

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JUDGES 1-4

When I think on my past my deepest regrets are the missed opportunities. The “*what ifs*” - the “*if onlys*”. The times God set the table, but I didn’t come to dinner!

If you want to sum up the book of Judges in two words they would be “**missed opportunities**”. The years after Joshua’s death could’ve been a “*golden age*” for Israel - but instead it became one of the darkest periods in their history.

At the end of Joshua’s life Israel had the enemy on the run - but rather than finish the job, and drive out the Canaanites - the Hebrews tolerated the enemy, worshipped their idols, and compromised with sin! They blew an opportunity!

The book of Joshua consists of 24 chapters, and covers 30 years.

The book of Judges is 21 chapters long and covers a period of 350 years.

During those 350 years Israel had 14 judges. Thirteen of them are discussed in the book - and according to tradition, the 14th judge, Samuel, was its author.

There’s an old Pogo comic strip that captures the message of Judges.

Pogo goes into the swamp to fight a battle. When he returns, he says, “**We have met the enemy... and he is us.**” The book of Judges proves we’re often our own worst enemy. When we put ourselves, and our own interests ahead of God’s will it causes us to miss out on opportunities to receive

His wonderful blessings.

The last verse in Judges sums up the whole book... Judges 21:25 compresses the book into a single phrase, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Though the book ends on a tragic note, it has a bright beginning. We find the Hebrews working together - Judah and Simeon join forces to drive out the enemy.

Verse 1 “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?" And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand." *And Judah knows* - what I hope we've learned - enemies are easier to defeat if we double team him...

“So Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory." And Simeon went with him.” One of the reasons God puts us in a church family – and gives us brothers and sisters - is so we don't have to tackle our enemies on our own. A foe is easier to defeat if we fight him together.

“Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek.

Bezek was a city in the mountains of Samaria – just west of the Jordan River.

And they found Adoni-Bezek (“*Lord of Lightning*”) in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites

and the Perizzites. Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.”

Judah and Simeon capture a man with the grizzly habit of amputating the thumbs and big toes of the kings he conquered. This was a form of humiliation.

This torture was Adoni-Bezek’s signature. A man without a big toe has a shaky foundation... Without a thumb a man can’t hold a weapon - or even a fork.

In ancient times, *thumbless and toeless meant helpless*. “A foe without a toe - you know who did it. Without a thumb you’d be dumb not guess Adoni-Bezek.”

But when the Hebrews caught Adoni-Bezek they chopped off his thumbs and big toes. He confesses in verse 7, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.” They brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.” In other words, “what goes around comes around”, or as the Bible says, “you reap what you sow”.

Verse 8 makes an interesting statement, “Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.” *Why then, does David have to conquer the city again 400 years later?*

This was indicative of Israel’s problem... *they lacked a good follow-through...*

My wife plays tennis - and every now and then I bless her with some free coaching. She’s always so grateful for my advice. And here’s one of the tidbits I tell her, “A good serve requires a good follow-through.” The same is true spiritually.

When you serve the Lord don't do it halfway – *follow through* – complete the job. Don't leave it for a King David – or a Pastor Steve – to have to come back and take care of what you neglected. Don't forget “a job ain't over 'til it's over!”

“And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland. Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.) Then Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.” Caleb throws in some incentive to draw out the bravest boys. He offers a pretty girl... *Knock-off* Debir and you can marry a real *knock-out* – Caleb's daughter, Achsah.

“And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.” And of course, it was a win-win situation for Caleb. Judah wins a battle. And he finds a brave man to marry his daughter.

In today's culture girls look for a *sensitive man*, or a *handsome man*, or a *rich man* – but I want my daughter to marry a brave man. Life is full of challenges. And in the face of an obstacle or enemy too many guys opt for the path of least resistance. I want my girl yoked to a man who's not afraid to press on.

Verse 14 “Now it happened, when she came to him, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?” So she said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.” One thing about Achsah, she’s not afraid to ask. She got a field and now she wants a spring.

Why is it we get to a place in our relationship with God where we stop asking?

Do we ever think we’ve tapped out God’s grace? God is like Caleb. Look at what he does... “Then Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.” God does exceedingly, abundant above all we ask... Achsah requests a spring, and Daddy gives her two... This is the heart of our heavenly Father toward us...

Jesus says Matthew 7:7, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” God never tires of us asking...

“Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law (Jethro), went up from the City of Palms (Jericho) with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which lies in the South near Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory.” But again, Judah failed to maintain possession of these cities. Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron later

become Philistine strongholds.

Again, it's not enough to just gain ground spiritually if we turn around and lose what we've gained. Hebrews 10 tells us to "hold fast the confession of our hope"

GK Chesterton once said, "The only way to love anything is to realize it can be lost." There are what I call *Teflon Christians*. Nothing sticks. God teaches them, and blesses them, but they forget what God does as soon as it occurs.

When God opens your eyes to a truth - or works in your heart – remember it, nurture it, embrace it by faith - never let it go. Don't let the devil steal it away.

Verse 19 tells us, "So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron." The Canaanites had entered the iron age. They built a fleet of chariots. Rather than trust God Judah was intimidated by the technology.

Let's not fall into the same trap... *Space-age physics* and *bio-tech genetics* still fall under the authority of Scripture. The Bible speaks to these areas, as it does to all of life. It's our job to apply Scripture to new advances and circumstances.

"And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak." Remember the Anakim were the giants. "But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly Luz.) And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy. So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day."

"However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land." Apparently *more determined* than the Israelites were to drive them out.

"And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out." ... *a missed opportunity.*

The rest of chapter 1 is a long record of four foot putts that didn't drop - missed opportunities. Not one of the 12 tribes drove out the enemy completely...

"Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites..."
Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron...
Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco...
Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh...

Verse 34, “And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute.”

Eventually, Ephraim subdued them, but Dan never did.

Chapter 2 is a flashback. Verse 6 tells us, Joshua is still alive and in command.

“Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you.’” God sends a spokesman.

The word “Angel” means “messenger”. And notice, this messenger speaks of God in the first person, “I will never break My covenant.” It’s a messenger from God, but it sounds like God Himself... Notice too, the angel doesn’t come from heaven, but Gilgal – Israel’s base of operation throughout the conquest...

We talked in Joshua 5 about the Commander of the Lord’s Army who Joshua met at Jericho. It was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Its possible Jesus stayed in Gilgal, throughout the conquest of Canaan, and directed the effort.

Now He rebukes Israel for not trusting Him and fully possessing the land.

“And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also

said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' "

Here He repeats what God predicted in Joshua 23:13. If the people hold on to unhealthy influences and ungodly habits – if they tolerate sin and its sources – the sin will become a snare. It'll hinder their spiritual growth – and hassle their soul.

“So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. Then they called the name of that place **Bochim** (which means “weeping”); and they sacrificed there to the LORD.” Always remember compromise with evil eventually produces weeping.

Verse 6 “And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.”

“So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was 110 years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.” Joshua’s death exposed a *spiritual generation gap* in Israel. Unlike their fathers the generation that came after Joshua didn’t know God or His works.

As long as Joshua and his elders were alive, the people served the Lord.

But as soon as they died off... Verse 11 tells us, “Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.

They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.”

Baal was the god of the storm. The Canaanites tried to appease Baal so rain would water their crop. Ashtoreth was a fertility goddess. She brought fruitfulness to families and farms. She was worshipped by lewd and immoral sexual practices.

It grieved the heart of God that His people, Israel, had forsaken His revelation, and His miraculous acts of deliverance - to depend on sinister superstitions.

Notice again verse 7, Joshua knew God personally. His elders knew the works of God. Their offspring knew neither... The third generation had no faith at all...

We'll also see this later in Israel's history. David followed God with his *whole heart*. His son, Solomon, had a *half-hearted* devotion. But his son, Rehoboam had *no heart* for God at all. Obviously, second hand experiences of God only go so far.

A man knows God and God works in his life.

His son sees that work. God answers his father's prayers. He witnesses God in the life of his father. That son might be impressed enough to follow in his father's footsteps - but the third generation who only hears about God... *forget it.*

Hearsay never captures a heart, or transforms a life, or humbles a person.

This is why every generation needs its own experience with God. All true Christians are *first generation Christians*. Everybody needs to meet God and experience Him personally... Here's a lesson for parents - don't just impose your convictions on your kids. Help your kids cultivate their own walk with God.

And we've already studied a parent who was an excellent example...

Caleb could've conquered Debir himself, but he shrewdly recruited a man, and promised him his daughter, to motivate him to discover the greatness of God on his own. He ended up with a son-in-law who knew firsthand God's faithfulness.

Rather than shove our Christianity down our kids' throat, we need to find ways to motivate our kids to seek the Lord and develop their own relationship with Him.

The rest of chapter 2 describes the cycle that occurs over and over in Judges. Write down 6 words - **sin, servitude, supplication, savior, Spirit, serenity.**

Here's how it works... The people **sin** and follow false gods. God causes their enemies to enslave them. They're forced into **servitude**. The Hebrews cry out to God to deliver them – they make **supplication**. God raises up a **savior** – a judge to

lead the Hebrews to victory. The **Spirit** of the Lord comes upon that judge with power to win battles. A period of calm and **serenity** then follows, until it's interrupted by the Hebrews sin... and the cycle gets repeated.

We'll see this cycle occur at least 7 times in the book of Judges.

Verse 14 “And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them.

And they were greatly distressed.”

“Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them.” When we think of judges we envision old men dressed in black robes - holding wooden gavels - and having legal degrees.

The judges of Israel were not like Supreme Court justices. The Old Testament judges were more like *virtuous vigilantes* – *patriots of purity* – *righteous Rambos*.

The Judges were common men and women with no credentials other than the call of God. They were folks in whom God ignited a fire for freedom - a passion for holiness - a hunger for truth - a zeal for justice. They rallied the nation, and lead the battle to liberate the Hebrews. The judges were Israel's heroes and patriots.

“Yet they would not listen to their judges...” Shortly after their deliverance the cycle started over... “but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.” Notice the cycle gets repeated – but each generation is worse than the last.

Notice verse 19, they “behaved more corruptly than their fathers”. Like watching a toilet bowl after you flush – each swirl goes a little lower...

“Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not.” Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.”

Have you ever wondered why God didn't rapture you the moment you were saved? Why are we left in this world – among the enemy, subject to trial and temptation? The answer for us is the same as it was for ancient Israel...

Life is a test... It's only a test! The Christian Life is an opportunity to prove our faithfulness – develop some character and endurance - show some resistance...

Chapter 3, “Now these are the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan (this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath.

And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.” *They failed the test!*

“So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served

Cushan-Rishathaim 8 years.”

Remember the 5-fold cycle. The nation’s **sin** is followed by a **servitude**. In this case, it lasts 8 years, until the people cry out to God in **supplication**.

Verse 9, “When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.” God raises up a **savior** to lead His people.

“The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel.” The **Holy Spirit** infuses Othniel with supernatural power to liberate His people.

“He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim.

So the land had rest for forty years.” Israel enjoys a period of peace and **serenity**. Until... “Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.” The cycle is about to start over... **sin, servitude, supplication, Savior, Spirit, and serenity.**

Verse 12, “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.

So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. (or Jericho)” This must’ve been heartbreaking to God and the people.

The miraculous battle of Jericho had been negated. It was back in pagan hands. “So the children of Israel served Eglon

king of Moab 18 years.

“But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man.”

Just out of curiosity, how many of you are left-handed?

Statistics shows that approximately 1 out of every 10 people are left-handed.

In ancient times left-handedness was viewed as a handicap – a deformity – a birth defect. The English word “*gauche*” (goosh) means crude or uncouth – socially awkward. But this English word comes from the French word for “*left-handed*”.

The Latin word for “*left-handedness*” gets translated into English as the word “*sinister*” - which of course, means “*evil or wicked*”... The point is God chose a man who was viewed as *inadequate* to do His work. It made sure credit for the victory went go to God – and not the instrument He chose to use – Ehud.

“By (Ehud) the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab.”

Eglon made Jericho his headquarters, and that’s where Ehud went to present tribute to Eglon. But along with the tribute or tax, Ehud brought along a surprise for King Eglon... Verse 16, “Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh.”

Ehud made a two-edged sword – a dagger about 18 inches long. Evidently, the dagger fit into a holster that he was able to strap to his thigh, under his clothes.

“So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) He was extremely obese. He looked like a Jabba the Hut.

“And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king."

He said, "Keep silence!" And all who attended him went out from him.”

“And Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." So he arose from his seat.” Eglon was so fat it was difficult for him to even get out of his chair. When he leaned forward to hear it made him more vulnerable to Ehud’s attack.

“Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.” I picture Ehud putting his right arm around the shoulder of the king - pretending to want to whisper in his ear. All the while he’s distracting the king’s attention from his left arm. Suddenly Ehud stabs him in the gut.

Ehud delivered his message - the God of Israel is the one true God. *And Eglon got the point.* Hey, here was the first message ever preached using *power point!*

Verse 21 “Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out.” The king was gutted. It was a bloody end. Ehud left his dagger as a calling card.

“Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. When he had gone out, Eglon's servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, "He is probably attending to his needs in the cool chamber." He's using the john.

So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened them.

And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.

But Ehud escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the stone images and escaped to Seirah. And it happened, when he arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mountains; and he led them. Then he said to them, "Follow me, for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand."

So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over. And at that time they killed about 10,000 men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for 80 years.”

Obviously, there're several lessons for us in this story...

First, God used Ehud's perceived weakness to win a victory. He stabbed the king with his left-hand. God often turns our weaknesses into strengths when we turn them over to Him. Stop using your handicap as an excuse - and learn to see it as an opportunity for God to show Himself strong on your behalf.

And second, as we learned this morning, Hebrews 4 refers to the Bible as "*sharper than a two-edged sword*". Ephesians 6 calls it "*the sword of the Spirit*".

God's Word is a spiritual dagger. Its message cuts. It gets to the point. And it's two-sided - it works both ways - *for us* and *on us*. It harms the enemy, but it also exposes our fleshly thoughts... *Use the Word, and start by using it on yourself.*

"After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel." The second judge gets summed up with one verse. He picked up a cattle prodder and killed 600 men all by himself.

It was similar to what Samson did with the jawbone of a donkey. He killed 1000 Philistines. Obviously, the Spirit of God came upon Shamgar like He did Samson.

The story of Shamgar reminds me of a poem... "**Shamgar had an oxgoad. David had a sling. Samson had a jawbone. Rahab had a string. Mary had some ointment. Aaron had a rod. Dorcas had a needle... All were used by God.**"

Shamgar's cattle prodder is a reminder that even little things become important when they're turned over to God, and empowered by His Holy Spirit.

One other point about Shamgar... Verse 31 says he was “**the son of Anath**” - the name of a Canaanite idol. Evidently, he came from a family of idolaters.

This just goes to prove, you may be the only believer in your family, or in your circle of friends, or in your neighborhood – but you can still stand strong for God.

Ehud had *a physical handicap* - Shamgar *a spiritual deficiency* - Othniel had *all the advantages*. In chapter 4 Deborah is *a woman*. God uses all types of people.

Chapter 4, “**When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.**” Once again the cycle starts over with the people’s sin.

“**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. And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had 900 chariots of iron, and for 20 years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.**” According to ancient standards Jabin’s 900 iron chariots constituted a military juggernaut.

Up until now the judges have been men. But in verse 4 we meet Deborah... “**Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 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.**”

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 10,000 men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 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'?" God promises a great victory to Barak.

Notice, God calls a man to lead His people into battle. We learn in the New Testament that in the church and in the home God ordains male leadership.

And this is not just a cultural accommodation. In 1 Timothy 2 and in 1 Corinthians 11 God explains it by taking us all the way back to creation.

1 Timothy 2 states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve." At home and in the church the man should lead and the woman should follow.

But, when a man refuses to lead, God will raise up a woman, like Deborah, to do the job! God won't let His work be hindered for the lack of a godly man!

It's sad, but many Christian women today have to wear the britches in their family, because their husband is either afraid or unfit to lead the family spiritually.

I believe the greatest need in the church today is for men to step up and be the spiritual leader in their family. I think most Christian women are more than willing to follow – they want to be led – but they're waiting on their husband to lead.

Verse 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!" Deborah

was obviously a capable, strong-willed, courageous woman, but she knew the spiritual importance of Barak's leadership.

That's why she chastises him for wanting to hide behind the skirt of a woman...

Verse 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." In the end a woman will strike the decisive blow, and it'll take some of the luster of the victory away from Barak. "Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh." They went northward to Kedesh in the Valley of Lebanon.

"And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with 10,000 men under his command, and Deborah went up with him. Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses (Evidently Jethro also went by Hobab), had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh. And they reported to Sisera (the Midianite nomads spied for Sisera) that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor." Tabor overlooks a very famous valley in northern Israel called the Valley of Megiddo. The Israelites camped on the top of Tabor.

"So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, 900 chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon."

Sisera is licking his chops. This is every general's dream come true. Sisera commands a modern army. Israel on the other hand is defenseless – powerless.

Chapter 5:8 says not a single shield or spear was seen among the Israelites.

Verse 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?” This Barak must be a timid guy. It takes Deborah to raise the battle cry.

“So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.”

This was terrible military strategy. Barak gives up the high ground, and steps out into the valley where the chariots of Sisera can crush his troops. Israel is *out-manned*, and *out-machined*, and *out-manuevered*. Israel is headed for an ugly, brutal beating... or so it seems. Instead God intervenes in a miraculous way.

“And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak...” Chapter 5 records a victory song written by Deborah. In her song she speaks of the battle... God brought heavy, torrential rains.

Imagine being one of Sisera’s chariot drivers in the middle of a flashflood and thunderstorm. Your chariot gets stuck in the mud - and an iron chariot is the last place you want to be in a thunderstorm. It’s like begging for a lightning strike.

Sisera’s army jumped from their chariots in confusion and ran for their lives.

This is what the general did, “Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 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.

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. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." Jael offers the fugitive king refuge.

And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. 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."

Notice, he asks for water, but she gives him milk. *Every night I drink a glass of milk before I go to bed. Milk is a natural sedative.* Jael wants to put Sisera asleep.

"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.'" Jael is suppose to stand guard, and divert the posse. Sisera will catch a few winks.

"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." *Sisera also gets the point...* Jael sees to it he ends up with a real Excedrin headache. Remember Deborah told Barak a woman would deal the decisive blow. Here it happens.

Verse 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 on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. 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."