

I. A Curse Upon Foolish Nations (vv 16, 18).

- A.** The Law is meant for not only the individual, but for societies as well.
- 1)** The Argument: The Law is to be applied societally, not just individually (Ex 20:8-12; Dt 17:18-20; Psa 2:10-12; Rom 13:4; Larger Catechism 118, 126)
 - 2)** Understanding our Text in Context
- B.** Does God really judge nations *as* nations? (Gen 15:16; Acts 12:20-23; Psa 67:4)
- C.** How do you know a nation is under the curse and judgment of God?
- 1)** Look at its leaders (v 16)
 - a)** Leaders who are like *children* (Isa 3:12)
 - i.** Short-sighted in addressing problems
 - ii.** Incompetent and emotional in the face of conflict
 - iii.** Easily swayed and not grounded in understanding
 - iv.** Selfish and self-centered, only taking and never giving
 - v.** Quick to fear (Jdg 8:20)
 - b)** Leaders who only care for pleasure, and neglect work (Dan 5:1-4, 26-28)
 - 2)** Look at its people (v 18): (*a*) Laziness; (*b*) Idleness
 - 3)** Look at its institutions (v 18)
 - 4)** Take note over time, not just in the moment (2 Chr 30).
 - 5)** The great indication and characteristic of judgment: God gives a people over to themselves (Rom 1:24-32)
- D.** Are we, as a nation, under God's judgment?
- E.** What is the solution?
- 1)** Not merely political reform, but spiritual revival
 - 2)** You must confess and repent from your particular sins, and turn to Jesus Christ as Saviour.
 - 3)** Then we may and must plead for God's mercy upon our nation.
 - 4)** Be diligent in raising children and discipling others, and being disciplined ourselves in the Lord.
 - 5)** Contribute, do not only consume.

II. A Blessing Upon Wise Nations (vv 17, 19)

- A.** Does God really bless nations *as* nations? (Dt 2:22; Dt 4:6-8; Eph 6:1-3; Larger Catechism 133)
- B.** How do you know a nation is under the blessing of God?
- 1)** Look at its leaders (v 17)
 - a)** Raised under wise and godly fathers
 - i.** Familiar, practically, with policy and court life
 - ii.** Grounded in truth and justice
 - b)** By implication, wise themselves (Pr 14:34; Psa 33:12)
 - c)** Temperate
 - d)** Not ascetic
 - e)** Know they are limited creatures
 - 2)** Look at its people (v 19)
 - a)** Joyful
 - b)** Community
 - c)** Prospering
 - 3)** Look at its institutions
 - 4)** Take note over time, not just in the moment

III. An Application of Warning (v 20)

- A.** Explanation of the Text (v 20; Hab 2:9, 11)
- 1)** Secrets always get out somehow (Acts 23:12, 16)
 - 2)** Tyrants (and even good leaders) always have their spies
 - 3)** Beloved leaders have those who will defend them (no matter what!)
- B.** Uses from the Text
- 1)** The fifth commandment (1 Pt 2:13-17; Eccl 10:16, 18)
 - 2)** There is a way Christians keep this command even under wicked rulers
 - a)** We can honour the magistrate by submitting to lawful laws
 - b)** We can honour the magistrate by refusing to obey ungodly laws
 - 3)** You may not curse (on your own authority), but you ought always to pray (even if that prayer is imprecatory, as God has all authority to curse and bless). (1 Tim 2:1-4)
 - 4)** A concluding encouragement — Why has God given His Word? Not only because it is to be obeyed, but because it will be obeyed! (Psa 72:8; Rev 11:15; Larger Catechism 191)