

GOD'S PROPHETESSES IN SCRIPTURE

II. Deborah: God's Servant Who Encouraged The Man's Role (Judges 4:1-24)

I. Introduction

- A. When God created the first woman, He made her to be a helpmeet for the first man, Genesis 2:20-23.
- B. Four women were prophetesses of the Lord whose ministries are recorded in Scripture, and their ministries involved specific relationships with men, revealing God's idea of a woman's being a man's proper helpmeet.
- C. We view each prophetess in her ministry to learn God's lessons on a woman's godly role as a helpmeet.

II. Deborah: God's Servant Who Encouraged The Man's Role, Judges 4:1-24.

- A. During the period of the judges, Israel cycled through periods of spiritual apostasy, followed by God's allowing Gentile oppressors to subjugate His people until they repented and called on the Lord for help followed in turn by God's answering His people by sending them a deliverer.
- B. However, each such cycle came with an increased deterioration in God-established institutions, until at one point, there was an absence of godly male leaders, and God had to use the woman to judge Israel, Judges 4:4.
- C. Deborah was a prophetess of the Lord who was married to a man named Lapidoth, and she judged Israel at the time because of a lack of spiritual male leadership, Judges 4:4. She dwelt under a palm tree in the Ephraim hill country between Ramah and Bethel where the people of Israel came to her for judgment, Judges 4:5.
- D. Due to Israel's sin, God permitted the nation to come under the rule of Jabin, king of Canaan who ruled from Hazor 8 ½ miles north of the Sea of Galilee, Judges 4:1-2a; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 388. Jabin's commander Sisera lived in Harosheth in the valley west of Mount Tabor where he could oppress the people of Israel in the lowland where his iron chariots gave him military advantage over Israel, Judges 4:2b, 3b; *Ibid*.
- E. The people of Israel cried unto the Lord for deliverance from Jabin (Judges 4:3a), and God led Deborah to summon Barak the son of Abinoam in Kadesh of the tribe of Naphtali to gather Israel's troops to Mount Tabor that rises 1,300 feet above the valley floor where Israel's foot soldiers would have the advantage, and from there to come down the mountain and attack Sisera's iron chariots, Judges 4:6; *Ibid*. God's plan was to have Barak's army lure Sisera's chariot army out toward them where they would engage in combat beside the Kishon River where God would deliver Sisera into Israel's hands, Judges 4:7 *ESV*.
- F. God through Moses had told Israel not to fear facing an enemy chariot army though Israel's men fought on foot because the Lord was with them to give them victory if they trusted in Him (Deuteronomy 20:1).
- G. However, Barak's faith faltered, and he replied to Deborah that he would lead Israel's army into battle only if she as Israel's judge would go with him, Judges 4:8. Deborah answered that she would go with Barak, but that the honor of defeating the enemy commander Sisera would not go to Barak, but to a woman, Judges 4:9.
- H. Deborah went with Barak and Israel's army to Mount Tabor, and Sisera was lured out to engage them in battle by the River Kishon, Jud. 4:10-13. Deborah encouraged Barak to attack Sisera, rushing down Mount Tabor, for the Lord would give him the victory, so Barak and his men charged down toward Sisera's army, Jud. 4:14.
- I. According to Deborah's song in Judges 5:21, the Lord then sent a strong storm that flooded the stream and valley, bogging Sisera's chariots from being mobile and giving Israel's foot soldiers the military advantage. Sisera's soldiers were all slain, and Sisera fled from his chariot on foot for his life, Judges 4:15-16.
- J. Sisera entered the tent of Heber the Kenite, a friend of his, and Heber's wife Jael offered to hide Sisera under a mantle in the tent once he had drunk some milk that would make him sleepy, Judges 4:17-20. After Sisera had fallen asleep, Jael as a Bedouin woman who was used to pitching tents took a tent peg and hammered it through Sisera's temples, fastening his head to the ground, killing him, Judges 4:21; *Ibid*, p. 389.
- K. When Barak who was pursuing Sisera came by Jael's tent, she showed him Sisera's body, so Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled as the woman Jael gained the honor of defeating the enemy commander for Barak's refusing to act as the leader he was called to be, Judges 4:22. God then subdued Jabin, eventually causing the people of Israel to overcome and defeat him, Judges 4:23-24.

Lesson: *When God raised up Deborah to judge Israel because of a lack of godly male leadership in Israel, she still sought to encourage the man Barak to trust the Lord and to lead Israel, but only with partial success. For Barak's refusal to trust the Lord to lead the army on his own, a woman in place of Barak was honored to slay Sisera.*

Application: *(1) If there is a lack of godly male leaders, God wants godly women to encourage men to be godly leaders. (2) May we men of God trust the Lord to fulfill our callings to lead like God wants us to lead.*