and prayers we

are humbly grateful. We express special appreciation to Donalsonville Hospital and staff, Dr. Breckenridge and Dr. Moody and to her personal caregivers for their uplifting support.

The family of Merle Shingler

## Relax & Enjoy!

Heat Therapy has been used for centuries as a safe and effective treatment for chronic pain. Heat therapy works by relaxing muscles and improving blood flow. Recent research even indicates that heat therapy is as effective as ibuprofen for the relief of lower back pain. It is also clinically recognized for its ability to improve wound healing. Unlike medications, heat therapy has no side effects.

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