

## EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

### Message #6

### Judges 5:1-31

When the month of May began, it began with news that we had killed Osama Bin Laden. We may remember it happened on a Sunday night after church. I was home watching a baseball game between the New York Mets and the Philadelphia Phillie's. When I learned that the President was going to address the nation, I immediately switched to a news channel. When it was finally announced that justice had been served and he had been killed, my first reaction was "praise God."

Many have wondered since this time if we have a right to praise God and rejoice when some Israel-hating, Christian-hating, God-mocking, American-killing Muslim is killed. The answer from Scripture is you bet we have the right. The Bible gives us the right. **When God takes out the enemies of God's people, they not only have a right to rejoice, they have a responsibility to praise God for what He has done.**

**I want us to notice from Judges 5:1 that this song of praise was given on the very same day God had given Israel victory.** They "sang" on that day. The Hebrew verb "sang" is feminine, which really emphasizes that Deborah, the prophetess of God, was very involved in this praise which included Barak. Both of them were directing the nation to praise God. Think about this; Deborah is a woman with a legal mind. She is very much interested in carefully knowing God's Word and she is very much interesting in a very reverent worship. The praise in this chapter is not about a bunch of women holding up their hands and swaying while repeating the lyrics to some fluffy chorus. This song requires careful thought and serious focus. When women and men are interested in using their minds to carefully understand God's Word and work, they are involved in exactly the same kind of praise as here.

There was a natural desire of those right with God to want to praise God. When God gives us any victory, the normal, natural response from a heart right with God should be to offer praise to God. There was a natural impulsive desire to publicly worship and praise God.

When God delivered Israel across the Red Sea, Moses and Miriam broke out in an immediate praise unto God (Exodus 15). When David experienced victory, he said God put a new song of praise in his mouth (Psalm 40:1-3). Deborah and Barak praise God here. What we actually see in this chapter in this song is the development of a theme:

**WHEN GOD GIVES GREAT VICTORY IT IS RIGHT TO PRAISE GOD FOR IT; AND THOSE WHO WERE FAITHFUL IN THE ACTION ARE HONORED, AND THOSE WHO WEREN'T FAITHFUL ARE EXPOSED.**

Gary Phillips said in Judges 4 we are introduced to an "odd couple," but in **Judges 5** we are introduced to an "awed couple" (*Judges*, p. 81). As we said, this is Deborah's praise song, not Barak's, although he enters and also praises God and leads Israel to do the same. We may prove that by the use of the personal pronouns "I" and "my" in **verses 7, 9, 13.**

**PRAISE REASON #1** – Praise to God because the leaders led . **5:2a**

This was one time when Israel's leaders led the people to obey God's Word. When God's work has leaders who lead people to understand and obey God's Word, it is cause for praise.

**PRAISE REASON #2** – Praise to God because the people volunteered . **5:2b**

When you get leaders and people following God's Word, you have something very rare. The leaders had led Israel to fight against Sisera and they had won. But carefully notice the end of **verse 2**, "Bless the LORD."

It is true and praiseworthy that the leaders led people to follow God's Word and it is true and praiseworthy that the people volunteered, but the One who gave the victory was the LORD and so Deborah ends by saying, "Bless the LORD."

**PRAISE REASON #3** – Praise to God because the Sovereign God is Israel's God. **5:3-5**

At the beginning of **verse 3**, Deborah calls all kings and rulers to take notice of this event. Just exactly what is it that Deborah wants the great leaders of the world to think about?

**She wants all leaders in the world to know that God is a sovereign God and if you tamper with Israel and try and take her land, God will turn against you and destroy you.**

In **verses 4-5**, the first picture that Deborah paints of God is that He is a Sovereign God who has entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. He is a Sovereign God who is in total control of all people and all places. He can cause earthquakes and rainstorms and He is the God of Israel.

World leaders would do well to take notice of this fact. If you are against Israel, you are up against the Sovereign God of the Bible and you must have some hole in your head and literally might end up with exactly that.

**PRAISE REASON #4** – Praise to God because God reversed deplorable conditions through His chosen woman. **5:6-11**

Now there is a shift here and the song moves to the terrible conditions Israel experienced when she was under Canaanite bondage. Deborah specifically dates the time of these things as being in the days of Shamgar and in the days of Jael. Conditions were deplorable physically and spiritually.

It was a time of economic difficulty. The highways were empty and abandoned because people were afraid of various terrorist attacks and harassment by enemies. When you wanted to do business or see your friends, you had to sneak around by the back way (**verse 6**). The peasants who lived in open areas and farmed the land had to leave their homes and move to walled city areas (**verse 7**). Even city areas were not safe. There was war within cities.

The military numbers were very low, only 40,000, and the military was neutered by lack of weaponry (**verse 8**). Talk about disarmament; here are 40,000 soldiers with no weapons. Dan Duncan said you basically had 40,000 disarmed men who were crippled by fear. To make matters even worse, they purposely chose to worship new false gods (**verse 8**). They apparently were not forced to do this; they chose this. You must wonder where were the men of God. Apparently there weren't too many, so God says I will use one faithful woman to get things moving right.

God, in His amazing grace, raised up Deborah (**verse 7**) to become a mother of Israel. She was raised up to bring loving guidance and direction for the people of God just as a mother would for her children. By the leading of God, she contacted Barak to be her military leader and God would turn things around. Notice this woman's heart went out to the "commanders" of Israel and the "volunteers" of the people who were willing to take a stand for God.

**In verses 10-11, Deborah calls all classes of men to praise God.** The wealthy class rode on white donkeys and sat on rich carpets. The "white donkeys" were rare and expensive and came from Arabia (George Bush, *Critical and Practical Notes on Judges*, p. 63). All who travel on roads through Israel were to "sing" as well as the shepherds and farmers (**verse 11**). For the first time in a long time, regardless of position or location, all people could praise God.

That Hebrew word "sing" (**verse 10**) is very interesting because it is a word that refers to the fact that they were to give careful consideration and thought to what they were singing about. **Specifically, they were to carefully think about this deliverance by God for Israel.**

**PRAISE REASON #5** – Praise to God because volunteers responded to the battle call.  
**5:12-18**

According to **verse 12**, the victorious plan of God starts with Deborah and Barak. Deborah was waked up by God for the task and Barak was raised by God for the task. There is an important principle to see here - **When God has a powerful work to do, He will raise someone up to do it.** He will stir someone to lead the charge. He did with Luther and Calvin. He did it with Moody and Spurgeon. He did with Scofield and Chafer. God is to be praised because He raises up individuals to set His people free.

The inspired plan was that they would recruit 10,000 men from Naphtali and Zebulun to go to war with Barak to attack Sisera. We know there were at least 40,000 military men available (**verse 8**), but God didn't need them or want them. He wanted 10,000 recruits. To do a job for God, we don't need the biggest numbers; we need the bravest warriors.

How do you recruit 10,000 men to go to war against a massive Canaanite military and warrior like Sisera who has 900 iron chariots when you don't even have the weapons you need? **What is amazing is that people volunteered (verses 2, 9, 13).** The Hebrew word "volunteer" means they did this freely and eagerly. Barak did not have to twist arms; the people were raring to go. God had done this. According to **verse 13** survivors of the Canaanite captivity came and volunteered. Here then is another very important lesson - **God can make winning warriors out of trusting volunteers.**

Deborah in these verses lists the tribes in her military roll call. They came from Ephraim (**verse 14**), Benjamin (**verse 14**), Machir (the half-tribe of Manasseh who lived west of the Jordan) (**verse 14**), Zebulun (**verse 14**), Issachar (**verse 15**), and Naphtali (**verse 18**).

**Three tribes are honored: Issachar** rushed into battle (**verse 15**); **Zebulun** went into battle with no thought of their own lives (**verse 18**); and **Naphtali** went to the tough high ground where the battle is often hot (**verse 18**).

These tribes are commended because they eagerly went against the enemy in the battle for God. We need to be good soldiers in this church. We need to be enthusiastic in defending the Word of God and reverent worship. We need soldiers out on the front lines of the battlefield who eagerly fight for God and truth.

**But carefully observe that there were four tribes that frankly did nothing**. There are those listed here who “merit dishonorable discharge.” **Reuben** was a tribe emotionally moved in their hearts; in fact, there was a great searching of heart (**verse 16**) but did nothing with their actions (**verses 15-16**). These people talked it over and then did nothing. They talked a good game but never got involved. Reuben-types are emotional, but they never do anything.

**Gilead** (the half tribe of Manasseh who lived east of the Jordan) just decided to stay by itself across the Jordan (**verse 17**). Gilead never got involved in fellowshiping and working with the other tribes. They only looked out for their own interests.

**Dan** just stayed in their ships and missed one of the great moments of Israel’s history (**verse 17**). **Asher** just minded its own business and kept working on its ships (**verse 17**). They had no volunteers. They did not make any significant contribution to the work of God.

If we do not have a zeal to be involved in learning and applying the Word and going to work and war for God, our spirituality can “shrivel up” in a hurry. If you don’t want to go to war for God, you don’t have to. God wants volunteers who willingly, eagerly, freely, spontaneously serve Him.

There are some of you who are on the front lines of everything God is doing. You are at services, you pray, you give, you worship. You serve and volunteer to help wherever or whenever you can. Then there are others that sit at home and just talk. They live in their own little world and they look out for themselves. You rarely see them at church, and frankly they don’t contribute much. I tell you this - in everything God does with this church, and He is doing things with this church throughout the world, they will not be honored by Him.

**PRAISE REASON #6** – Praise to God because God gave victory. **5:19-23**

The whole battle is described in these 5 verses. **Verse 19** describes what Israel saw - a coalition of kings coming straight at them in the Taanach by the waters of Meggido, which was actually a small stream of the Kishon river.

They were coming in full force with all 900 chariots and thousands of soldiers. However, the Canaanite kings would not win this battle and they did not carry off any silver or plunder. They were completely destroyed by God. In fact, the Canaanites never oppressed Israel again after this moment.

It was the dry season and Sisera expected to easily defeat the Israelites with their 900 chariots. But what they didn't count on was God sending a rain to cause a torrent of water from the Kishon river to wash them away. Sisera was in war with God from heaven (**verse 20**), specifically "the angel of the LORD" (**verse 23**), who is none other than Jesus Christ.

God controls all atmospheric elements. God sent a terrible storm and the rain caused the banks of the river to overflow and the chariots were getting stuck in the mud and this caused the horses to become frightened and spooked (**verse 22**). Sisera put all of his trust in his military and in his equipment, but failed to realize God can wipe it out easily and instantly with one rainstorm.

Jesus Christ is the One who cursed Meroz, because they committed treason and did not come to the war of the LORD. Meroz was a key city located in close proximity to the battle area. They apparently were in a great position to do something for God; yet they refused to lift a finger to help, so God puts a curse on them. The sin was not just failing to help Israel; it was a failure to help God in view of the fact that they were right there where everything was taking place.

The curse was so effective that, as one commentator observed, there is no trace of this city to this day and even remembrance of it has been blotted from memory.

It is important to see that whenever someone does something good for God's people, God takes it Personally as done unto Him. By the same token, whenever someone doesn't do something good for God's people when they are in a position to do it, God takes that Personally too.

**PRAISE REASON #7** – Praise to God because of His sovereign work in a woman . **5:24-27**

Jael is praised and blessed by God. She didn't even have a house (no Jael house), but she lived in a tent and she is the most blessed woman to ever live in a tent (**verse 24**). According to **verse 25**, Sisera asked for some water and Jael brought him milk and a wonderful bowl of cottage cheese, which makes a great final meal. As one of our elders said (initials TK) who wouldn't want to die after a meal as great as that.

She picked up a tent stake with her left hand and a hammer in her right hand and drove that tent stake right through his temple (**verse 26**). It is possible that when she drove the tent peg into his head that he tried to get up, which is why the Hebrew says he fell at her feet dead.

What God did was destroy all enemies from the foot soldiers, to the chariot soldiers, to the commanders. They were destroyed completely.

**PRAISE REASON #8** – Praise to God because the aspirations of enemies are shattered.  
**5:28-30**

Enemies of God have no hope even when they think there is hope. Sisera's mother waited for her son to come home, but he never would come home. Various maidens speculated that he was dividing up the spoil and that is why he had been delayed. What they didn't know is that he was dead. There are many people who hope in things that will never happen. Sisera would never come home again. He was dead. Deborah's motive for bringing this up is not to gloat over a grieving mother, but **to tell the truth about what happens when someone turns against God and against Israel.**

**One who rejects God and His Word will have all aspirations shattered.**

**Verse 31 closes the song by saying let there be a real difference between those who love God and those who are the enemies of God.**

Let the enemies perish and let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun.

Now notice the last phrase, "The land was undisturbed for forty years." Because God was praised and worshipped and obeyed, God did powerful things.

Listen, it is possible for you to hope that you will go to heaven and really not have any chance at all of going there. You can hope all you want. There is only one Person who can save you from all of your sins and take you there - Jesus Christ. If you will place your faith in Him you are saved.

**Judges 5** is a song everyone should sing:

- A. Political leaders should sing it because it warns them to support Israel.
- B. Believers should sing it because it shows we will be either honored for our faithfulness or exposed for unfaithfulness.
- C. Nonbelievers should sing it because it shows their doomed destiny.