

Don't Judge Me, Lead Me: The Book Of Judges

Judges 4:4-9

"Raising Up Deborah"

Mark 15:40-41

There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Mark 15:47

And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Beloved, it is significant that God chose to feature precious women in one of the most significant scenes in Scripture. It was God Who created women in His own image (Genesis 1:27) and upheld their beauty and value alongside any man in the Bible.

I am grateful to God for the good and perfect gift He gave me nearly twenty-five years ago—a godly wife who is my helper and best friend on earth.

We need to remember that any diminishing or degradation of women—who are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)—was and is the evil doing of evil men, not just “the way it is” or according to cultural etiquette or man-made religious rhetoric. No. Note well that God in His Word consistently elevates the uniqueness, value, and worth of all women everywhere. We simply need to align ourselves to His truth.

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** Are there any wrong assumptions concerning women's roles in the church that you at one point found yourself accepting because of the source from which they were espoused? Do you still accept these views or do you believe more personal study would be beneficial in order to better understand this important issue from a purely Biblical perspective?

***STUDY POINT:** Conduct your own personal Bible study on paper by creating a simple two-column chart comparing traditional religious views concerning women's roles in the church with a more informed, Biblically sound (backed with Scripture in context) approach. Let this study be a longer term endeavour—a couple of weeks—filling your chart with information as you learn it from our studies.

Looking at Judges 4:4-5, we are introduced to Deborah. We can imagine that, just as in our time today, there were probably many girls and women named Deborah in the time of the Judges. But this Deborah was like no other—she was a prophetess and was married to a man named Lappidoth. We are told nothing about Lappidoth other than that he was married to Deborah. Do you see now? God's Word is affirming that—yes, it is that Deborah. Just as I am that specific Darren. And you are uniquely you also!

As believers we know that our God knows our names—each one of us:

Exodus 33:17

And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

Isaiah 49:16

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How easy is it for you to rest in the truth that God knows your name, and loves you—through Jesus Christ—as His very own? Why or why not? If you struggle with your new identity as a child of God, simply pray and ask God to reveal His unconditional love for you. Ask Him right now.

Such a difference between worshipping a distant, unapproachable God versus the God of the Bible Who fearfully and wonderfully created us, knows our name, and has reached down in love to us through Jesus Christ His Son! Deborah and Lappidoth are not only known by God but He loves and values them both. So why wouldn't God raise up one such as Deborah? Yes, and raise her up for mighty exploits in battle; to defend His children against a formidable enemy; to be recorded in the historical canon of Scripture for all time. Clearly, raising up Deborah to deliver the Israelites was no plan B. God would accomplish His will through this woman.

In today's Teaching Room we take great encouragement from God as He sovereignly selects and raises up Deborah. She was uniquely the wife of Lappidoth, an anointed prophet and judge, but most significantly a chosen recipient of God's grace, wisdom, and strength. Be encouraged brethren that God can and will raise up any one of us who are willing and available to Him. And He will provide all we need to ensure our success concerning His kingdom-building assignments.

Judges 4:4-5

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.

Now Deborah. We need to understand that Deborah was already a conduit to the Lord for His people. The text does not in any way hide the significance of her position, or that how by God's grace and access to divine wisdom she was able to decide disputes and provide spiritual counsel. In other words, she doesn't need to be exalted or featured in any Bible narrative to prove her worth. It would seem she was already tight with God. Additionally, in the Book of Judges, Deborah stands out as the only figure truly serving in a judicial capacity. She holds court beneath a palm tree, a significant landmark where she listens to cases and provides divine guidance. The answers she gave to those seeking were believed to have come directly from a divine source, hence Deborah's widely known reputation as a prophetess. She already possessed two unique traits in combination—that of judicial authority and spiritual insight.

Deborah's court was strategically located between Ramah and Bethel, along a major thoroughfare. Ramah, identified with modern-day er-Ram, lies three miles north of Jerusalem in the tribe of Benjamin's territory. Bethel (modern Beitin) is another four miles north along the road into Ephraimite land. This busy route made it an ideal spot for a judge and prophetess, ensuring people could easily seek her counsel and judgments. The location underscores Deborah's accessibility and her pivotal role as a regional leader.

With such significant spiritual and judicial acumen, we in our natural thinking might surmise that God would, of course, choose her as a judge. However, we know from our reading thus far in Judges that God must first raise up rescuers and saviours—temporarily anointing these individuals for the express purpose of saving His children. Perhaps Deborah was chosen then because she had an intimate connection with God and would communicate and carry out His will obediently.

A quick aside here: we only glorify God when we bear the spiritual fruit that results from our intimate connection with Him—like a branch connected to a vine (see John 15:1-8).

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** It would seem that God requires a person who is already somewhat connected to Him to be His chosen vessel to carry out His assignments. Or He needs to bring a person around to a place of humility and attentiveness before working through them to accomplish His will. How would you assess your own relationship with God—are you in a place of intimacy with Him in which you could clearly hear and respond to His divine instructions?

***STUDY POINT:** Find six instances—and write down the Scripture references—in the Old Testament in which God accomplishes His will despite the distracted or disobedient nature of the people involved. Write down what you think these narratives teach us about God.

Judges 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 them up to Mount Tabor.

Kedesh is identified with Tell Qades, located northwest of Lake Huleh in the upper region of Galilee. Mount Tabor, with its distinctive flat-topped shape, rises prominently above the northeastern end of the Jezreel Valley, about two and a half miles from Nazareth. Positioned at the intersection of the tribal territories of Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali (Joshua 19:22), it served as a logical rallying point for troops from these tribes. From its summit, one can see south to Mount Gilboa and west to Mount Carmel. As neutral ground, it was perfect for pre-battle sacrifices and other cultic activities (see Judges 8:18 and 1 Samuel 10:3). Moreover, the high ground provided a strategic advantage, keeping them safe from Sisera's chariots. However, the actual battle was set to take place south at the Wadi Kishon.

Judges 4:7

I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands."

The Kishon River, south of Mount Tabor near Taanach (see Joshua 12:21), runs through a flat plain typically advantageous for Sisera's chariots (see Judges 1:19). However, heavy rainfall had caused the river to overflow its banks (Judges 5:20-21), turning the battlefield into a muddy quagmire. This terrain rendered Sisera's chariots ineffective, bogging them down and turning them into traps. The strategy of drawing the enemy into overconfidence, only to be thwarted by the adverse conditions, gave the Israelites the crucial edge they needed to secure victory.

Judges 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."

At Barak's request, Deborah agrees to join him on the battlefield. Barak strongly insisted on her presence, believing her guidance and advice to be more valuable than any military council (Judges 4:8). He told her, "If you come with me to provide direction and let me know God's will in difficult situations, I'll go without fear of the iron chariots; otherwise, I won't." While some might see this as a sign of weak faith, it actually reflects his conviction that God's presence and guidance, symbolized by Deborah, were essential. He earnestly pleaded for her to accompany him, recognizing her presence as a guarantee of divine support.

In like mind, I would like to think that you and I as Christ followers would intentionally involve God in our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual battles. And why not also allow Christ and His Word to light our everyday paths?

Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Judges 4:9

"Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.

At Barak's request, Deborah agrees to join him on the battlefield. Barak insisted on her presence, believing her guidance to be more valuable than any military council (Judges 4:8). He said, "If you come with me to provide direction and reveal God's will in difficult situations, I'll go without fear of the iron chariots; otherwise, I won't." While some might interpret this as a sign of weak faith, it actually reflects his conviction that God's presence, symbolized by Deborah, was essential. He earnestly pleaded for her to accompany him, seeing her presence as a guarantee of divine support. Also, Barak no doubt was reassured by Deborah's faith and God-ordained fortitude. He could see that she was undeterred by the coming challenges and dangers of battle. Confident of their success, she noted that the journey would not bring Barak ultimate glory, as the Lord

would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. This meant that people would credit Deborah with the victory, even as Jael would ultimately complete the victory—essentially overshadowing Barak's role. Barak, prioritizing the mission's success and his peace of mind over personal glory, refused to drop his request. He felt he couldn't fight without Deborah's guidance and prayers. With God-ordained courage, Deborah joined Barak, and this noble heroine set off with him to the battlefield.

Modern commentators note that Deborah's leadership and Barak's insistence on her presence highlight the critical role women played in biblical times, often providing the moral and spiritual guidance needed for success. Deborah's willingness to step into danger and Barak's acknowledgment of her essential role challenge traditional gender roles and offer a powerful example of collaborative leadership. This dynamic partnership showcases how faith and courage can transcend societal expectations, leading to God-sized achievements.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Do you recall any situations in your own life when God accomplished a greater result from your collaboration with another believer or group of believers?

Next week, we enter into the battle scene, watching God—Who raised up Deborah—glorify His Name once again through mighty exploits!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland