

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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God of Wonders!

Habakkuk decries the evil running amuck among the Lord's people and asks God to act. He could not have anticipated God's reply, "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days—you would not believe if you were told" (Habakkuk 1:5). God further reveals that the Babylonians would serve as God's instrument to judge His wayward people. Habakkuk was not particularly excited about the news and it only raised more questions in his mind.

The last statement of verse 5 is worthy of much meditation as it summarizes the ways and activity of God. Our God is a God of Wonders! "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways" (Romans 11:33). While we may greatly struggle to fully process the depths of this statement about God, such lofty thoughts of Him should be often frequented in our minds.

Three important thoughts flow out of God's words to Habakkuk: (1) God's activity astonishes. (2) God's activity is not thwarted by powerful men. (3) This same God is still active today.

The whole Bible story continually reveals the grandiose nature of God's doings. Anticipating the role of a suffering Savior in man's redemption, the inspired psalmist writes, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:22-24).

Extraordinary signs demonstrate God's limitless ability. He makes an axe head float. Jesus walks on water. He feeds thousands with a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread while the leftover fragments exceed the original amount of food. While astonishing, such acts are easily consistent with a God whose "understanding is infinite" and One who is "abundant in strength." After all, "He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them" (Psalm 147:4, 5).

Particularly impressive to me is the day of which it is said, “And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel” (Joshua 10:14). Following the dramatic victory at Jericho and ultimate victory at Ai, the Amorite kings and a quite formidable army unite to attack Gibeon, who had made a life-saving alliance with Israel. God informs Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands, not one of them shall stand before you” (Joshua 10:8). Joshua and his army march all night and suddenly fall upon their foes. The Lord confounds the Amorites and pummels them with hailstones as they flee. Joshua needs more daylight to finish them off and pleads, “O, sun stand still at Gibeon, and O moon in the valley of Aijalon” (Joshua 10:12). Both the sun and moon stop, “And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day” (Joshua 10:13).

Some claim, “Impossible!” We know what Joshua did not. It’s not the sun moving around the earth but the earth’s rotation that gives the appearance of the sun moving from the east to west. We are told by skeptics, if the sun stood still for “about a whole day,” the effects would be cataclysmic. But remember, this is the Creator we’re talking about. Nothing is too difficult for Him.

When God speaks to Habakkuk of His wonder He is about to perform, nothing miraculous is under consideration. Assyria, the present world power, is going to eventually relinquish world dominance to the Babylonians and God is going to use them to judge and teach His people in Judah as He had used the Assyrians — “the rod of My anger” — to punish Israel (Isaiah 10:5).

A careful reading of the last several chapters in Daniel causes one to marvel at the activity in the spiritual realm that is behind what is playing out in the kingdoms of men. Government leaders rarely see themselves for what they really are, nothing more than God’s pawns to accomplish His purposes (cf. Isaiah 40:12-25). Even the Babylonians did not see it, “...they whose strength is their god” (Habakkuk 1:11).

No elected official or government in this whole world is capable of overthrowing what God has done or is planning to do. Certain freedoms might be restricted that we might presently enjoy but God’s salvation will still be provided to those who seek it. His spiritual kingdom will continue on (cf. Daniel 2:44). History will culminate the way God intends and at the time He decides. Only due to God’s patience does the world still exist to this time (2 Peter 3:9, 15).

The appropriate reaction to the God of wonders is to fully submit to His purposes. Find your purpose in His great purposes. No greater purpose for our lives can be pursued. If

you think about it, how do most people spend their days? They work, accumulate things, improve their circumstances, enjoy family, seek fun and then ultimately someone else ends up with all of their stuff and their position. Eventually, they become just a footnote in history and most are forgotten. How much do you know about your great-great grandparents?

While our deeds in human history may not be remembered by future generations, involvement in God's things contains far-reaching and eternal implications...the destiny of souls! Can anything in this world exceed being "a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21)? People get excited about a lot of different things that have a temporal purpose and a temporal reward. We stack those things back to back to back and they become the stuff of life. But those things must be secondary to our greater spiritual purpose and pursued in light of it or they become a snare to our souls. Ultimately, only one thing matters, "...rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 17:20). And God will not forget the things we have done to promote His cause in the world (Hebrews 6:10).

Christians find liberation from the anxieties that plague so many. God equips us to face and endure the crippling pain and troubles associated with life in this world. We trust in the God of wonders! We know "Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

- Tony Mauck

Responsible and Accountable!

Nations establish civil laws to benefit their citizens, and society is to be responsible because they are accountable to them. Likewise, the Lord has established moral laws, the very concept of which implies that man has some measure of responsibility. Within both of these areas, man is responsible for his own actions and is consequently accountable to the authority behind them when they are violated.

On the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, the apostle Peter preached to an audience, and in that message he emphatically declared that they were responsible for the crucifixion. They had, by the hands of godless, lawless men (men who had not subjected themselves to the Law of Moses, Acts 2:23) slain the Christ. This Jesus, whom they had crucified, Peter stated, "God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart," and asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" What they had "heard" (v. 37; noting that faith comes from hearing

the word of Christ, Rom. 10:17), that the Jesus who was put to death is the Christ, and that they were responsible for His death, rightly led them to a keen sense of remorse. The people who were persuaded by this message were disturbed to the extent that they sought the remedy that would remove their guilt. They were responsible, they were accountable, they were guilty, and they knew it.

Fear must have filled these men when they realized that the man they condemned was in truth the Christ, and that He had "been exalted to the right hand of God," (Acts 2:33) where He was in a position to release divine retribution against them. Again, they were responsible, they were accountable, they were guilty, and they knew it. They did not say that they could not help doing what they did. They were responsible for their own choices and actions and, consequently, accountable to the Lord for their opposition to Him. They needed forgiveness.

The apostle Peter did not reply to their question by saying that there was nothing which they could do. He did not suggest that, because of the magnitude of their sin, they were incapable of responding to his gospel message. Instead, he gave them heaven's remedy (Remember that the Holy Spirit caused Peter to speak these words.): "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). He not only told them what the Lord required of them in order to be forgiven, but he also urged them to do it. "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" (Acts 2:40). "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41).

Friend, are you aware of sins you have committed against the Lord God? You are responsible for keeping His word. You are certainly accountable to Him for any of His commands that you have failed to obey. Will you allow the gospel to enter your heart? Can you be pierced when the word convicts you of sin? Will you feel the guilt and allow it to move you to repent and be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:41; Gal. 3:26-27) for the forgiveness of your sins? May we assist you as the Apostles of Christ assisted about 3,000 souls in Acts 2?

- Gary Smalley

> "The Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not!"

> "One minute of keeping your mouth shut is worth one hour of explanation!"

- > "It did not take the Lord long to get the people out of Egypt, but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of the people!"
 - > "Patience is something you admire in the driver behind you and don't understand in the one ahead!"
 - > "The mental cases most difficult to cure are those people who are crazy about themselves!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*A Preacher Who Lost His Head!*" (Text: Mark 6:17-29); Sunday evening: Hebrews Class: Questions (pp. 142-143, then Lesson 25, p. 144).