



NG Study Guide: Hab. 2:1-20 “Live by Faith” (11.21.21)

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: The key to this book, and the key to God’s dealings with humanity is, *the just shall live by his faith* (Hab. 2:4). In the midst of difficult circumstances, and despite the awareness of our fears and failures, God’s people experience profound hope and peace in trusting Him.

Subject: God’s Judgment and Babylon

Object: Trust God

Context: After Habakkuk shared his lament (sorrows) God replied. The prophet wondered why God allows the wicked to prosper. God ensures the prophet that rebellious Israel will be judged and that God will use the Babylonians as His instrument to render judgment. The prophet wondered why God would use those who were more wicked than the Jews. In this chapter, God assures the prophet, and us, that justice will triumph, but God’s people are to persevere in faith. The inevitability of God’s judgment of Babylon is revealed through five “woes” (v.5-19).

1. Assurance to the just (1-4):

I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected. ²*Then the LORD answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.* ³*For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* ⁴*“Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.*

Habakkuk makes clear his intention to continue to seek God and wait to hear from Him, *I will stand ... and watch to see what He will say to me* (1). He expects to gain perspective when he hears from God, *what I will answer when I am corrected* (1). God did not disappoint, *Then the LORD answered me and said* (2):

God’s truth (2): *Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.* God’s message is to be clear, tangible and understandable so that God’s people can apply it or live it. The prophet Ezra devoted himself to learn the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach God’s commands to Israel (Ezra 7:10).

God’s timing (3): *For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* The revelation given through the prophet would not be immediately fulfilled. The event(s) *tarries* or is delayed, but it will surely happen. Also, *it will not tarry* affirms that it will happen exactly when God plans.

The coming Babylonian conquest and Israel's restoration in the Promised Land would happen as God planned and foretold through His prophets. God's timing is perfect, He is never late! Similarly, the events concerning the Rapture (gathering of the Church) and the Second Coming also carries, but in another sense it will not tarry, but will certainly happen in His perfect time.

God is trustworthy (4): *“Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. The proud reject God's authority, and are set in contrast to the just or those who yield to God in humility. God's people are to live by faith. They are to have a confident assurance that God is trustworthy, that He cares, that He loves them, and He is good.*

Jesus is our example of *the just*, He always yielded to His Father and always trusts His plans. His words, works, voluntary death for our sins, and resurrection prove God's love and goodness.

Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the New Testament: in Romans 1:17 the emphasis is *the just*, in Gal. 3:11 the focus is *shall live*, and in Hebrews 10:38 *by faith* is highlighted. God's people have life with Him through faith in Christ, and growing faith produces growing confidence that God is trustworthy. We are called to persevering faith in God and His plan.

This verse was the key to Martin Luther's salvation as he realized that salvation was a gift by faith. Thus Habakkuk 2:4 is a key to the Protestant Reformation.

2. Assurance of justice (5-20): God will judge righteously those who reject Him.

In the remainder of the chapter, Babylon is pictured as *a proud man* (5). At the time of Habakkuk, Babylon is a rising power, but not an empire. Yet, God knows their future rise and their fall. God is assuring the prophet, and us, that He is aware of Babylon's evil. Although Babylon will be God's instrument to judge rebellious Israel, Babylon will also be judged. God sets forth the reason for judging the unjust like an indictment in verses 5-19. The charges are associated with five “woes.”

Crimes of conquest (5-8): *Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, and he does not stay at home. because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples. ⁶ “Will not all these take up a proverb against him, and a taunting riddle against him, and say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his—how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges?’ ⁷ Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you, because of men's blood and the violence of the land and the city, and of all who dwell in it.*

The plunder of other nations were the spoils of war, but were crimes against humanity.

Covetousness (9-11): *Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster! ¹⁰ You give shameful counsel to your house, cutting off many peoples, and sin against your soul. ¹¹ For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timbers will answer it.*

The accumulation of wealth and materialism came at the cost of oppressing people. Their pursuit of material gain (9) was a sin against their own soul (10).

Cruelty (12-14): *Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity! ¹³ Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

The splendor of Babylon was built on the bloodshed of other nations (12). Their cruelty was renown.

Drunkenness (15-17): *Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness! ¹⁶ You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also—drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory. ¹⁷ For the violence done to Lebanon will cover you, And the plunder of beasts which made them afraid, because of men's blood and the violence of the land and the city, and of all who dwell in it.*

Babylon was associated with drunkenness, *transgression by wine* (5). They not only engaged in drunkenness, but encouraged drunkenness (15). Their drunken behavior was to their shame (16).

Idolatry (18-19): *What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols?¹⁹ **Woe** to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone, 'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all.*

Babylon is renown as the epicenter of idolatry (Rev. 17:5). The rejection of the true and living God for a manmade object of worship that is powerless to save is not only futile, but is an offense to God.

3. Assurance to trust (20,14):

But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him (20).

God assures the prophet, and us, that He has not abdicated his throne, He remains in His *holy temple*. Since He is in heaven, and is all *holy* or morally perfect, than *all the earth* or His Creation has no reason nor right to question God's plan (See, Is. 6:1-8)

In the midst of the five "woes" or indictment against Babylon specifically, and the proud generally, God declares to the prophet, *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (14)*. This prophecy may have seemed improbable in the tiny country of Israel in the 7th Century B.C. Yet, even today Christianity is the only truly global religion with over two billion followers around the world. This prophecy will be ultimately fulfilled in the Second Coming. Just as the rise and fall of Babylon was foretold and occurred per God's plan, and the events concerning Jesus' First Coming occurred exactly as foretold, we have plenty of assurance to trust God and his plans in all seasons of life.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How would you like to apply, "The just shall live by his faith" in this season?

Q2. When you contemplate wickedness the likely feelings are generally numbness, overwhelmed, anger, or lament (sorrow/grief). Describe how you've experienced each of those feelings?

Q3. What thoughts or feelings come to mind as you consider that God will judge righteously those who reject Him?

Q4. How does fulfilled prophecy and/or past experience of God's faithfulness in your life provide assurance to trust?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article regarding the role of Bible prophecy:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-prophecy.html>.

2. Here are some additional thoughts regarding, "The just shall live by His faith"

<https://www.gotquestions.org/righteous-will-live-by-faith.html>.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Look for opportunities to share how your growing faith in God has helped you to navigate difficulties in your life.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.