

Lesson From the Lives of Judges

# DEBORAH A WOMAN OF CONVICTION AND COURAGE

## JUDGES 4:1-24

Text:

Introduction:

In the chapters before us today, we are introduced to two women who were used by God in great ways, for his glory. Those women are Deborah and Jael. One was a respected leader in the nation; the other was a simple housewife. They came from different walks of life, but they were both used by God in remarkable ways.

We will focus our attention on Deborah today since she was the respected leader.

We will see how God used a courageous, faithful woman to deliver His people from bondage and oppression.

Notice:

# 1. THE SPIRITUAL MELTDOWN IN ISRAEL (vs. 1-3)

These verses describe the horrible spiritual conditions that existed in Israel during the time of Deborah.

## A. Their Corruption (vs. 1)

### **Judges 4:1**

<sup>1</sup> *And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.*

After Ehud delivered Israel from Eglon and the Moabites, the land has rest from war for 80 years, Judges 3:30. As long as Ehud lived and judged the nation, the people followed God and served Him. When Ehud passed from the scene, the people returned to their sinful ways. We are told that they “again did evil in the sight of the Lord” Judges 5:8:

### **Judges 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> *They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?*

## B. Their Chastisement (vs. 2)

### **Judges 4:2**

<sup>2</sup> *And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose*

*host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.*

When Israel rebelled against God, He responded by giving them over to their enemies for punishment.

They paid a terrible price for their rebellion. The condition of the nation is described in Judges 5:6-7.

***Judges 5:6-7***

*<sup>6</sup> In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways. <sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.*

They were literally driven from their highways and their homes.

When we choose our ways over His ways, and when we choose to follow other gods instead of Him, we can expect His displeasure. He will send chastisement into our lives.

Notice not only the corruption and chastisement but also:

## C. Their Cry (vs. 3)

### **Judges 4:3**

<sup>3</sup> **And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD:** for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Israel was oppressed by Jabin and his armies for 20 years. As far as Israel was concerned, Jabin was undefeatable. He possessed a powerful army anchored by 900 chariots of iron. The helpless armies of Israel were no match for this enemy.

They were a conquered, defeated people. They were a people without hope. Eventually, they came to the place where they were tired of their situation. They called on the Lord and He heard them.

NOTICE:

They did not cry out in repentance, they cried out for deliverance from their problems. Israel never seemed to realize that walking with the Lord, and honoring His Word and His ways brought His blessings, while rebellion and wickedness always brought His judgment

Note not only “The Spiritual Meltdown in Israel” but also:

## 2. THE SPECIAL MINISTRY OF DEBORAH (VS. 4-24)

Notice:

### A. Her Position (vs. 4-5)

#### ***Judges 4:4-5***

*<sup>4</sup> And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

Deborah's name means – “bee”

Quote:

Matthew Henry said that her very name suggests the work of the bee: industrious, sharp perception (discernment), great usefulness, sweetness to her friends, and sharpness to her enemies.

The word judge lets us know that she settled disputes among the people of Israel, v. 5. They came to her with their problems and she rendered judgment.

## B. He Prophecy (vs. 6-7)

### **Judges 4:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup> And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? <sup>7</sup> And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.*

Deborah receives a word from the Lord and she calls Barak, to take 10,000 soldiers and go to war with the enemy. The Lord promises to defeat Sisera, the Canaanite general. God promises a great victory, if they will simply trust Him. And go to war.

## C. Her Problem (vs. 8-9)

### **Judges 4:8-9**

*<sup>8</sup> And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. <sup>9</sup> And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.*

Deborah has a word from the Lord. She shares that word with Barak, and she finds that Barak seems to be afraid to follow that word. He is willing to go to battle, but only if Deborah will go with him. She agrees to go, but tells him that since he depended on a woman, the glory of victory will be given to a woman!

Notice not only The Spiritual Meltdown In Israel, and the Ministry of Deborah but also:

### **3. THE SWEET MUSIC OF VICTORY (VSS.5:1-31)**

The victory over Sisera results in Barak and Deborah launching into song. Their song is recorded for us in chapter 5. It is a song of praise to the God Who gave them the victory over their enemy.

Notice:

#### **A. The Praised God for His Virtues (vs. 1-12)**

##### ***Judges 5:1-12***

*<sup>1</sup> Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, <sup>2</sup> Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.*

*<sup>3</sup> Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel. <sup>4</sup> LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth*

trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. <sup>5</sup> The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel. <sup>6</sup> In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways. <sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel. <sup>8</sup> They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? <sup>9</sup> My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD. <sup>10</sup> Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. <sup>11</sup> They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates. <sup>12</sup> Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

## B. The Praised God for His Volunteers (vs. 13-18)

### **Judges 5:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty. <sup>14</sup> Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down

*governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. <sup>15</sup> And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. <sup>16</sup> Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. <sup>17</sup> Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. <sup>18</sup> Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.*

When the call went out for volunteers, only half the tribes came to fight. The rest refused to go to war. In the days of Joshua, every tribe was expected to fight for the nation, when Barak called for warriors, many would not come.

By the way, things have not changed today. The majority of the work is carried out by a minority of the people.

### C. The Praised God for His Victory (vs. 19-23)

#### ***Judges 5:19-23***

*<sup>19</sup> The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. <sup>20</sup> They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. <sup>21</sup> The river*

*of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.* <sup>22</sup>

*Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.* <sup>23</sup> *Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.*

The enemy was defeated by the power of God. He sent the rain and defeated the 900 iron chariots of the Canaanites. One raindrop is a tiny, fragile thing, but when it is united with many other raindrops, it becomes a things of great power. Just as God took the weak raindrops and used them to wash away the enemy; He took the weak army of Israel and gave them a great victory.

#### D. The Praised God for His Vessels (vs. 24-31)

##### ***Judges 5:24-31***

<sup>24</sup> *Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.* <sup>25</sup> *He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.* <sup>26</sup> *She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.* <sup>27</sup> *At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he*

*bowed, there he fell down dead.<sup>28</sup> The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?<sup>29</sup> Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,<sup>30</sup> Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?<sup>31</sup> So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.*

They close their song by praising the Lord for His unsung heroes. They praised the Lord for the bravery of Jael the common housewife in slaying Sisera. Her act of bravery allowed the nation to enjoy victory.

God always has His people. He has those secret ones through whom He is working. We ought to praise God for the unsung heroes of the Christian faith.

Close:

**Judges 5:31**

<sup>31</sup> So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

This verse reminds us that the enemies of the Lord will be destroyed, while the faithful saints of God will shine with His glory someday.

Let me encourage you to keep on serving the Lord. I know the way gets weary. I know the path gets steep. I know that it often seems there is little reason, from a human standpoint, to carry on, but there is! One