

JUDGES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Judges chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Last time we looked at the first three Judges that God raised up to deliver the children of Israel in the southern region of the nation. Their enemies oppressed them because they turned from the Lord, moved into idolatry and when they repented God raised up a Judge to deliver them and we saw Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar raised up last time.

Tonight, in Judges chapters 4 and 5 the focus is now the northern region of the nation and the Judge that God raises up to deliver them from this oppression, an oppression that God brought upon them for their idolatry, and that Judge was Deborah. Here's the thing. You can't make a covenant with the enemy; you can't compromise your faith because when you do you are on a slippery slope away from God. Sin is sin and we are not to give it a place to grow in our lives. I like what Jon Courson wrote regarding a famous evangelist. He wrote:

From before the turn of the century into the days of the Great Depression, a colorful evangelist named Billy Sunday preached with an intensity unrivaled to this day. A professional baseball player before his conversion, Sunday caroused continually, partied frequently, and experienced the effects of sin most definitely. No doubt that is why he said, "I am against sin. I will kick it as long as I've got a foot. I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes to perdition."

- Jon Courson, Application Commentary,
Old Testament, Volume 1, p. 736

Folk's, the wages of sin is death! Make no mistake about it. Don't go down that path. Paul warns us in Romans 13:11-14, "**And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**"

We need to be awake, alert as we are living in these days, for they are evil. And if we are not paying attention, if we do not guard our lives, if we become complacent in our walk with the Lord, you are making provision for the flesh to control your life. Listen to the way that Spurgeon put it in regards to casting off the works of darkness. He said: “The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins.”

Paul tells us that we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, what does that mean. I like what Ray Stedman wrote as he gives to us this illustration in regards to putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. He said:

When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, “Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make him a part of your life that day. Intend that he go with you everywhere you go, and that he act through you in everything you do. Call upon his resources. Live your life **IN CHRIST.**”

- Ray Stedman

The Children of Israel did not do this and their compromise lead to their apostasy and the oppression they faced. May we learn the lesson that God is teaching us. With that said, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 4, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we look at the fourth Judge in Israel, Deborah.

JUDGES 4**VERSES 1-3**

1. Here again we see the death of a Judge, Ehud, and once he passes off the scene the people fall away from the Lord. That just tells me they never cultivated their own relationship with the Lord, it was only influenced by Ehud, the Judge. Folk's, our walk with the Lord can't be based upon someone else's walk. We need to cultivate it; we need to draw close to Him.
2. The oppression against these northern tribes in Israel came at the hands of Jabin, who was the king that reigned in Hazor. This city was located in the northern part of the land, about 10 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee and it was a stronghold in the northern Galilee area.
3. Here is the problem folk's. During the time of Joshua this area was taken but the enemy was not completely destroyed. Thus, this compromise, along with time, let the enemy grow to the point that they are now oppressing the tribes in this area, primarily Naphtali and Zebulun. But, if they would have obeyed the Lord, walked with the Lord, drove out this enemy in the first place, then they would not have allowed this provision of the flesh you might say, to overtake them now!

4. Now the central figure of this story is not king Jabin but the commander of his army, Sisera. He was obviously the muscle behind the throne. And this commander, Sisera, lived to the south of Hazor in Harosheth Hagoyim. So the bad guy of this story is Sisera and we will see who the good guy or gal is in a minute!

5. The sad thing here is it did not take Israel 8 years to repent before the Lord, or 18 years, but now it takes them 20 years of oppression before they come to their senses and turn back to the Lord! Now here's the thing. God did not need 20 years; He was standing with His arms of forgiveness opened wide if they would have only turned to Him sooner!

We see this illustrated for us with King David. For a whole year he covered up his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband and in Psalm 32:5 we are told, **“I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [continually unfolding the past till all is told] — then You [instantly] forgave me the guilt and iniquity of my sin. Selah [pause, and calmly think of that]!”**

As David confessed his sin before God, God forgave him. In fact, as soon as David confessed his sin God was standing there with His arms of forgiveness extended to David. The same is true for us as John reminds us, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

I John 1:9.

VERSES 4-5

1. Here we see God raise up Deborah, who was a prophetess and a Judge. Now I don't have a problem with her role as a prophetess because we see women in that role in the Old Testament. For instance we see Miriam in that role in Exodus 15:20 and Huldah is also spoken of as a prophetess in II Kings 22:14. And in the New Testament there is Anna in this role in Luke 2:36 and also the four daughters of Phillip in Acts 21:8-9.

Here is where I do have a problem. Deborah was also a Judge, and yes, I believe God allowed this because there was no man who was willing to take a stand for God, to lead the people. I don't believe the Scriptures teach that a woman is to rule over a man, especially as a spiritual leader. For us, I don't believe women should be pastors, not because I said so, God did. It is not that women aren't smart enough or qualified, it is just the role that God has established. And I know that some of you may not agree, but show me where God ordains women in the role of a pastor, you won't find any! And yes, in God's eyes we are all equal but just as God the Son was subject to God the Father in the incarnation, so a woman is to be in subjection to her husband. I didn't say that a woman is to be a slave for her husband or the man is to lord over his wife, not at all. In fact, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave His life for it. Ladies, that is a great place to be and men, don't forget your role!

2. But now in Israel we see a woman ruling over them, judging them, which shows me the condition of Israel. There were no men who would stand up and take charge in Israel, even Barak, as we will see, was not a strong leader, he was feeble in many ways! In Fact Isaiah 3:12 speaks of God treating them as children. He says, **“As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.”** Since no man is found to take a stand, God raises up a woman who is bold and strong! You also have to understand that in this male dominated society, this had to be humiliating to the Jews. But again, no man rose to the occasion to lead the children of Israel. And tragically, many times we see this in the church where the women are involved in all kinds of ministries, doing all kinds of work and the men are sitting back and not doing anything. That is wrong! Learn the lesson here and don't miss out in the blessings that God has for you!

3. Interestingly enough the name Deborah means, “honeybee.” I know, how sweet. In regards to this little honeybee, listen to what Jon Courson wrote:

The wax with which beehives are constructed is the most heat-resistant wax known to man and can withstand temperatures up to 140 degrees. However, at 141 degrees, the wax begins to melt. So when the hive nears the 141-degree mark, the bees begin to cluster around their hive and fan it by fluttering their wings 190 times per second, or 11,400 times per minute. No wonder bees are called industrious! They are also very discerning, with antennae containing between 2,000 and 3,000 plates through which they identify the proper flower from which to draw their nectar. Finally, bees are known for the sweetness of the honey they produce.

In Deborah, I see these same three characteristics: She was very industrious, very discerning, and very sweet. But she also packed a wallop of a sting, as we will see.

- Jon Courson, Application Commentary,
Old Testament, Volume 1, p. 736

VERSES 6-7

1. So Deborah calls for Barak to come down from the north, the area of Naphtali and it seems that she is just confirming a prophecy about this battle against Sisera that the Lord had already given to Barak and maybe he was not acting upon it yet or he did not believe it. But here is the conformation, go and destroy the enemy!

2. Now here is the battle plan. Barak was to take his men and station them on Mount Tabor, which rose some 1300 feet up and is located just south of the Sea of Galilee at the junction of the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar. Now why was it important for them to position themselves on Mount Tabor? Because Sisera had 900 iron chariots and they would be useless in the mountains, obviously. So this is more of a staging area for them as they prepare to go into battle, they will come down off of Mount Tabor to fight Sisera and his army.

3. The Lord says He is going to deliver Sisera and his army at the River Kishon. Folk's, this is not some raging river but a tiny stream. And yet God will take something that is not too impressive and make it into something that is to assist the children of Israel in this victory, as we will see. I see God doing that with us. We may not be too strong, too impressive, but God will use us to attain His victory in the battles that are out there. We just need to be open, to be available.

VERSE 8

1. Barak, the commander of this army tells Deborah that he will not go into battle unless she goes with him. You have to be kidding me? It is like saying, "I'm not going to war unless my mommy comes with me!" Sorry, but that is not good and we will see that in the next few verses. And I know, there are some who say that he is just being wise since God is directing her. I don't see it that way because of what we are told, like I said, in the next few verses, so let's read on.

VERSES 9-10

1. Because of his lack of faith in God, he trusted more in Deborah, the victory would not only be given to Deborah, but to another woman also, Jael. I truly believe God wants to use us but if we refuse to walk, God will raise up another and they will enjoy the spoils of the victory, those blessings!

VERSES 11-13

1. The Kenites were distant relatives to the children of Israel through Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. And it still goes back even farther for we can go all the way back to Abraham and his second wife, Keturah, (Genesis 25:1-4). And here we see Heber become an informant to Sisera telling him that Barak had gathered his army at Mount Tabor. Why did he do that? We aren't sure but it is possible, since he broke away from the rest of the Kenites who were living in the south, that he sided with a winner and that was king Jabin, at least that was up until this point in time!

2. So Sisera gathers his troops, 900 iron chariots, these war machines, and they are far outnumbering Barak and his troops, they have no chariots! Thus, they were at a great disadvantage, at least through the eyes of man. In God's eye's, through the eyes of faith, Barak was the one with the advantage, as we will see!

VERSES 14-16

1. Many believe this battle took place during the summer months, June to September because it was the dry season. And that does make sense since you would not take your chariots into battle during the rainy season because they would get stuck in the mud. Now here's the thing. We are not told of this in Judges chapter 4 but in Judges chapter 5, in the song of Deborah, where we are given more information about this battle, some details that were left out in Judges chapter 4. We are told that God sent a flash flood upon the land and the chariots go stuck in the mud! That is an important piece of information because it gives to us how God attained this victory for Israel!

When we were in Israel several years ago, we went to visit En Gedi, which is an oasis in the desert where David and his men hid from king Saul. And it was a nice day out as we started our hike to the waterfall. But there were storm clouds way in the distance, back around Jerusalem and it was making the tour guides nervous. You see, even though it was sunny by us, those rains in Jerusalem could send a flash flood to our area and we could get swept away, so they hurried us out of there because there was a bus that did get swept away because of one of these flash floods that came through! You could lose your life if you were caught traveling in this area, that is how fast and strong these waters could be. Thus, we then understood why our tour guides were so nervous!

2. And so as God rained down upon them, this tiny stream became a ragging river, the ground became like mud, these flashfloods came roaring down upon them, and the chariots were useless as they sank into this mud. The word “**routed**” in verse 15 speaks of “confusion” as their chariots were stuck in the mud and Israel was upon them. Thus, Sisera flees from his chariot, for it could not move in the mud, and high tails it away on foot. As we move to chapter 5, the song of Deborah, we will see this information regarding God opening the heavens and raining down upon the land as I have said.

VERSES 17-22

1. So Sisera, the commander of this army, flees to the tent of Jael and she opens her tent up to him. Sisera must have felt comfortable there because her husband, Heber, was the one who told him where Barak and his troops were located!

2. So Jael opens her tent to him, tucks him in, and he asks for water to drink and she brings him warm milk. How hospitable, how nice was Jael, up to a point I guess. Now, why did she give him warm milk instead of water to drink? Maybe to help put him to sleep! You see, as soon as he goes to sleep she grabs a tent spike and drives it through his skull, killing him. Sisera was nailed you might say, sorry!

3. Now, the Bedouin women were in charge of setting-up and taking down the tents, so Jael knew how to pound in a tent spike and really nailed this guy to the floor, literally! And as Barak comes on the scene, he finds Sisera dead, and as Deborah had said,

“ . . . there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of woman. . . .” Judges 4:9. Because he refused to walk by

faith, to be the spiritual man that God wanted him to be, God blessed not only Deborah, but also Jael and Barak was left out. And yet, when we come to the New Testament, in that section on the great hall of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, we are told in verse 32,

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.” God sees

Barak as a man of faith and has put away all his failures just as He does with us!

Now keep in mind that this was not only humiliating for Barak, that a woman destroyed the enemy, but for Sisera too. You see, to die in battle was a great honor, but to die in retreat and then by the hands of a woman was a double humiliation.

VERSES 23-24

1. Remember what I said earlier. The power behind king Jabin was the commander of his army, Sisera. And now that Sisera was gone and his army decimated, his power is also gone and Israel rose up and defeated the king who had oppressed them for 20 years!

2. Now, how can we apply this to our own lives? Ladies, don't get any ideas. If I see you at Fleet Farm getting some tent spikes I don't think you are planning a camping trip! Anyway, Charles Spurgeon had a sermon that was titled, "Sin Slain" and he saw Sisera as a type of sin, Jabin as a type of Satan and how we should look at sin slain by the work of Jesus, He has already won the battle! Let me take this a step further. Think of that tent spike as the Word of God and how we are to drive home the Word of God into the flesh to destroy the flesh. David put it like this in Psalm 119:9-11, "**How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**" May we make no provision for the flesh!

JUDGES 5**VERSES 1-2**

1. The children of Israel sang songs of deliverance many times. We saw in Exodus chapter 15 the song of Moses as God gave the children of Israel victory over the Egyptian army. Just a few verses of that song, **“Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: ‘I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble.”** Exodus 15:1-7. And here in Judges chapter 5 we see this song of deliverance as God gave the children of Israel victory over King Jabin and his commander, Sisera.

2. Folk's, leadership is important and especially in the work of God. People will follow where they are being lead but if the leadership refuses to go, so will the people! Think of it like this. A conductor of an orchestra is the one who is leading them and as the orchestra follows the conductor, as they are working together, beautiful music is made. But, if they all did their own thing, it would be a mess. The same is true in any Christian work, in any Christian church, may we not forget that!

It is as this story illustrates for us:

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College, and R. Scott Builione, a graduate student at Columbia University, presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestra perceived each other. The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving. String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and unathletic. The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose "loud" as the primary adjective to describe the brass players. Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem, described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Interesting findings, to say the least! With such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music? The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his guidance, they play beautiful music.

- Today in the Word, June 22, 1992

As Christians, we all have roles or positions in the body of Christ, let's work together and see the music that God can make as He works in us and through us!

VERSES 3-5

1. God gave victory to Israel just as He did during the Exodus, only this time He rained upon the enemy!

VERSES 6-8

1. The enemy had oppressed Israel for 20 years and life was dangerous. You stayed away from the open places; you would not take the main road but travel on the side roads where you could not be seen. Even the open walled villages were empty because they had no walls of protection. The enemy even confiscated their weapons of war from them!

2. Folk's Satan does the same by trying to disarm us. He tries to get us to lay down our spiritual armor, even taking away the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Don't let him. Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 6:10-18, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”**

Thus, put on the whole armor of God, including taking up the Sword of the Spirit but not limited to that piece of armor!

VERSE 9

1. Notice the heart of Deborah not only for the people but for the leaders in Israel who placed their lives on the line, on the altar of sacrifice unto the Lord and she is encouraging them to go forward. God wants no less from us, we too need to encourage each other and the leaders!

VERSES 10-12

1. How important it is to tell others of the great things our God has done and is doing in our lives and in the life of this church. It shows people that our God is living, our God is powerful, and our God can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think! It is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-16, **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

May we shine for Him!

VERSES 13-18

1. Deborah recognized that God worked and brought about this victory through the people and not apart from them. He could have done it on His own, but most of the time God desires to work through His people, you and me. And she acknowledges those tribes that came in and assisted in the work of this battle; Ephraim, Benjamin, West Manasseh as Machir was the eldest son of Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali. But sadly, there were those tribes that refused to come; they were Gilead; (Gad, on the east side of the Jordan), Dan, Asher and Ruben. And the people of Ruben thought about it, but that is all they did. They did not come to assist their brethren.

2. We see that in the work of God today. Many just sit on the sidelines, they don't want to get involved or they don't even care to get involved, and how sad that is. Imagine if every Christian stood up and was doing the work that God called them to do, working side-by-side with their brethren, the territory we can take back from the enemy!

VERSES 19-23

1. Here in verse 21 it speaks of the, "**torrent of Kishon.**" Remember that this was only a very tiny stream, insignificant, until God caused the heavens to open and the rain to fall down upon the land. And as this occurred the chariots were becoming stranded in the mud.

2. God curses Meroz, which was a town in Naphtali, but why? He cursed them because they did nothing, they did not assist their brethren! You see, sin is not only in our actions, but also when we ***DON'T*** do something when we should. God asked them for help, and they refused. We as Christians, by not coming to the battle, we are forsaking the work of the Lord. No we won't be cursed, but we certainly won't be blessed by doing nothing. Folk's, there are many blessings in serving the Lord.

VERSES 24-27

1. Here we see Jael honored for killing the enemy. One woman took down their powerful military leader! Folk's, God is looking for faithful people, people who are willing to walk by faith because He wants to give them the victory and in that he gets the glory!

2. This seems to contradict what happened in chapter 4, but what probably happened is as the tent spike went in, the body reflexes sat him up, and then he just fell down dead. I remember my dad telling me that when he was young they would get fresh chickens and have to kill them and de-feather them. And he said that many times when you cut their heads off they would run around for a few seconds before falling over. It is just the nervous system responding, but only for a few seconds.

VERSES 28-30

1. Here we see what Sisera's mother was thinking as she waits for her son to return from battle. She is thinking of the worst, but one of the young women tries to comfort her by telling her that the delay is due to them dividing the spoils of victory and enjoying themselves after this victory. How wrong she was.

VERSE 31

1. Here's the thing. Do you want to be an enemy of God or one who loves God? One is defeated and the other finds the victory in Him. And for us as Christians, if you love God you will hate His enemies. And I am not specifically speaking of people because God loves sinners. But God does hate the sin! And ultimately, apart from Christ He will judge sinners but we too need to love people with God's love; we are to love them into the kingdom of God! And because of this woman, because Deborah was willing to take a stand for God, to lead the people, because she exercised her faith, God blessed her and the children of Israel. We see that out of all this the land had rest for 40 years! May we be like this woman of faith and see what God can do as we take a stand for Him!