

# **BELIEVE IT!**

Joe Slater

Paul preached Christ at the Synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14). As he concluded, he warned the Jews not to be like their ancestors, to whom God had said: “Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish; For I will work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you” (Acts 13:41, quoting Habakkuk 1:5).

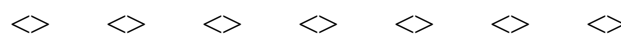
How do a 7th-century BC prophet’s words apply to people in the first (or twenty-first) century? Both Paul and Habakkuk spoke words from God that their people found hard to swallow. In both cases, failure to believe and obey God would result in disaster. Habakkuk and his people were facing destruction and captivity at the hands of the Chaldeans; the prophet himself could scarcely believe it, and the people scoffed. In only a few short years, however, here came Nebuchadnezzar, Do you suppose they were still scoffing? Ten years later, he came again. After still ten more years, he appeared once more, this time utterly destroying Jerusalem, slaughtering the vast majority of its population, and taking most of the survivors as captives. God’s people had failed to heed Habakkuk’s warning; they had only themselves to blame.

Paul told the Jews in Antioch a message they found hard to swallow: you can’t be saved by the Law of Moses, but Jesus is the promised Messiah Who was crucified and raised from the dead, and you can be saved through Him. Unfortunately, most of Paul’s Jewish audience despised his message, just as Habakkuk’s people had done. They contradicted and blasphemed, and finally stirred up such opposition that Paul & Barnabas were expelled from the region (Acts 13:45, 50). How sad, that they didn’t heed the warning or learn from the mistakes of their ancestors!

Do you ever find God’s word difficult to swallow? “Enter by the narrow gate . . . which leads to life . . .there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14). Isn’t that awfully negative and exclusive? “There is no other name (than Jesus) under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

How can we say this in an age of tolerance and non-judgmentalism? Then we read: Jesus will return “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Is this just too much to swallow? Remember this: God has proven Himself repeatedly. He is right, but seldom (if ever) does the majority of the world agree with Him.

Let us not repeat the mistake of Habakkuk’s people and the Jews in Antioch by rejecting God’s word because we think it’s too much to swallow.



## **A Little More**

Do more than exist – *Live!*

Do more than touch – *Feel!*

Do more than look – *Observe*

Do more than read – *Absorb!*

Do more than hear – *Listen!*

Do more than listen – *Understand!*

Do more than think – *Ponder!*

Do more than talk – *Say Something!*

--via House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart

## **What Do We Need?**

**We do not need a new vision, a shiny new scheme of work full of bells and whistles, a new idea of what objectives and goals should be. No great and tall king deserves our oohs and ahs.**

**What we need are ears to hear the word of God, eyes to see the work that the Lord Jesus placed before His people thousands of years ago, a work whose validity still continues to this day.**

**We need a humble heart that does not attempt to create new kingdoms, but that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.**

**We need willing submission to the Lord Jesus. We need obedience to the divine plan.**

**What we need is to embrace and participate in the great divine purpose that still engages the universe.**

**What we need is to restore our focus upon that great people called the Assembly of Separated Ones who are the exclusive Carriers of Good News.**

**This was His eternal plan, which He carried out through Jesus Christ our Lord (Ephesians 3;11, NLT).**

**Forget those who claim to provide a new vision for a new day. Remember Him, Who established an eternal purpose and continues to pursue it to the end.**

--Randal Matheny (Brazil)