**INTRODUCTION**

**The complete and utter destruction of the Canaanite army, with its 900 iron chariots, marked the end of their power in the land of Israel. No more would the Canaanites oppress the people of Israel. Unfortunately, there were other enemies that would take their place. Of these, the Philistines would eventually become the most troublesome.**

**The defeat of King Jabin and his captain Sisera was cause for great celebration in Israel, and Judge Deborah would lead the praise. Chapter 5 is, in fact, a psalm of praise. Deborah was inspired to lead it, and Barak joined in. There are many parallels between Deborah’s song and the song of Moses and Miriam, his sister, who also was a prophetess (see Exodus 15:1-21).**

**Deborah’s song points to another important understanding about God – He loves music! In heaven, the angels surround His throne with songs of praise (see Job 38:4-7). He gave the gift of song to humankind. Ironically, it was a descendant of Cain named Jubal who is identified as “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ” (Genesis 4:17-21). David, a man after God’s own heart, was a skilled musician himself, and a writer of many of the Psalms. After the Lord’s Supper, Jesus and the apostles sang a hymn (Matthew 26:26-30). Paul encourages the Ephesian and Colossian saints to sing spiritual songs to themselves in the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16). The Apostle John’s breathtaking vision of heaven in the Book of Revelation reveals the glorified saints joining the angels in ceaseless songs of praise to God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son (Revelation 5:6-14; 14:1-3).**

**Judge Deborah’s gift of prophecy is also revealed in her song. Through her, the Lord pronounces both blessing and judgment based on the people’s response to His call for action against the Canaanite army. She concludes with a rare and personal look at war from a mother’s perspective; sadly, something that millions of women are experiencing throughout the world to this day.**

1. **Read verses 1-5. Who is the OBJECT of praise in the Song of Deborah? (v.1-2)**
2. **God avenged Israel when the people themselves. What does it mean to do something willingly? (v. 2; see also Exodus 25:1-2; I Chronicles 29:1-9; Nehemiah 11:1-2; Isaiah 1:18-20; Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 9:16-17)**
3. **To whom did Deborah address her song? Recall that at this time, Israel did not have any kings or princes. (v. 3; see also Psalm 2; Acts 4:23-28)**
4. **Judge Deborah was not only prophetic (forward-looking); she was well-acquainted with the history of her people. What SPECIFIC INCIDENT was in mind as she sang verses 4-5? (Hint: see Exodus 19:9-11, 16-19; Deuteronomy 33:1-5) What important lessons can we take away from this passage?**
5. **Read verses 6-8. These verses of Judge Deborah’s song illustrate the difficulties of life under the oppression of the Canaanites. What were the main routes of travel “in the days of” Shamgar and Jael? Why do you suppose this was the case? (v. 6)**
6. **What had happened to the villages in Israel, and why? (v. 7)**
7. **How does Judge Deborah describe herself in verse 7? What is significant about this?**
8. **What CHOICE had Israel’s people made, and what were the CONSEQUENCES? (v. 8)**
9. **Throughout America, there are communities where people live in fear, surrounded by the threat of violence and bloodshed. What might the causes of this situation be, in light of God’s Word? (v. 8; see also Deuteronomy 28:64-67; II Chronicles 15:1-6; Isaiah 57:19-21)**
10. **Read verses 9-13. What CHOICE did the “governors” (local rulers) of Israel make, and what were the consequences? (v. 9-11)**
11. **What command is given to them? (v.10; see also Psalm 107:1-2; Psalm 126:1-3).**
12. **What do the rest of the people of Israel do, and why? (v. 11)**
13. **Finally, what is Deborah moved to do when Israel’s army, led by Barak, is victorious? (v. 12-13; note: armies of those days traveled with large numbers of slaves (male and female) who did chores such as carrying supplies, gathering wood, preparing meals, and caring for horses. The victors didn’t kill them, but claimed them as prizes – they “led captivity captive”; see Genesis 14:10-16; I Samuel 30:1-3, 11-20; Ephesians 4:8)**
14. **Read verses 14-18. This passage is difficult, but it basically describes the lack of response of other neighboring tribes of Israel to God’s call to battle against the Canaanite enemy. It reveals a widespread APATHY in Israel, not unlike that of our communities today. Altogether, how many of the tribes of Israel are mentioned in this passage? Name them:**
15. **Of the tribes mentioned, which ones actually responded? Was Deborah’s command to Barak (Judges 4:6) SPECIFIC or PROPHETIC? (See also Psalm 81:10-11; Isaiah 65:11-12; Matthew 20:16)**
16. **Of the tribes who did not respond to the call to action, what might have been their excuses? (See also Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 14:16-20; I John 2:15-17) What are OURS?**
17. **Read verses 19-22. This passage shows exactly how the Canaanites were defeated, and how God intervened on Israel’s behalf. (the “waters of Megiddo” is a reference to the Kishon River) What UNEXPECTED ENEMY did the Canaanite army encounter? (v. 20; see also Exodus 14:23-25; II Chronicles 20:20-24,27-29)**
18. **Verses 21-22 show how God dealt with the 900 iron chariots. What happened? Do you see why God chose this place for the battle?**
19. **Read verse 23. Meroz was apparently a city near the place of the battle. It is only mentioned here in the Bible. Who “cursed” the inhabitants of Meroz, and why? (v. 23)**
20. **Read verses 24-27. This passage describes the rather gruesome end of Sisera, the once-mighty captain of the Canaanite army. What is your impression of Jael? (Note: When we consider the death of Sisera, we must do so in the context of the severe oppression that he and his army exerted upon Israel. God is the ultimate Judge, and He had already ordained the death of Sisera in Judges 4:9).**
21. **Read verses 28-31. Judge Deborah ends her song on a note of sadness, as she offers a rare insight to the thoughts of another woman – the mother of their enemy, Sisera. What does Sisera’s mother ask herself, and the “wise ladies” in her company? (v. 28)**
22. **What “answers” do they provide to the worrying questions? (v. 29-30)**
23. **Verse 31. Deborah ends her song with an “Amen” – or “so be it”. As Sisera met his end, “so be it” to all those who oppose God and oppress His people. But what about those who love the Lord? How is it with them? (See Psalm 50:1-2; Psalm 67:1-5; Proverbs 4:18-19; Daniel 12:1-3)**
24. **How long did Israel enjoy rest after Barak’s victory?**

**CONCLUSION**

**Wife, mother, judge, prophetess - Deborah wore many hats. She wore them all with humility and dignity. Abraham Lincoln said, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.” Deborah certainly demonstrated her godly character. After the resounding victory over the Canaanites, did she exalt herself? Did she take all of the credit? Did she proclaim herself “smarter than all the generals”? NO! In this fifth chapter of the Book of Judges, she sings praises to the Lord, the God of Israel. She opens it with “Praise ye the Lord”! Could it be that we see so little of God’s power today because we insist on taking, or sharing, HIS glory? Traditionally, we conclude our revivals, programs, special days, etc. with “special recognitions”. We are careful to mention all who participated in the planning and execution of these events BY NAME. And woe be to the speaker if they should happen to omit or mispronounce anyone’s name! But rarely do we give more than “lip service” to God who, through Jesus Christ His Son, gave us the grace to accomplish all “good and perfect” things in the church. What might happen if we imitated Deborah’s example? What might happen if we imitated the example of the early church (Acts 3:11-16; 4:7-12, 23-31)? What might happen if we gave ALL of the glory, thanks, and praise to GOD?**

**After twenty years of being “mightily oppressed” by the Canaanites, Israel has been delivered. People could return to their abandoned villages in peace. This peace would last for forty years. But, as they had done before, so they will do again – as they materially prospered, they became spiritually complacent. They neglected the study of God’s Word; they neglected prayer; they neglected corporate worship. What happens then? Sadly, we already know: the cycle of sin, which we discussed in Judges Chapter 2, begins again.**

**Chapter 6 introduces us to a new oppressor (Midianites) and a new deliverer (Judge Gideon). Scripture has much to say about Gideon, which means that we have much to learn from his example.**