

## DEBORAH – PART ONE

### Introduction:

1. Deborah has a unique place in the history of Israel and in the record of Scripture.
2. She is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible.
3. Yet, she stands alongside other women of great faith – Sarah, Hannah, Rahab, Ruth – as an example of a godly servant.

### I. Deborah's Selection

A. The story of Deborah raises many questions in the minds of many students of the Scriptures.

1. Why did God choose a woman to be the judge of His people?
2. How could Deborah be a judge and not violate God's role for women – a role that goes back to the Garden of Eden (cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-15)?
3. Since Deborah was a judge, can women be preachers, deacons, elders, or other public leaders in the church?

B. However, most of the confusion arises from not studying carefully what the Bible teaches about Deborah.

C. First, Deborah was a prophetess (4:4).

1. A prophet is an inspired spokesman for God.
  - a. They engaged in foretelling – *predicting the future*.
  - b. They engaged in forth-telling – *preaching God's Word*.
  - c. They were simply spokesmen – receiving and delivering God's message.
2. A prophetess is a female prophet.
3. In Judges 4:5-7, Deborah is engaged in delivering God's Word.
4. Deborah is one of several prophetesses mentioned in Scripture.
 

a. Exodus 15:20 –	Miriam
b. 2 Kings 22:14 –	Huldah
c. Nehemiah 6:14 –	Noadiah
d. Luke 2:36 –	Anna
e. Acts 21:9 –	Philip's daughters
f. Acts 2:17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:5 –	Christian women
5. So, how does this harmonize with God's role for women?
  - a. Deborah judged in a private setting (vs. 5).
  - b. Deborah taught one on one, in private (vs. 6).
  - c. Deborah led from the background (vs. 10, 14; Heb. 11:32).
  - d. Deborah praised along with others (5:1, 12).
6. Deborah judged Israel without usurping authority over the men.
7. Women can and must work for the Lord.
  - a. They can teach privately and one on one (Acts 18:24-28).
  - b. They can help alongside faithful men (Acts 18:26).
  - c. Men who lead need the support of faithful women.
    - i. Can a sister correct a preacher's mistake?
    - ii. Can a sister question or challenge the elders?
    - iii. Can a sister encourage a good work?
  - d. They must publicly praise God – in the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:34; Ephesians 5:19).
8. These things can be done without public leadership roles.

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- D. Second, Deborah was chosen as a judge because no man would stand up and serve (4:6-9!)
  - 1. God had previously given this instruction, but Barak (nor any other man) had stepped up to obey and to lead.
  - 2. Barak's weakness jumps from the page when he declares, "I will go if you will go."
  - 3. It is a shame when women have to do the work that God has ordained for men!
    - a. In the home (Ephesians 6:4)
    - b. In the nation (Isaiah 3:1-12)
    - c. In the church (1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Timothy 2:3-5)
  - 4. Rise up, O men of God!

## DEBORAH – PART TWO

Introduction:

1. Deborah has a unique place in the history of Israel and in the record of Scripture.
2. She is the only female judge mentioned in the Bible.
3. She stands alongside other women of great faith as an example of a godly servant.

II. Deborah's Service

A. Deborah served as a guide (4:1-5).

1. Again, Israel sinned against God and He sold them into the hands of the Canaanites.
  - a. At that time, Jabin was the king of Canaan.
  - b. Sisera was the captain of the Canaanite army.
  - c. They were a well-armed and imposing force, with 900 iron chariots.
  - d. Thus, they oppressed Israel for twenty years (cf. 5:6-8).
2. Deborah was the judge of Israel and she sought to guide the people back to God's Word.
3. Keep in mind that she did this in a way that did not violate God's role for women.
  - a. The word "dwelt" is the Hebrew word for "sat."
  - b. In the context, it carries the meaning of sitting as a judge (cf. Exodus 18:13).
  - c. However, this function was usually performed in the gate of the city (cf. Deuteronomy 16:18; 25:7; Genesis 34:20; Ruth 4:1-2; Proverbs 22:22; Amos 5:10-15).
  - d. That Deborah did not sit at the gate of the city is an indication of her unwillingness to assume the position or authority of a man.

B. Deborah served as a motivator (4:6-9).

1. She reminded Barak of God's commands (cf. Acts 18:26).
2. She reminded Barak of God's promises.
3. She reminded Barak of God's justice.
  - a. God would be glorified in this battle, but not Barak.
  - b. In fact, the hero of the story would be a woman – but not Deborah.
  - c. God would not reward the cowardice of Barak.

C. Deborah served as a colleague (4:10-16).

1. Deborah kept her word and went with Barak to the site of the battle, along with 10,000 infantrymen from Zebulon and Naphtali.
  - a. Joining these two tribes in battle were men from Ephraim, Benjamin, West Manasseh (Machir), and Issachar (5:14-15).
  - b. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, East Manasseh (Gilead), Dan, and Asher refused to help in the battle (5:15-17).
2. Sisera was warned of the approaching Israelites by Heber, a Kenite who had separated himself from his people.
3. This gave Sisera opportunity to gather his forces – including the chariots of iron that Israel feared so greatly – and prepare for battle.
  - a. Surely, Sisera calculated that he would win a decisive victory over the ill-equipped forces of Israel.

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- b. He did not take into account the fact that God would fight for His people.
      - c. Notice that the forces were assembled near the river Kishon.
    - 4. Deborah informs Barak that this is the day God has chosen for battle.
      - a. On the day of battle, God sent a tremendous storm that led to Israel's victory (5:19-22).
      - b. It seems that the river Kishon overflowed – making the chariots of Sisera of no use in battle.
    - 5. Thus, with his faith in Jehovah, Barak led Israel into the fight.
    - 6. God fought for Israel and gave them a complete and total victory.
      - a. The word “discomfited” means, “to put in commotion; to disturb, confuse, trouble, vex.”
      - b. Thus, the organized troops of Sisera became a confounded and confused mess.
      - c. Israel needed only to pursue and attack their troubled enemy.
    - 7. However, there was one who escaped the battle – Sisera jumped from his chariot and ran away.
  - D. Deborah served as an example (4:17-24).
    - 1. Sisera continued to run until he came to the tent of Heber's wife, Jael.
      - a. It was Heber who had demonstrated friendship toward Sisera by warning him of Israel's approach.
      - b. Also, there was a peaceful relationship between Heber's family and Jabin, king of Canaan.
    - 2. No doubt, Sisera chose Jael's tent as a place to hide hoping that the woman's privacy would be respected and her tent not searched.
    - 3. Jael allowed him into her tent and hid him by covering him with a mantle (a rug or thick covering).
    - 4. He asked for water, but Jael gave him milk to drink.
    - 5. According to the tradition of those times, one could not enter a woman's quarters without her permission.
    - 6. However, instead of protecting Sisera, when he fell asleep due to his exhaustion, Jael drove a tent spike through his temples and killed him.
      - a. Many have question why Jael would do this.
      - b. Remember there was a connection between the Kenites and Moses (cf. Numbers 10:29).
      - c. In fact, the Kenites had been allowed to dwell with the tribe of Judah (Judges 1:16).
      - d. It is possible that Jael still felt allegiance to Israel even though her husband had sided with the Canaanites.
      - e. Nevertheless, she fulfilled God's promise that the glory of the battle would go to a woman (cf. 9:54).
    - 7. When Barak arrived in pursuit of Sisera, Jael showed him the body of his enemy.
    - 8. Thus, Israel prevailed over Canaan, Sisera, and even Jabin.
- III. Deborah's Song
  - A. 5:1-11 – God is to be praised for His vigor
  - B. 5:12-18 – God is to be praised for His volunteers
  - C. 5:19-23 – God is to be praised for His victory
  - D. 5:24-31 – God is to be praised for His vengeance