

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bible with me to Judges 4

We are going to continue our verse by verse and chapter by chapter study through the book of Judges

In our study last week, we looked at the first three judges

Othniel

Ehud

And Shamgar

And we saw how God used these individuals to deliver the Children of Israel out of oppression and bondage – which by the way was by their own choice.

It was because of their disobedience and because of their compromise that God allowed them to be oppressed by the same of the same tribes they failed to conquer.

God simply allowed them to have what their hearts desired.

So they would cry out to the Lord and the Lord would raise up these judges to deliver them.

In our study this evening, we are going to be looking at Deborah.

And for those who haven't figured out by the name – Deborah is a woman.

After chapter 3 – we would Deborah to be a type of Wonder Woman right –

What is her superpower?

And that's what our passage is about tonight.

What kind of people does God use?

And as we will see, we see that God uses individuals who believe that following Him is worth the risk—enough to take the opportunities that God sets before them.

In other words – He uses those who step out in faith.

Let's pray...

[Jdg 4:1-24 NKJV] 1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.

Now, a quick reminder, Ehud was the judge who was left handed.

He was the one who stabbed the very fat Moabite king in the belly with his 18" dagger and all his poop came out.

So after killing the king – he gathered the Children of Israel and they killed a bunch of Moabites that were returning home.

So as a result – the Children of Israel had rest for 80 years

Keep in mind that the period of the judges is about 400 years – so 80 years is a good chunk of time.

Not only did the judges deliver the Children of Israel but also, God used them to turn the people back to Him.

He didn't go around threatening people to turn back to the Lord

He led the people by example – and that led the people to turn.

However, when Ehud died, the Children of Israel returned back to their old ways.

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. 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 Lord sold them – meaning that he allowed Jabin to come in and force the Children of Israel to pay tribute.

They are paying taxes on their own land that God had already given to them.

They are in bondage – in their minds, they can't fight back because the commander of the army had 900 chariots of iron.

Last week and also in chapter 1, we looked at how the tribes failed to conquer much of their territories because they were afraid of the Philistines who had chariots of iron.

Here, we see an army that had 900 of them.

These chariots of iron were the Death Star of the time – they were unstoppable – especially when we realize that the Children of Israel had no real weapons themselves.

Read Judges 5:8

[Jdg 5:8 NKJV] 8 They chose new gods; Then [there was] war in the gates; Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

So they waited 20 years and they cried out to the Lord

You see, the Children of Israel didn't have 900 chariots of iron – but they did have God Almighty – and it took them 20 years to remember that.

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

Deborah was a prophetess – which means she had the ability to hear directly from God and speak on His behalf, and she would help the people settle their disputes, so she had wisdom and discernment.

Now, here is where I believe that people take this verse out of context.

They will point to verse 4-5 and say, God used Deborah to judge Israel because there were no men available – and because God used Deborah then somehow that supersedes anything else in God's word regarding roles of men and women in the home or in church leadership.

Here is the thing church; nowhere in the text do we find mention that there were no men available.

That is simply speculation.

Because there were no men available, God was stuck using Deborah.

In my opinion that is putting God in a box.

I believe that God used Deborah because He wanted to use Deborah.

Because she was the one who could bring encouragement to the Children of Israel.

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'?"

Deborah sends for Barak – and by the text, it appears that this is not the first time Barak had heard this command.

So what Deborah is doing here – she is giving Barak confirmation of what he was supposed to do.

And we must remember church that when God calls us to do something, He will give us confirmation to guide us on the right path.

However, once we receive confirmation, we must make sure that we are obedient to what He has called us to do.

So God tells Barak exactly what to do.

Who to pick for his army - take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun

He tells him where to go - he was supposed to go to Mt Tabor

He even tells him who is he going to do battle against – Sisera and his chariot army

But most importantly, God promised him that He was going to give him victory.

Seems like a great opportunity right?

Not for Barak –

Look at his response.

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!"

Why did Barak hesitate to go? Not only did he hesitate to go – we see him adding a condition – Deborah, I will go if you go with me.

Maybe he realized that a victory like this was beyond his capabilities.

Maybe he felt that the ten thousand men that he was to collect – maybe they would be more inclined to listen to him if Deborah was there.

Maybe he viewed Deborah as a better leader.

Maybe he didn't want the responsibility

The truth is – we don't know why.

So why did I have you highlight the entire verse.

Here is the thing church,

I am so thankful we have verses like verse 8 in scripture.

Even with the clear Word of God, Barak hesitated, but as we will see, God was patient with him.

And I am pretty sure there are times when we find ourselves like Barak – being hesitant to do what God has called us to do – despite having His Word and His Spirit dwelling in us.

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.

"Barak, because you hesitated and asked that I go with you – you will not be known as the individual who God will use to deliver the Children of Israel, that honor will belong to a woman" "

It isn't her; it's Jael, as we will see momentarily.

Church, Barak missed out on an opportunity

You see, God is going to accomplish his plan.

The question he has for you and me is: do we want a part in it or not?

Are we content to stand by and simply watch other people do significant things for God?

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.

So Barak, Deborah and 10,000 men – unarmed – go to battle.

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.

So Heber here is a Kenite –

These were the nomads that lived in the wilderness.

When Moses fled Egypt the first time – after killing the Egyptian, he married one of the daughters of Jethro/Hobab/Reuel

So this guy is a descendant of Moses' father-in-law.

They really don't have an allegiance to the tribes – they pretty much just wander the desert.

So, Heber here is acting as a lookout for Sisera.

He tells him the position of Barak and the army.

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. 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.

So Sisera has organized his troops down in the valley – by the way, this is the valley of Megiddo – the same valley where Armageddon is going to take place.

Sisera is down in the valley, Barak is up on top of the mountain – Deborah tells Barak, “ok, Barak it’s time” – and Barak leads his men down the mountain

Notice the absolute stupidity of this.

On the hillside, you might have some chance against iron chariots.

In the valley, they were going to be road kill.

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.

Who routed Sisera?

The Lord – how did He do it?

Turn to the right to chapter 5

[Jdg 5:20-22 NKJV] 20 They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera. 21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, That

ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength! 22 Then the horses' hooves pounded, The galloping, galloping of his steeds.

As Barak's army rushed down the mountain and across the plain to meet the enemy head on, God sprang into action.

You see, iron chariots gave the Canaanites an awesome advantage as long as the conditions were ideal to use them.

So, God sent a freak storm.

It rendered some of the chariots unusable, they got stuck in the mud.

Others were washed away, and the soldiers drowned.

The Canaanite infantry became disoriented and fled.

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.

So it appears that some of the chariots were able to retreat – however, notice that now, it is the Children of Israel chasing after the chariots.

The Canaanites probably understood that they had walked into a trap set by the God of Israel.

They were very superstitious.

They were very familiar with the stories of what had done on behalf of the Children of Israel – remember when the spies encounter with Rahab the harlot – Rahab told them that they were all broken hearted because they heard the stories of what God had done in the wilderness.

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.

So, it appears that Sisera gets away.

And he tries to hide out at the tent of Jael.

Remember, Sisera has an allegiance with Heber, he was the one who was doing intelligence and told him where Barak and the 10,000 soldiers were.

Now, before we continue, I want to provide a little cultural background on the tents.

During this period of time, men and women lived in separate tents.

Gen 24:67 specifically names Sarah's tent

When Jacob flees from Laban, with Leah and Rachel, you might remember that Laban catches up with them because Rachel took some of his idols with her.

Gen 31

And the scriptures mention that Jacob, Leah, Rachel and the maids each had their own tents – and the reason that Laban couldn't find the idols was because Rachel hid them in the saddle – and she told her dad that she could stand because she was on her period.

So Jael has her own tent – this was a perfect hideout for Sisera as no one would expect a man in the tent of a woman.

Another thing I want you to understand is that during this time, it was the responsibility of the women to set up the tents.

And because Jael was a Kenite, a nomad, who would move their tents from one place to another – that means she was experienced at setting up tents.

She wasn't a newbie.

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.

So Sisera goes into her tent to hide out.

He covers himself with a blanket – which most likely was a rug of some kind.

And then the baby wanted a little water – remember, he had been fleeing Barak and the 10,000 men.

But notice, Jael doesn't give him water, she gives him milk.

Now, remember, they didn't have fridges during this time –

This wasn't cow milk – this came from a goat

This most likely resembled a thick cream / to cottage cheese

This was the Nyquil of the time.

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.

I bet none of you who didn't read ahead saw that coming – neither did poor Sisera.

Not only did the nail go through his head, it went into the floor.

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.

So, Barak shows up and Jael meets him and tells him – “This is how it's done son”

Now, let's look at Barak and Jael

Barak

Qualified to deliver Israel – impressive resume

Military leader

Male

Full blood Israelite

Publicly chosen by God

Had direct instructions and promises from God

Put conditions on God to avoid risk

And should have been the hero

Jael

Possessed none of the qualifications to deliver Israel

Housewife

Female

Foreigner

Informant to the enemy



No instructions or promises from God.

Acted boldly and without hesitation

And was the unexpected deliverer of Israel

Now, regarding God's providence –

In theology, providence is God providing for His plans, to see to it His will is accomplished.

But it is important to understand that God does it without violating our free will.

In this case, God was providing by sending Barak into battle.

He would have gotten the glory by finishing-off Sisera.

However, when Barak balked, God provided someone else - Jael.

God's providence saw to it His will was accomplished, but without violating free will.

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.

As much as it seems that we have been picking on Barak –

I think we see a little of God grace here in the last two verses.

You see, Sisera was simply a battle.

And from the text, it seems like Barak learned from his shortcomings here in chapter 4 – and led the Children of Israel in their fight against the King of Canaan.

How do we know?

Because in the book of Hebrews – in the Great Chapter of Faith –

It doesn't talk about Jael's victory or Deborah's victory – it talks about Barak's victory.

Because ultimately, he took the opportunities that God set before him.

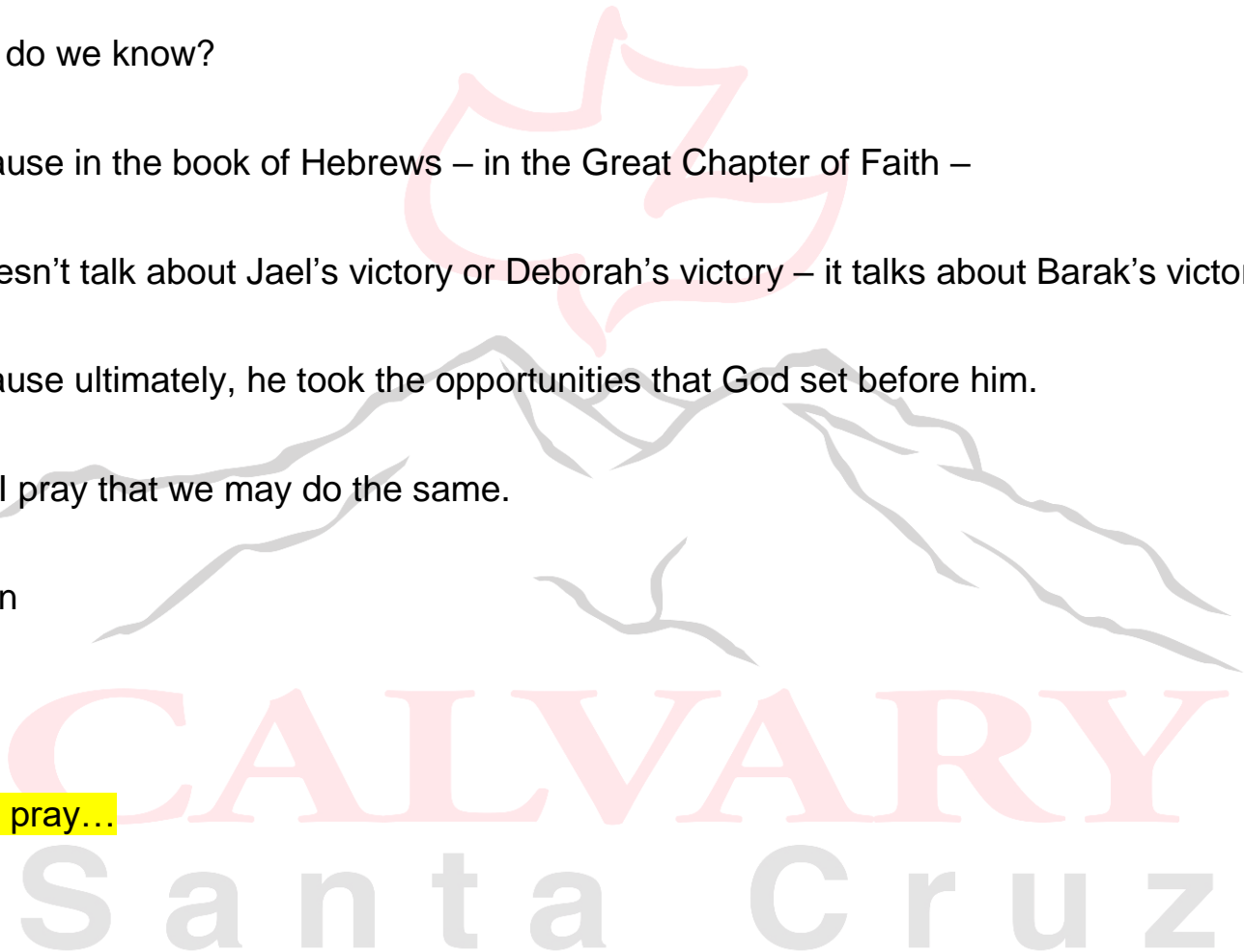
And I pray that we may do the same.

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."



Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'