

## THE BOOK OF JUDGES

### "Deborah, Woman Judge in Israel"

Judges 4:1-24

#### Introduction

1. God's fourth judge was a woman (v. 4). She took the lead, under God, following 80 years of peace (3:30).
2. Other women have been used by God. Miriam was one (Ex. 15:20) and so was Hulda (1 Kings 22:14). There are many in their ranks: Ruth, Hannah, and Mary! God, therefore, has His place for the women in His purpose.
3. But it is not that God uses women which seems to be the emphasis in the chapter. It is this: successful teamwork is necessary for effective ministry unto God. The entire account illustrates how people worked together and they triumphed. What a lesson!
4. Here are the facts:

#### 1. CANAAN--oppressed Israel vv. 1-3.

It is true that the oppression was due to the sin of Israel (v. 1), but that is not the full story, albeit the core of it. It was a ripe time for the Israelites to be moved against by the Canaanites. The Egyptians 19th dynasty under Seti I (1316-1304 B.C.), Rameses II (1304-1238 B.C.), and Merneptah (1238-1228 B.C.) had kept the Canaanites subjected. Now there had been a resurgence of their power and this was ill for the Israelites. It coincided with Israel's sin. Politics and religion are all in God's hands! The Canaanites had plenty of military hardware (v. 3) and they oppressed the Jews for 20 years. Jabin and Sisera had joined to make it unbearable for the nation. They cried for deliverance (v. 3). God intervened--with a woman!

#### 2. DEBORAH--enlists Barak vv. 4-10.

She was both a prophetess and a judge (v. 4). Her service was in the south and with the public under a tree (v. 5). Knowing her limitations, she enlisted Barak, a man from the north (v. 6). She had God's Word (revelation) to incite her to action (v. 6). She instructed him and prophesied the outcome (vv. 6, 7). He agreed to go if she cooperated, and this she did (vv. 8, 9). Deborah predicted

a woman would gain the victory (v. 9), although Barak must have 10,000 troops. It is thrilling to see a woman judge from the south help to resolve incursions into northern tribe areas. God revealed the strategy of victory to her.

3. GOD--defeats Canaan vv. 12-16.

Sisera heard that Barak marshalled his forces at Mt. Tabor (v. 12). He initiated his move towards the River Kishon (v. 13). Deborah got the signal of these events and issued the call to Barak to attack (v. 14). He did and the Lord gave the victory (v. 15). The verb "discomfited" means to rout and bring to ruin. God's intervention was powerful (Ex. 14:24; Josh. 10:10). Josephus says that God sent a great hailstorm and numbed the fingers of the Canaanites with the cold so that they were unable to fight. Whatever God employed, the fact is that the Canaanites were totally defeated and Sisera ran away on foot (vv. 15, 16).

4. JAEL--kills Sisera vv. 17-22.

Heber, the husband of Jael, is introduced earlier (v. 11). The Kenites were probably related in some way to the Midianites (Ex. 2:16-18; Judges 4:11). Apparently, Heber had moved from the ancestral center around Arad (Judges 1:16; 1 Sam. 15:6; 27:10) north to the plain of Zaanaïm (4:11). It was this man's wife who ultimately killed Sisera after having shown him some kindness. Apparently, there had been some sort of agreement between Heber and Jabin, but in the end, Jael sided with Israel against the Canaanites. She took a tent peg and nailed Sisera to the floor (v. 21). So Jael was the woman whom Deborah predicted would slay the Canaanites (v. 9).

5. ISRAEL--destroys Jabin vv. 23, 24.

It is true that God intervened for the nation (vv. 15, 23), but Israel was involved, too (v. 24). Deborah's song of deliverance reveals that several tribes helped in this war: Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir (half tribe of Manasseh on the west of Jordan), Zebulun (5:14), Issachar (5:15), and Naphtali (5:18). Some did not help: Reuben (5:15), Gilead, Dan, and Asher (5:17). Judah, Simeon, and Gad are not even mentioned. With such a national tragedy, one would have hoped for total involvement.

Conclusion One of the greatest needs among the saints today, in a practical way, is unity and full cooperation.