

## Judges 5A

- As we ended chapter 4, the king of Canaan was defeated by Barak and his army
  - But in reality, that victory belonged to the Lord
    - He orchestrated it
    - He initiated it
    - And He accomplished it
  - And the Lord brought it about principally by the hands of two women
    - Deborah the Judge announced the manner and timing of the battle
    - And she called the man, Barak, who the Lord selected to wage the war
    - She even provided Barak with the sign to recognize victory was at hand
    - Without Deborah's prodding, the reluctant warrior might never have entered the fight
  - But the final victory belonged to a second woman, Jael, who killed Sisera, the commander of Canaanite army
    - Jael means mountain goat, and her name reflects her toughness
    - She smartly coaxed the commander into her tent
    - And after putting him to sleep, she dispatched him with a hammer and tent peg
    - She mustered the determination and courage to do what was necessary and in so doing, she freed Israel
- Chapter 4 presented a complicated look at the Jewish culture during the time of the third Judge
  - Samuel's story was a study in contrasts
    - Israel's culture had strong leaders...but they were all women

- And the men of Israel had no effective means for challenging the powerful chariots of the Canaanite king
  - Yet they readily volunteered and went up to fight with Barak in faith that the Lord would deliver them
  - While Israel's enemy was powerful and confident
  - But ended up running away to seek safety and refuge in the tent of a women
- What is Samuel trying to teach us by these contrasting images?
    - That's why we have chapter 5
    - Today's chapter is a song of praise sung by Deborah and Barak to the Lord following the defeat of the king
    - The song serves as commentary on the events of chapter 4
    - So it brings into focus not only *what* happened by also *why* it happened
  - The song has three parts, and each part contains it's own contrast, so we'll study it according to its three parts, beginning with part 1 today

**Judg. 5:1** Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying,

**Judg. 5:2** "That the leaders led in Israel,

That the people volunteered,  
Bless the LORD!

**Judg. 5:3** "Hear, O kings; give ear, O rulers!

I – to the LORD, I will sing,  
I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.

**Judg. 5:4** "LORD, when You went out from Seir,

When You marched from the field of Edom,  
The earth quaked, the heavens also dripped,  
Even the clouds dripped water.

**Judg. 5:5** "The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD,  
This Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel.

**Judg. 5:6** "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,  
In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted,  
And travelers went by roundabout ways.

**Judg. 5:7** "The peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel,  
Until I, Deborah, arose,  
Until I arose, a mother in Israel.

[Judg. 5:8](#) “New gods were chosen;

Then war was in the gates.

Not a shield or a spear was seen

Among forty thousand in Israel.

[Judg. 5:9](#) “My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel,

The volunteers among the people;

Bless the LORD!

[Judg. 5:10](#) “You who ride on white donkeys,

You who sit on rich carpets,

And you who travel on the road – sing!

[Judg. 5:11](#) “At the sound of those who divide flocks among the watering places,

There they shall recount the righteous deeds of the LORD,

The righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel.

Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.

- This first section serves as background on the battle, and offers a glimpse into what life was like for Israel under Canaanite oppression
  - Beginning in vs.1-3, Deborah exclaims this is a song of praise to the Lord
    - Notice the first person singular references throughout this section and the entire song
    - The “I” in this song is Deborah
    - So once again, though we’re told that Barak and Deborah sang this song, it’s clear that Deborah is the author
    - Which reminds us that women were the leaders in the society during this time
  - In these opening verses, there are a couple of important points worth noting
    - First, this song was sung in the day of the battle
    - There was no delay on Deborah’s part to praise the Lord for His work in the moment
    - Notice in v.3 Deborah is intent on the world’s kings and rulers recognizing that the Lord has done this work
  - And in v.2 she says that even though the leaders led and the people volunteered, it was the Lord Who should be blessed for this outcome

- The leaders wouldn't have known what to do much less been successful in doing it without the Lord
- And the people wouldn't have had the courage to volunteer without the Lord prompting them to join the battle
- So in all these things, Deborah acknowledges the Lord won this victory
- Deborah serves as a great example of godly humility in response to those successes the Lord awards us in life
  - If we are willing to appeal to the sovereignty of God in moments of tragedy, then we must be equally willing to give Him praise for our triumphs as well
    - When we need the Lord to help us pass a test in school or a difficult assignment at work, we'll often turn to Him for help then
    - And if we fail at a task, we almost certainly pray for the Lord to fix our dilemma or rescue us from the consequences
    - But do we think to immediately praise Him for the victories He grants us?
    - It can be easy to forget to praise to the Lord when things go our way in life, like in our workplace or school or family life
    - Because we tend to credit ourselves for success
  - Notice that Deborah praised the Lord on the same day and did so publicly to an audience of kings and rulers?
    - The world needs to see the Lord at work to reward those who seek Him
    - The ultimate manifestation of our reward awaits the Kingdom,
    - But the Lord still bestows many other blessings upon us in the meantime
  - The point here is that our timely praise is important to glorifying the Lord among the nations
    - Land a new job? Get accepted to a school? Score the winning point? Receiving the unexpected bonus?

- Give the Lord immediate, public praise for His work, because these outcomes are the Lord's work

**James 1:17** Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

- Let's be sure we tell the world about His goodness
- Then in vs.4-5, Deborah compares the Lord's work in freeing Israel from the Canaanites to His work in the Exodus
  - Deborah calls Israel to remember the Lord's record of rescuing Israel in the past, so they can appreciate His faithfulness to His covenant
    - And in particular, notice how Deborah highlights the strength of the Lord
    - He marched
    - He made mountains quake
    - He made clouds bring rain in a desert
    - Just the mere presence of the Lord resulted in powerful displays on earth
    - Israel serves a powerful God
  - But then look at the contrast in vs.6-7
    - Back in the days of Shamgar, the man who fought with Ehud and And again in the days of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite...
    - The main highways were deserted
    - Jews traveling in their own promised land were forced to travel by roundabout ways through the land or else risk attack and abuse by the oppressors in the land
    - And the peasants of Israel no longer grew and sold crops because of Canaanites threats and oppression
  - Deborah is painting a picture of a weak, downtrodden culture made like slaves in their own land
    - The people are humiliated, weak and fearful
    - It was that way before and it is that way again

- And why are they suffering in this way?
- Because they turned away from the living God and broke the covenant
- Here's the key contrast in part 1 of the song
  - A powerful God of Israel contrasted with the weak and oppressed people of Israel
    - And this situation happens every time the people of Israel reject their God
    - Israel was nothing without the Lord's strength
    - They were a small, weak nation
  - And yet somewhere along the way they began to think that their victories in the land and their strength were their own doing
    - And they took for granted that they owed their victories to the Lord
    - You may remember that the Lord told Israel that this would be their undoing even before they entered the land

**[Deut. 8:11](#)** “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; **[Deut. 8:12](#)** otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, **[Deut. 8:13](#)** and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, **[Deut. 8:14](#)** then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **[Deut. 8:15](#)** “He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. **[Deut. 8:16](#)** “In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. **[Deut. 8:17](#)** “Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ **[Deut. 8:18](#)** “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

[Deut. 8:19](#) “It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

[Deut. 8:20](#) “Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.

- Israel’s pride and self-satisfaction led them to turn from their dependence on the Lord and toward idolatry
  - This a basic spiritual principle of scripture
  - The people of God must turn away from a prideful, self-satisfied heart so we may recognize our utter dependence on the Lord
  - If we forget that the Lord’s strength sustains us, then He is likely to let us fail and experience discipline so we can learn the mistake of our pride
- And even when the Lord is ready to restore us, He may do so in a very humbling way to ensure our pride isn’t provoked anew
  - Notice at the end of v.7 that Deborah says these sad conditions continued until she arose to fix them
    - But she adds that Deborah was just a mother in Israel
    - She’s not diminishing the importance of motherhood, of course
    - But she is pointing out how unlikely a choice she was to become Israel’s deliverer
  - The Lord humbled Israel at the hands of their enemies to chastise them for their haughtiness
    - And even when the time came to rescue them, the Lord delivered Israel in a way that furthered their humiliation
    - He appointed a woman to lead the nation into battle
    - Then the Lord called a military leader who lacked the fortitude to enter the fight without a woman’s prodding and protection
  - In v.8, Deborah says that new “gods” were chosen
    - The Hebrew word for gods can also be translated rulers or even judges

- Deborah is referring to herself as the judge chosen by God to humiliate the prideful men of Israel
- But the Lord didn't stop there
- When the Lord assembled His army to fight, He made sure they were so poorly outfitted, they had no logical hope to prevail
  - They lacked even basic implements of war
    - Among 40,000, none brought a spear or shield to battle
    - The word for 40 thousand could also be translated 40 divisions
    - Which probably means that the 10,000 Jewish warriors were divided into 40 units of 250 men each
    - And none had a decent weapon
  - This is no accident either
    - The Lord wants everyone to know Who won this victory
    - Let there be no confusion
    - An army without weapons doesn't win a battle by their own might
  - In fact, throughout the book of Judges, the Lord equips His warriors with ridiculous weapons
    - One handed men with small daggers, ox goads, later a donkey's jawbone
    - And here we have an army lacking any weapons at all
    - But the army did possess one very powerful weapon: faith
  - Deborah sings that her heart went out to this ragtag group of soldiers
    - For obvious reasons...they had signed up for what looked like a suicide mission
    - They and their commanders were brave men, willing to die for Israel
    - They had no idea how they would win
    - They faced a vastly superior army

- We must assume they went up in the confidence that the Lord would win the battle for them
- And so He did, which is why Deborah stands amazed at their faith
- Finally, in vs.10-11, Deborah repeats the importance of testifying to the Lord's victory among among every class of Jewish society
  - In v.10, she declares that those who ride white donkeys, sit on rich carpets and travel on the roads should praise to the Lord
    - White donkeys refers to leaders, since white horses and donkeys are reserved for royalty and military leaders
    - Rich carpets refer to the wealthy business and land owners who sit while others wait on them
    - Travelers on roads refers to the working class, who move goods around the countryside
  - And in v.11, Deborah asks both the shepherds and the peasants to praise the Lord
    - All members of Jewish society were to praise the Lord for He is over all
    - There was no room for pride in Israel at any layer of culture
    - Everyone was to gather at the city meeting place in the gates to testify to the Lord's power on behalf of the people
- That's what God expects from His people, both in Israel and in the Church today
  - Everyone in the body of Christ is equally dependent on the Lord for every good thing we have
    - Though we may find differences in our strength, health, wealth and peacefulness, there are no "haves" and "have nots" in the Church
    - We are all equally dependent on the Lord, no matter our station in life, and He has determined our course in life
    - And therefore we are all equally obligated to credit the Lord with our victories and to declare praises to the Lord

- So let's not allow our successes to go to our heads as happened in Israel
  - The more successful we become in this world, the harder it can be to recognize the Lord's sovereignty in our lives
  - It was Jesus Who said it's virtually impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom
  - In other words, a wealthy man is likely to think he has gained everything by His own hand
  - And so he is unlikely to acknowledge His need for God
- It isn't the riches that barred the man from the Kingdom
  - It was a heart attitude that interpreted his earthly success as spiritual validation
  - As if to say his worldly success blinded him to his spiritual poverty
  - But even believers are capable of slipping into a mindset that views earthly success as validation of our spiritual strength
- When everything in life is humming along, we must be pleasing God and we have no concerns or cares
  - But that's a very poor measure of pleasing God
  - And if that's where we are...self-satisfied, feeling we've arrived spiritually...then hold on
  - God is probably about to rock your world
- Anytime Israel began to trust in their wealth in the land rather than relying on the Lord, they saw the consequences of Deuteronomy 8
  - As Moses foretold, at a point Israel began to declare in their hearts, "My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth."
    - This is a consequence of pride
    - Pride causes us to forget that we are nothing without the Lord
  - How do we combat this tendency?
    - We praise Him for His provision and blessing
    - Because anytime the Lord chooses to bless us in a particular way,

- Whether financially
- Or in our physical strength
- Or in our family life or work life
- He does so with the expectation that we would praise Him
- And that isn't simply a matter of thanking the Lord
  - It means continually checking our pride
  - Not allowing our egos to take credit for God's work
- If you ever find yourself feeling self-satisfied in what you have accomplished or accumulated, whether spiritual or material, then watch out
  - The Lord may bring your world crashing down in ways you don't expect so He can expose your dependence on Him
  - And He may do so in unexpected ways
  - Men who pride themselves on their wealth or power may lose their health or their family
  - Women who pride themselves on their looks may fall to temptation
  - The Lord will find a way to rock our world so He can get our attention and deflate our pride
  - He does this for our good, because to do otherwise is to lead us toward our own destruction