

## Judges 4 - Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

(1) When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.

- Right out of the shoot, verse one should give us all pause, and it's not necessarily for the reasons you might think. Here's what I'm thinking:
- It's only after Ehud's death that the Israelites once again did evil in the sight of the Lord. This suggests that they put Ehud on a pedestal.
- Through no fault of his own, the Israelites gave Ehud a place of prominence in their lives, such that once he's gone, they return to their evil.

- The reason I point this out is because every pastor's fear in the sense that those under his care would backslide in the event of his death.
- Actually, and really, sadly, this type of scenario plays out whenever some prominent minister falls morally in that people are stumbled by it.
- Usually, this is a good indication that they've given that man too much of a place in their lives, so when they fall or die, they're devastated.

(2) So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army *was* Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim.

- Just like with verse one giving us pause so too should verse two give us pause. The reason I say that is because of this king of Canaan.
- Here's how I get there, had they Israelites obeyed God's command to drive out all the Canaanites, they wouldn't be taken captive by them.
- Could it be that whenever God commands us to do something, that He always does so, because He knows the end from the beginning?

(3) And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

- The first time the Israelites were oppressed it took them eight years to cry out, then the second time it took them eighteen years to cry out.
- Now, here we read how that it would take them twenty years to cry out. How could this be possible? Shouldn't it be less instead of more?
- Why wasn't it twenty minutes instead of twenty years? You'd think they'd learn their lesson and cry uncle sooner the third time around.

- Here's one thought; it's because sin is so captivating and debilitating. By that I mean, to be in bondage to sin, is to be enslaved by that sin.
- So much so that we are rendered incapable to cry out because of the sins oppression, and unwilling to cry out because of sins pleasure.
- The problem is sin is only pleasurable for a season, or better said; a short time of sins pleasure, can lead to a long time of sins bondage.

Hebrews 11:25 He (Moses) chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

(4) Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

- Now we're introduced to the next deliverer or Judge, and she's the only woman out of thirteen deliverer's, with the other twelve being men.
- Deborah is a most fascinating lady as we'll see here in a moment and it's on several fronts, not the least of which is her name is her nature.

Jon Courson in his commentary captures this in a rather profound and poignant way when he writes; "I find it fitting that Deborah's name means "bee." 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."

(5) And 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.

- Notice how in the previous verse were told Deborah was a prophetess, and here in this verse we're told she had a tree named after her.
- It would seem God had gifted her with not only a prophetic gift, but had also gifted her with that bee like discernment of sound judgment.
- It's for this reason deliverer's are called judges. Like with Deborah, they come to her with problems that she would judge from God's Word.

(6) Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and 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; (7) 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?'"

- Here we're introduced to this man by the name of Barak, who apparently, God is going to use to draw ten thousand men into this battle.
- What's interesting about this is, in so doing God will also draw the troops of the enemy's army into this battle along with all their chariots.
- Furthermore, God will also assure them and guarantee them that in drawing together these troops, He will absolutely give them victory.

Charles Spurgeon - "The Lord has not only leading strings to draw His people, but fatal cords with which to draw His foes whithersoever He wills."

(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!" (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." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

- At first glance, it would be very easy to write Barak off as a coward and a wimp in the abdicating of his God given authority to take the lead.
- However, I don't think it would be too wise to jump on this bandwagon. The verses that follow have him fighting bravely as a mighty warrior.
- That's not to say he's off the hook, not just yet. Here's why, he's still subordinating to the leadership of a woman in saying this to Deborah.

- It's not so much that he subordinates to her, it's more a matter of why he subordinates to her. I would suggest it's more about her than him.
- I would submit, Barak is more confident in her spiritual discernment and judgment than he is in his own, thus he defers to her leadership.
- Please know that this doesn't excuse it rather, it only explains it. I say that because of what Deborah says concerning there being no glory.

Charles Spurgeon - "He had not faith enough to go alone, and therefore, though he won the battle, he had not the honor of the victory. We lose much when we lean upon an arm of flesh. At the same time he showed a noble spirit in entering upon a conflict in which another was to receive the chief honor."

(10) And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him. (11) Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which *is* beside Kedesh. (12) And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. (13) So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

- I've never seen myself as the sharpest knife in the kitchen drawer, or the brightest bulb in the pack, but it seems the odds are against them.
- Not only is God seemingly placing them in a terrible disadvantage, but He also seems to be cruel having just promised them a sure victory.
- Well, if you were here last week for our study in chapter three, what happens next won't come as a surprise by virtue of the tactical detail.

- Notice we're told that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor. Why do we need to know this? because 900 chariots are useless on a mountain.
- OK, but we're also told they took their 900 chariots to the River Kishon. Why? Because now God has got them right where He wants them.
- The details in scripture are there to show us Who and how God is. This detail teaches us that even at a disadvantage, God is still in control.

(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. (15) And the LORD routed Sisera and all *his* chariots and all *his* army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from *his* chariot and fled away on foot. (16) But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

- When we get to chapter five, we will have some blanks filled in for us as it relates to how God did what He did here in giving them victory.
- Suffice it to say for now anyway, God supernaturally sends a flash flood to that River Kishon where they just happen to have 900 chariots.
- Oh and by the way, Barak and his army was safe on Mount Tabor, and I'll bet they're glad they didn't first go to the River Kishon instead.

(17) However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for *there was* peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. (18) And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. (19) Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. (20) And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.' " (21) Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. (22) And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her *tent*, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

- I'm thinking verses seventeen through twenty-two should be rated at least PG13 because of all the violence and it's from a woman no less.
- Maybe a little cultural context may help us understand the why behind the "what" of this account. The woman back then put up their tents.
- To this day in the Middle-East, the Bedouin women do this type of work. In other words, you really don't want to mess with these ladies!

- While that's certainly not the lesson of the text, it does contain within it another one of those interesting details that can be missed at first.
- First, this Jael invites Sisera into her tent, which would have been reasonable by virtue of how there was peace between both their people.
- Second, because he's cold from that supernatural flash flood, in addition to the shelter of her tent she also offers him a blanket to get warm.

- The third detail is, instead of giving him water when he asks, she gives him milk, which he didn't ask for. This would've made him sleepy.
- Then, he tells her to go to the door and lie for him even though he knows no one would suspect a man would be hidden in a women's tent.
- Again, all these details come in to play as she waits for him to fall asleep, at which time she takes the peg and drives it into Sisera's head.

Charles Spurgeon preached a wonderful sermon titled *Sin Slain* on how the we can take Sisera as a type of sin, and his boss (Jabin) as a type of Satan. Just as Jael asked Barak to look at the dead body of Sisera, Spurgeon said we should look at sin slain by the work of Jesus, knowing He has already won the battle.

(23) So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. (24) And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it further reinforces the typology we saw in the previous passage.
- Notice how that the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, until they had finally become strong enough to destroy him.
- This is how it is for us. We grow stronger and stronger in the spirit in our ongoing battle against the flesh until we can finally put it to death.

Romans 8:13 NIV For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Colossians 3:5 NIV Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.