

JUDGES

Lesson 3 w/Answers

Deborah

In this lesson we will look at the mighty ways in which God used women to deliver Israel from its oppressors, as we examine the only woman Judge, Deborah. We will also be learning about a woman named Jael and a man named Barak. Because of their faith in God, Israel will again be delivered from its oppressors.

Consistent with the theme of Judges, upon the death of the leader/judge, Ehud, the people of Israel slid back into their evil ways; and God used their enemies to bring them to their knees. As they cry out to God for deliverance, He once again does the unexpected and sends a woman to deliver them. Our study will reveal much about (a) the role of women in God's kingdom, (b) our own personal walk with the Lord, and (c) how God quite often does things in ways that we do not expect.

Read Judges Chapters 4 and 5 and answer the following:

1. What happened when Ehud died? (see Judges 4:1)
 - a. ANSWER: When Ehud died, just as with the judges who came before, the people "did evil in the eyes of the Lord."
2. How long did the Canaanite king, Jabin, oppress the Israelites? (see Judges 4:2-3)
 - a. ANSWER: This particular time they were oppressed for twenty years.
3. Why would the "nine hundred iron chariots" be a cause for the children of Israel to cry out to the Lord? (see Judges 4:3)
 - a. ANSWER: A standing army, such as the one possessed by Israel, would not have been able to defeat such a large number of iron chariots without God's help.
4. In addition to being a Judge, what else was Deborah known for? (see Judges 4:4)
 - a. ANSWER: Deborah was also a prophet and an actual judge as well.
5. Considering that Deborah was a real Judge, as well as a deliverer; read Judges 4:5 and try to draw a parallel with someone else in the Bible who also judged in a similar fashion. Who was this person?
 - a. ANSWER: Moses also held court in this manner until the burden became so great that he appointed judges to handle the work for him. (Exodus 18:13-26)
6. Read Judges 4:6-10. Who told Barak to draw out a 10,000-man army?
 - a. ANSWER: Deborah directed him to do it.
7. In the passage referenced in the previous question, what was Barak's reaction when Deborah brought God's command to his attention?
 - a. ANSWER: Barak replied that he would not go into battle as the leader unless Deborah went with him. (He was weak in character, for sure.)
8. Based on your findings above, would you consider Barak to be a man of faith? How did Paul describe him? (see Hebrews 11:32-33)
 - a. ANSWER: From this portion of the scriptures, you would not think that in later passages, the Bible would refer to him as a man of faith. However, clearly, in Hebrews he is listed with many men of faith.
9. Read Judges 4:9 again. Can you name the woman into whose hand the Lord gives Sisera? (And no, it is not Deborah.)
 - a. ANSWER: See also Judges 4:18-22. Jael, Heber's wife, is the woman into whose hand God gave Sisera.
10. The plot thickens in Judges 4:11-12. Whom does verse 11 tell us that Heber the Kenite was loosely related to? How did he help the Lord in preparing for the defeat of the Canaanites?
 - a. ANSWER: Heber is loosely related to Moses; he is a Kenite and a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law. In verse 17, we read that Sisera fled to the Kenites "because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite." This alliance is how God used Heber and Jael to defeat the Canaanites.
11. Read about the battle with Sisera in Judges 4:13-16. What does it tell us happened to all of Sisera's army?
 - a. ANSWER: It tells us that "all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left."

12. Exactly how did the above happen? Clearly, we see God's immediate and ever-present hand in this great victory! Now see Judges 5:20-22. How was Barak able to slay with the sword all of Sisera's army, including the 900 chariots of iron?
- a. ANSWER: We learn that God intervened from the heavens, bringing heavy rain to the Kishon spring. As such, the 900 chariots got mired in the mud, allowing Barak's army to slay all of the opposing army, including those in the iron chariots.
13. Can you think of somewhere else in the Bible where we have seen God accomplish something similar to this before? What does this indicate to us regarding what to do when we are being faced with impossible situations in life? If we crying out to God, will He be faithful in hearing our pleas for help?
- a. ANSWER: There are many examples of God intervening in a mighty, but unexpected, way to redeem his people and defeat his enemies. We will see this vividly illustrated in Judges chapter 6 with a judge named Gideon. We of course have seen this previously in God's miraculous delivery of His chosen people out of bondage in Egypt, and the defeat of the Egyptian army and their chariots in the Red Sea. For us today, this should provide reassurance to us today that if we cry out to God, He will hear and respond to our prayers.
14. Read verses Judges 4:17-22. What did Jael do? Do we see Deborah's prophecy fulfilled in Jael? Can we see that she and Heber were playing a small, but very important, part in God's plan? We should view what we accomplish for God in our lives the very same way, as we perform a small (or great), but key, part in God's sovereign plan for us and for those around us.
- a. ANSWER: Heber and his wife Jael demonstrate the value of following God no matter the circumstance. Sometimes, as was the case here, God simply wanted them camped at exactly the right location, at the perfect time (when an alliance existed); so that God's greater plan would be fulfilled. It also shows us that we should be ready to act on God's behalf at any moment. Since He does not always show us in advance what we are to do, He simply wants us to be faithful and ready, always watching for opportunities to serve in any capacity.
15. Who actually subdued Jabin, the king of the Canaanites, and his forces? (see Judges 4:23)
- a. ANSWER: The record is clear: "God subdued Jabin king of Canaan."

So many lessons from this study can be applied in our lives today. First, we see that God uses both women and men in the kingdom to accomplish His purposes—and both are called to lead, to prophecy, to teach, to judge, and to carry out God's will.

Secondly, we see once again that nothing is impossible for God. Although the protracted oppression and the mighty army, complete with iron chariots, worried the children of Israel, it was of no consequence to God.

We also see that God's approach to things is very often completely different from ours, and that God answers prayers in ways we cannot even imagine. As Moses and the freed slaves from Egypt stood on the shore watching the Egyptian army rapidly close in on them, they could not imagine that that was exactly what God wanted. How could that be!? And yet, it was God's perfectly-devised plan for preserving them. So it was with the battle recounted in Judges 4 as well. Trusting in God means trusting Him completely, and not trying to limit him as a result of our humanly-constrained view of how we envision that something should be accomplished.

Finally, we are made aware that, as God's plan is unfolding, there are many "moving parts", i.e., everyone has a role. If we are faithful in our own walk, we will be a part of God's great and sovereign plan for mankind. In our story from Judges today, no one involved knew how God would enable them to be victorious, but they all believed that we would.

And so it is with us today. It should be sufficient to know that God has a reason for everything that he does in our lives, even if, at the time, we don't understand what the reason is.

May your faith in Him continue to grow from our study of this story, in which God's faithfulness in hearing the cries of His people was clearly demonstrated.

May God richly bless you this week as you study His Holy Word.

In Christ,

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