

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 6- "Two Are Better Than One!"

Key text: Judges 4-5

Suppl. texts: 1 Tim. 2:11-12, Titus 1:6, Heb. 11:32

Introduction: Last time, we unraveled the stunning story of Ehud, Eglon, & Shamgar. First, we noted a self-absorbed king who was God's instrument of justice towards His rebellious people. We saw that Eglon gathered a coalition of cousins & took over the city of Palms, Jericho, where the Promised Land began for the Israelites. Second, we saw God raise another judge, a left-handed man (or ambidextrous, or disabled?) named Ehud who devised an assassination scheme to remove Eglon from power & topple the Moabite kingdom. Eglon was not only a self-absorbed king but a very large man, wealthy & secure, yet God removed him from power. Finally, we saw there's a one-verse judge named Shamgar, who might've been a farmer, whom God used to push back the longstanding enemy of Israel, the Philistines. Tonight, we visit the most unique judge, the only female judge, as we unpack the stories of Deborah & Barak.

Outline: *read Judges 4:1-24.*

1. An iron-fisted king

- **4:1-2;** *"After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim."*
- The cycle of captivity returns. Jabin is God's instrument of discipline for His people.
- Eighty years of peace ended after Ehud. Jabin oppresses Israel for twenty years.
- *"Cruelly oppressed"* is the phrase used, sometimes translated 'harshly', 'severely', or 'ruthlessly.' This paints a vivid picture of the forceful nature of their treatment.
- Again, an opponent has better military technology than Israel.
- **4:3a;** *"Because he had nine hundred iron chariots..."*
- While Jabin is king in Canaan, it seems his general, Sisera, is the real power behind the throne, the commander of Jabin's armed forces.
- Again, God's people cry out to Yahweh. **4:3b;** *"they cried to the LORD for help."*

2. A faithful woman

- In the big 'C' Church today, there is an ongoing debate & struggle over the role of women in church leadership. As such, many denominations ordain women as ministers, clergy, or pastors.
- Culture today certainly promotes this ideal, called egalitarianism.
- We should all believe that women are fully equal to men. Capable of doing almost anything a man can do, with a few exceptions of physical strength & ability.

- Women, generally speaking, are more serious about their faith, their walk with God, & about the spiritual instruction of their children.
- Let me also say, many men are apathetic & glad for their wives to fill such a role.
- Churches are comprised of far more women than men, who are available to serve.
- **We, as Southern Baptists, do not. Why? Because we adhere to the Word of God.**
- **1 Tim. 2:11-12;** *“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”*
- **Titus 1:6;** *“An overseer/pastor/elder must be blameless, **the husband of but one wife, a man whose children are not open to the charge of being wild or disobedient.**”*
- From the Garden of Eden forward, God assigns & holds responsible the man as the spiritual leader of the home as well as priestly duties. In the N.T., men are again assigned the spiritual leadership of the home as well as the Church.
- The only way to debate this is to say these views are antiquated, or to isolate them as sexist opinion, which negates the inerrancy & authority of Scripture.
- Pick & choose what you like & don't like in the Word of God & you turn it into a house of cards destined to fall & make it no different than any other classical work.
- As Baptists, we believe in **complementarianism**, as outlined in the Word of God.
- Men & women are equal but are assigned God-given, separate roles.
- It's not about **ability** at all; it's about God's assigned **order**.
- **Quoting from the Baptist Faith & Message 2000: Basically, our confession of faith.**
- **In regards to the family & the home:** *“The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.”* Note, they complement one another.
- **In regards to church function & roles:** *“Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”* A woman can fill many roles in the church, but not pastor or deacon.
- Often, a main argument against this clear tenet of Scripture is the example of our next judge, Deborah, a faithful woman. But, once again, context is key!!!

- This is a **dark time** in Israel's history. This is still controversial today, but in Deborah's time in Israel, a male led every time! There are no other female judges, & there will never be a female queen (only). Leadership was **patriarchal** in the Old Testament.
- The example of Deborah is not there to set a **normative** practice among God's people & uphold **egalitarianism**, but to see & show how far the nation has **fallen**!
- Men are not obeying God! Men are weak! Men are lazy! A woman must lead!
- Deborah is not only a **faithful** woman, but a **good & courageous** leader.
- Deborah is **different** than the other judges, but not only by **gender**.
- **First**, Deborah is called a **prophetess**. Meaning she speaks what God tells her to speak. One of a few women in the bible to have such a title: *Miriam, Huldah, Isaiah's wife (?), Anna, & the four daughters of Philip.*
- **Second**, Deborah is a **married** woman. She is identified as *"the wife of Lappidoth"*.
- She is not a woman doing her own thing in the absence of a man, but married.
- **Third**, she is a **dispute solver**, like Moses, but she's not a **military** leader.
- **4:5**; *"She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided."*

3. A **reluctant** general

- When God called the other judges, He called them to rise & fight in battle.
- Instead, God called Deborah to call on another leader, whose name was Barak.
- **4:6**; *"She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you **ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun** and lead the way to Mount Tabor.'"*
- God gives Barak **instructions** again on the **tribes** of Israel to be used.
- God then **guarantees** Barak victory.
- **4:7**; *"I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands."*
- Reminds us of how God trapped Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea during the Exodus.
- Like Judah in chapter 1, who called for Simeon to reinforce them, Barak isn't satisfied & sure of the Lord's Word is not enough.
- **4:8**; *"Barak said to her, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.'" Essentially, Barak establishes **conditions** for his obedience.*
- **4:9-10**; *"Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, **for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman.**" So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh, where he summoned Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him."*
- The consequence to Barak's condition might seem **minor**, but God is continuing to show that he doesn't need a man to accomplish His purposes.
- We might **assume** at this point that the woman is Deborah, but it is not her.

4. A shameful death

- We noted earlier that Sisera is the powerful general with iron chariots upholding the rule & kingdom of Jabin.
- However, God had **providentially placed** the descendants of Moses' in-laws in a position to help Israel.
- **4:11;** *"Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaananim near Kedesh."* These are **descendants** of the Midianites with whom Moses intermarried.
- Sisera brings his full complement of chariots & all his men to battle.
- **4:14-15;** *"Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by ten thousand men. At Barak's advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot."* Again, the Lord **fighters** for Israel & puts an army to **flight**.
- **4:16b;** *"All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left."* Total annihilation. Only Sisera is left as he abandons his chariot & flees.
- Sisera flees to a **friend**, not expecting a **foe**.
- **4:17;** *"Sisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there were friendly relations between Jabin king of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite."* The Kenites had peaceful relations with Jabin.
- **4:18-20;** *"Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid.' So he entered her tent, and she put a covering over him. 'I'm thirsty,' he said. 'Please give me some water.' She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. 'Stand in the doorway of the tent, he told her. 'If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say 'No.'"*
- Sisera thinks he is still in a position to give **orders** to this woman, Jael, in her home.
- Sisera even tells her to keep **watch** & to **lie** for him.
- Tired from fleeing, his thirst quenched, & with a nice warm blanket covering him, he falls asleep in safety, or so he thinks. He's going to **wake** up **dead!**
- **4:21;** *"But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died."* Barak, in high-speed pursuit, arrives too late for the glory.
- Twice, Barak loses out on the renown, first to Deborah & now to Jael.
- God subdued Sisera & Jabin, & yet, God is still gracious to Barak.
- **Heb. 11:32;** *"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets."* He made the Hall of Faith, but the song Deborah sings in chapter 5 could have been all about Barak.
- Barak could've saved & led Israel, but God gave **forty** years of peace again (5:31).

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 6

Introduction: Last time, we unraveled the stunning story of Ehud, Eglon, & Shamgar.

First, we noted a self-absorbed king who was God's instrument of justice towards His rebellious people. We saw that Eglon gathered a coalition of cousins & took over the city of Palms, Jericho, where the Promised Land began for the Israelites. Second, we saw God raise another judge, a left-handed man (or ambidextrous, or disabled?) named Ehud who devised an assassination scheme to remove Eglon from power & topple the Moabite kingdom. Eglon was not only a self-absorbed king but a very large man, wealthy & secure, yet God removed him from power. Finally, we saw there's a one-verse judge named Shamgar, who might've been a farmer, whom God used to push back the longstanding enemy of Israel, the Philistines. Tonight, we visit the most unique judge, the only female judge, as we unpack the stories of Deborah & Barak.

Outline: read *Judges 4:1-24*.

1. An _____ - _____ king

- The _____ of _____ returns.
- _____ years of peace followed by oppression for _____ years.
- "*Cruelly oppressed*" is the phrase used, sometimes translated ' _____ ', ' _____ ', or ' _____ '.
- **Sisera** is the _____ behind the throne.

2. A _____ woman

- Culture today certainly promotes an ideal called _____.
- As Baptists, we believe in _____.
- It's not about _____ at all; it's about God's assigned _____.
- **This is a _____ in Israel's history.** Leadership was _____ in the Old Testament.
- The example of Deborah is not there to set a _____ practice among God's people & uphold _____, but to see & show how far the nation has _____!
- Deborah is not only a _____ woman, but a _____ & _____ leader.
- Deborah is _____ than the other judges, but not only by _____.
- **First**, Deborah is called a _____.
- **Second**, Deborah is a _____ woman.
- **Third**, she is a _____, like Moses, but she's not a _____ leader.

3. A _____ general

- God gives Barak _____ again on the _____ of Israel to be used.
- God then _____ Barak victory.
- Essentially, Barak establishes _____ for his obedience.
- The consequence to Barak's condition might seem _____, but God is continuing to show that he doesn't need a man to accomplish His purposes.
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- However, God had _____ the descendants of Moses' in-laws in a position to help Israel.
- These are _____ of the Midianites with whom Moses intermarried.
- Again, the Lord _____ for Israel & puts an army to _____.
- Sisera flees to a _____, not expecting a _____.
- Sisera thinks he is still in a position to give _____ to this woman, Jael, in her home.
- Sisera even tells her to keep _____ & to _____ for him.
- He's going to _____ up _____!
- Barak could've saved & led Israel, but God gave _____ years of peace again (5:31).

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Does it surprise you that God once again used an enemy of Israel to discipline His people? Discuss some of the ways God uses to correct His children & why.**
- 2. Discuss the various roles women can fill in the Church. Discuss what made Deborah unique as the only female judge.**
- 3. Why are so many Christian men so lax in their God-assigned roles & responsibilities today? What's the fix?**
- 4. Why do you think Barak was so hesitant to believe God's promises? Why are we so often guilty of the same?**
- 5. Who is the real hero of the story? And why?**