Deborah Stood Up

Judges 4-5

Introduction:

We see again the cycle of sin:

Israel falls into idolatry

God sells them into captivity

They cry out to God

God raises up a judge who delivers them

They live in peace until that judge dies

Then they fall into idolatry again

This is the second cycle in Judges. Before, God had raised up Othniel, Ehud, (Shamgar). After Ehud Israel had 80 years of peace.

Judges 4:1-3

“The children of Israel again did ﻿﻿evil in the sight of the Lord. When Ehud was dead, ﻿so the Lord ﻿﻿sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in ﻿﻿Hazor. The Commander of his army was Sisera.

He had 900 chariots of Iron and 100,000 men.

Israel had 10,000 men and no weapons at all.

Jabin oppressed Israel for 20 years.

God always has His man waiting in the wings.

This time His man was a woman named Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth.

There are other women in the Bible:

200 are mentioned by name.

200 others are mentioned anonymously.

There is another Deborah in Genesis 35:8

She was Rebekah’s nurse.

I. Deborah’s Devotion

A. She Was Committed to God.

1. She was a Prophetess.

A prophet (ess) received a message from God and gave it to the people.

Other Prophetesses in the Bible:

Old Testament:

Miriam – Moses’ and Aaron’s sister

“Then Miriam ﻿﻿the prophetess, ﻿﻿the sister of Aaron, ﻿﻿took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her ﻿﻿with timbrels and with dances.”

Huldah - II Kings 22:14

“So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess,”

New Testament:

Ana - Luke 2:36

“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of ﻿﻿Asher.”

Philip’s Daughters - Acts 21:9

“Now this man [Philip] had four virgin daughters ﻿﻿who prophesied.”

There were other prophets in the churches. Paul gives them instruction on how they should take part in the services.

There are no prophets or prophetesses today since what God has to say to His church has been written down.

When the complete revelation had come the partial revelation [including the gift of prophecy] was no longer needed and was done away. (I Corinthians 13:10)

2. She Judged Israel at that Time – 4:4-5

“she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment”

This is more like what we think of as a judge.

B. She Was Committed to Her Family.

Her husband was Lapidoth. Some people think that he was a weak individual.

One writer said that Lapidoth was a weak man married to a strong woman.

There’s no indication that this is true.

God’s men need the help of a good woman. When God calls a man, he calls a good woman with him.

God’s women need the help of a good man. When God calls a woman, He calls a good man with her.

We don’t know whether she had children, though one verse might indicate that she did.

Judges 5:7

“… I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.”

C. She Was Committed to Her Country.

As she judged under the palm tree, she heard the cries of the people under the slavery of Jabin.

According to the “Song of Deborah” in Chapter 5, she stood up to meet the challenge.

She called on Barak, a military man, to lead the army against Jabin.

“Then she sent and called for ﻿﻿Barak the son of Abinoam from ﻿﻿Kedesh in Naphtali,” (4:6a)

II. Deborah’s Dedication

A. She Was Dedicated to God’s Message

1. She Gave God’s Message to Barak.

When Barak came, she said to him,

“Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, ‘Go and ﻿﻿deploy *troops* at Mount ﻿﻿Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you ﻿﻿I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude at the ﻿﻿River Kishon; and I will ﻿﻿deliver him into your hand’?” (4:6b-7)

God had told Joshua at the beginning of the conquest of the land:

Joshua 1:7

“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law ﻿﻿which Moses My servant commanded you; ﻿﻿do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may ﻿﻿prosper wherever you go”.

Deborah had heard or read that and she believed it.

2. Barak was Not Too Sure - 4:8

“And Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!”

Don’t pound too many knobs on Barak’s head.

1. He hadn’t heard the voice of God.

2. Suppose God had something else to say!

Deborah chided him a little (4:9)

“So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will ﻿﻿sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”

She apparently did not mean herself, but Jael as we will see in a moment.

However, hold on to that idea of “no credit.” It may come back to haunt Deborah.

B. She Was Dedicated to God’s Manner.

God said that He would deliver Sisera into their hand, but He didn’t say how.

Deborah did not need to know the manner in which God would do it.

She was dedicated to God’s manner as well as His Word.

C. She Was Dedicated to God’s Means - 4:14-15

Remember the situation:

Sisera, Jabin’s general, had: 100,000 men – 900 chariots

Barack, God’s general, had: 10.000 men, no weapons, and God

Deborah gave a rousing speech - 4:14

“Then Deborah said to Barak, ﻿﻿“Up! For this *is* the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. ﻿﻿Has not the Lord gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.”

Notice that she used the past tense “has delivered” She was dedicated to God’s means.

D. She Was Dedicated to God’s Method

How could an army of 10,000 on foot defeat a large army with 900 chariots.

They used God’s method. We learn what that method was in the Song of Deborah - 5:4-5

“Lord, ﻿﻿when You went out from Seir, when You marched from ﻿﻿the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens poured, the clouds also poured water; the mountains ﻿﻿gushed before the Lord, this Sinai, before the Lord God of Israel.

David Jeremiah calls this the California Defense - earthquakes and flash-floods.

The Kishon River was dry for months at a time. The Canaanites knew when those times were. In the dry season the river bed was hard as rock. The chariots rode well on the bed.

Judges 5:21 adds:

“The torrent of Kishon swept them away, That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength!

So, the army is defeated, but where is Sisera?

He ran away, like the villain in a cowboy movie. The guy in the black hat runs away and the hero in the white hat goes after him.

Only Barak doesn’t follow him. He gets away and goes to the house of one he thought was a friend, Jael.

She was a friend of Israel. She gave him some warm milk and he fell asleep. She took a tent peg and a hammer and nailed him through the temple to the ground while he slept.

In The Song of Deborah she imagines Sisera’s mother waiting for him to return from the battle.

Judges 5:28-30

“The mother of Sisera looked through the window, and cried out through the lattice, ‘Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?’ Her wisest ﻿﻿ladies answered her, Yes, she ﻿﻿answered herself, ‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil: To every man a girl *or* two; For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments, plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,

III. Deborah’s Determination

A. She Was Determined To Fight the Enemy

Against all odds she stood up to the enemy.

It’s hard enough when you have everything you need.

It’s another story when you need everything.

She didn’t know how God would do it; She just knew that He would.

We have an awesome enemy as well.

Peter tells us in 1Peter 5:8:

“Be ﻿﻿sober, be ﻿﻿vigilant; ﻿﻿because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Talk about bad odds! These are worse than Deborah’s odds. Don’t under-estimate him.

Don’t make fun of him, he is the 2nd most powerful being in the whole universe.

Even Michael, the archangel dared not bring an accusation against the Devil (Jude 9).

Yet Michael the archangel, in ﻿﻿contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ﻿﻿“The Lord rebuke you!”

We don’t need to fear him, but we do need to respect his power and determination to fight against God’s people to the very end

Deborah knew that she also had to depend on the Lord to fight the battle. She did, and He did!

But that was not the only test she encountered:

B. She Was Determined To Face the Opposition. Barak almost didn’t go.

The opposition is not always from the outside. It often comes from the inside.

Jesus experienced this kind of opposition in His most critical hour:

One disciple betrayed Him,

One denied Him,

The rest forsook Him.

(With the possible exception of John)

Deborah faced the opposition and overcame it in God’s strength.

Barak went, but he went reluctantly. She warned him that he would not get the credit.

I wonder if she did not enjoy that a little too much.

Surprise! Have you read Hebrews 11:32 lately?

“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:

Conclusion:

Don’t put God in a box, unless it is a box of His own making.

He describes His boxes in His Word.

God can use anything and anybody in any circumstance, unless He has stated categorically in His Word that He will not do so.

Then, in that case, not even God can do it. He also is bound by His own Word.

He cannot lie; He will not change what He has said in His Word.

God may surprise you by what He does through you.

God may surprise others by what He does through you.

God may surprise you by what He does through others.

Dwight L. Moody said,

“The world has yet to see what God will do through a fully dedicated person. By God’s grace, I will be that person.” Amen.