**INTRODUCTION**

**In Chapter 3 we met the first three of Israel’s judges. They were chosen to instruct the people in God’s ways and to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies, which came about as a consequence of their sinful conduct. Israel was learning three things about sin, which we should remember:**

**Sin will take you farther than you thought you would STRAY.**

**Sin will keep you longer than you thought you would STAY.**

**Sin will cost you more than you thought you would PAY.**

**God’s anger at His disobedient and rebellious people was justified. But because of His love for them, He would hear their cries and show them mercy. Before the judges delivered them from their oppressors, the judges instructed them in the ways of the Lord, turning them back to the worship of the true God. After victory over their oppressors, the nation enjoyed a time of peace and blessing.**

**But sinful habits die hard. After the judge died, the nation once again drifted away from God and renewed its relationship with the Canaanite gods, Baal and Asherah. Israel during the time of the judges is an illustration of the life of Christians who try to accommodate a sinful lifestyle while also trying to serve the Lord. They are *carnal* – in spite of an outward show of faith in God, their human nature dominates their thinking and eventually, their actions. They repeat the same sins, often confessing them over and over, but never fully repenting of them. Sometimes, they even may “confess in advance” – “Lord, forgive me for what I’m about to do!” Like Israel, they live basically defeated, joyless, and unfruitful lives with only brief periods of reform and peace.**

**After the death of Judge Ehud, Israel slides into sin again. This time, the deliverer that God raises up is unique among the judges – a woman. But as we shall see, she is unique even among the women of her day – and perhaps ours, too.**

1. **Read verses 1-3. This part of the Book of Judges reads like a “broken record”. What happened after the death of Judge Ehud? (v. 1)**
2. **What enemy did the Lord “raise up” in response, and who led his army? (v.2)**
3. **What made this army appear to be unbeatable, and how long did they oppress Israel? (v. 3; see also Judges 1:19)**
4. **Read verses 4-5. How does this short passage describe Deborah? Besides being a judge, what else did she do? Where did Judge Deborah convene her “court”?**
5. **This passage shows that Deborah began her work of instructing the people in the ways of God BEFORE they were relieved from their oppression. Many years later, the Lord gave King Solomon the “recipe for revival” (II Chronicles 7:12-14). What do God’s people have to do before He sends revival? (See also Joel 2:12-13)**
6. **Read verses 6-10. This passage outlines GOD’S strategy for the deliverance of the Israelites. Who did the Lord tell Deborah to lead the army? (v. 6)**
7. **How many men, and from which of Israel’s tribes, were supposed to be recruited? (v. 6)**
8. **What would the Lord do to Sisera and the army of King Jabin? (v.7)**
9. **What CONDITION did Barak demand before he would obey the Lord’s command? Think about why he might have done this. What CONDITIONS do we attach to OUR obedience to the Lord? (v. 8; see also Luke 9:57-62; John 20:24-29; I Peter 1:6-9)**
10. **How did Judge Deborah respond to Barak’s “ultimatum”? (v. 9-10)**
11. **Read verses 11-16. This passage describes the defeat of King Jabin’s army and its 900 iron chariots, led by Sisera. Who did God use to bring them to the Kishon River? (v.11-13).**
12. **What did Judge Deborah tell Barak in verse 14? We will learn in Deborah’s song (Chapter 5) exactly how the Lord intervened in the battle. See also Exodus 23:27-28; II Samuel 5:22-25; II Chronicles 20:20-24.**
13. **Who REALLY led Israel in the battle against Sisera and his iron chariots? What does this tell us about the “battles” that WE face? How should we prepare for them? (v. 15; see also Exodus 14:14, 23-25; Proverbs 21:31; Romans 16:20)**
14. **What part did Barak and his soldiers play in the battle? (v. 16)**
15. **Read verses 17-24. This passage describes the death of Sisera. How did he escape from the battle, where did he go, and why? (v. 17)**
16. **Who greeted Sisera? What did he ask for, and what did he receive? What other request did Sisera make? (v. 18-20)**
17. **What did Jael do while Sisera was asleep? (v. 21)**
18. **Recall Judge (and prophetess) Deborah’s words to Barak in verse 9. Who came to Jael’s tent, looking for Sisera, and what did he find? (v. 22)**

**CONCLUSION**

**Deborah is the fourth judge mentioned in the Book of Judges, but she is the first one that we meet whose life is described in detail. In this sense, she can be called a “major” judge, one of three that fall into this category (the others are Gideon and Samson). Deborah is remarkable in that she was born and raised in an almost exclusively patriarchal culture. In spite of this, she clearly has the same respect and authority as any of the male judges. Her character was outstanding, unlike that of some of the other judges, who were flawed to varying degrees. We will see even more evidence of this in Chapter 5 – her psalm of thanksgiving to God.**

**Barak is the man whom God called to lead the army into battle with Sisera and his 900 iron chariots. He is often criticized for his conditional response to this calling – “I’ll go only if you come with me, Judge Deborah!” Before we judge him so severely, let’s recall that Moses was hesitant to obey God’s call; so much so that God had Moses’ brother Aaron accompany him (Exodus 4:10-16). Other great saints have benefitted from the encouragement and mentoring of fellow disciples – Paul (Barnabas) and Timothy (Paul), for example. Those who are mature in the faith should be ready to help less mature disciples to grow and develop.**

**Chapter 5 is unique in the Book of Judges. It is a song of thanksgiving by Deborah (and Barak). It is both personal and powerful. In some respects, it resembles the song of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15:1-21. Its central focus is on the power of God, without which Israel could not have won the battle. It also offers an insightful perspective on war from a mother’s perspective.**