



## Deborah: A Woman of Influence

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The life of Deborah seems controversial to some and intriguing to others, but it often leaves readers with more questions than encouragement. The Apostle Paul tells us, "*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope*" (Romans 15:4). In the book of Judges the endurance, encouragement and hope are embedded like gems in the darkness of Israel's spiritual depravity. We wonder if it is safe to dig them out and even then, we struggle in our understanding of how to use these truths. But there are lessons to be learned and wise words to guide us! Our ever holy God is shown to be patient, merciful and powerful. The people of this earth still prefer to "do as they see fit"; and we still live as Israelites in a Canaanite world. It is our purpose to more fully understand this historical account to find hope and encouragement for ourselves today. We see a familiar pattern in Scripture of people who are struggling, a God that moves hearts to action, and difficult situations the Lord uses for His purposes and glory. God's message has not changed in thousands of years; we are sinners in need of a Savior and consider it a privilege to respond with lives of faith. These are all truths that strengthen our faith and deepen our love for God; truths that equip us with wisdom. Understanding the setting and people brings us the hope and encouragement He promises.

### **The Setting**

The mere placement of this account in the book of Judges sets the stage for the story. It occurred during Israel's cycle of apostasy, marked by a pattern of human sin and divine grace. Israel repeatedly turned away from God and suffered under His reproach. There were long stretches of lukewarm complacency and blatant defiance. The head of each family carried the responsibility for spiritual leadership and they were failing miserably. The Israelites found themselves embracing the religions of their neighbors and forsaking the God of their fathers. God allowed other nations to conquer and oppress the people of Israel, yet always had the ultimate goal of leading his

wayward people to repentance. Our faithful Lord heard their cries for help under tyranny, answered their prayers, and *"raised up judges"* (Judges 2:16).

The ugliness of their spiritual depravity was reflected in destitute social conditions. Deborah and Barak sang about main roads which were abandoned and travelers who took *"winding paths"* in hopes of safer passage. A hushed tone echoes, *"Village life ceased"* recalling the danger of living outside the city walls where villages would have been *"fruit for the plucking"* (Lawrenz pg. 69). The threat of war came to the city walls but *"not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel"* (Judges 5:8). Those who were to provide protection had no offensive or defensive weapons let alone the heart to use them. Like a haunting chorus lingers the familiar refrain, *"Everyone did as they saw fit."* There is no glamour here; it is not a pretty story we wish to relive. But it is not unlike our situation today where the Christian church on earth struggles to remain faithful. We follow faithfully for a while and then we grow weary or become distracted. Like Israel, we are drawn away from our purpose to pursue other paths. Our world today is not unlike the world of ancient Israel where the influences of a sin, pursuit of self and false religions erode the clear truths of God into muddy, stagnant ponds of filth. Solomon wrote, *"what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Sin upon sin calls out an invitation to us from without and within, hoping to turn our hearts away from the Lord. But His mercy is new every morning, and He leads us to daily repentance. Luther's familiar words bring such truth, *"the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and...a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."* It is in winning our hearts to repentance each day that He is preparing to use us. God calls His own flawed people in the work of His Kingdom and proclamation of the true Gospel. His Word continues as the sole foundation of all that is pure, true and effective despite the flawed humans that carry the message.

*"Everything that was written in the past was written [that] we might have hope."*

### **Deborah, a prophetess**

Deborah is not the central focus of Judges Chapters 4-5. Her life is recorded there but God is the one speaking, working miracles and delivering enemies into the hands of the Israelites. The network of people involved in the conquest of Sisera was extensive and people from several tribes and different backgrounds responded to the Lord's calling. Yet Deborah did have a significant role and served an important purpose at this time in history. Her actions and motives offer much to remind us how God chooses to use people in relationships and situations to honor Him.

The first thing Scripture tells us about Deborah is that she was a prophetess (Judges 4:4) and the Concordia Study Bible states, *"She is the only judge said to have been a prophet(ess)"* (p. 334). She received a specific message from the Lord for Barak, the commander of Israel's army, so she sent for him. Her humble and respectful attitude never waivers yet it seems noteworthy that she does not deliver the message. Barak knows where to find Deborah and comes to hear the message of the Lord. He never doubts the validity of God's message, *"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. 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'" (Judges 4:6-7).*

Deborah is not the first woman to be listed as a prophetess and her calling as such foreshadowed the words of Joel, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy...Even on my servants both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:29). God's prophets in Scripture were given direct revelation from the Holy Spirit to speak of things that would otherwise not be known (Gurgel, p. 87). Today, we often refer to "prophets" in the church as those who teach or preach God's Word. But Deborah and other women such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Isaiah's unnamed wife (Isaiah 8:3) and Anna (Luke 2:36) were used as vessels to share a direct prophecy from God. In a similar way, we learn of the prophetess Huldah in 2 Kings 22:14, who served the Lord shortly before the fall of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon. King Josiah gave orders to "inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found." The priest and his servants went to the prophetess, Huldah who lived in Jerusalem. It isn't clear why they didn't go to Jeremiah, the faithful servant of God but Scripture records the conversation with Huldah who responded, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says..." and "they took her answer back to the king" (2 Kings 22:15, 20).

We begin to squirm at this point, wondering about how all this fits with Scripture's clear directive that women should not have spiritual authority over men. Prof. Gurgel writes, "The gift of prophecy was not limited to males in either the Old or New Testament. However, in no way does the biblical description of how female prophets carried out their calling from God indicate that they disregarded or violated the scriptural principle of headship" (p. 87). There is not much more that can be said and we must be careful not to say more than Scripture has revealed but we can speak of this truth that we know. Our perfect, holy God gave specific prophetic messages to women who served Him by delivering those messages as He directed. Let us begin by rejoicing in the reminder that God uses women to share His truth in many different ways, and this was one of them! Delight that our covenant Lord demonstrates holiness as He upholds all His principles with purity.

The setting and style of Deborah's calling has overtones that harmonize well with the rest of Scripture. While other prophets proclaim God's message in the courts of His anointed kings and holy temple, she is found serving the Lord by the Palm of Deborah. Many of God's prophets were called to public settings and prominent audiences, but like Huldah, we find Deborah faithfully speaking the Lord's message in a different setting. Neither one of them is leading in the temple or tabernacle; yet the Lord gives them a direct revelation of prophecy. Then those who are seeking God's wisdom are led to these women, who are faithfully serving as they have been called.

The harder question is, "What applications can we make and what are we learning here?" The applications and lessons will be consistent with all other teachings in Scripture. We look to other related passages that are clear and pray for wisdom from the Holy Spirit as we search the Word. It would be inappropriate to focus on the few occurrences of prophetic women and think that we should give more weight to these accounts compared to other teachings of Scripture. Several of these prophetic women lived at a time when Israel was struggling spiritually. However, we don't need to dismiss these women as if to say their stories have no impact or bearing on how we

see God using women in Scripture. Without violating the principle of head and helper in any way, God has and still does use women to share influential messages of faith and hope with others, including men. His pure desire to save souls has trumped common social practice for thousands of years. He used mixed gender conversations when men weren't supposed to talk to women and women weren't supposed to talk to men. Now, while society struggles toward gender neutrality, God still demands respect for leadership and calls men to provide spiritual authority for the church on earth. But listen to King Lemuel's bold announcement, "*Let her works bring her praise at the city gate*" (Proverbs 31: 31). We do not need to hide or belittle the labors of our sisters. God has used women in the work of His Kingdom since the beginning of time. The renewed woman longs to serve and share Christ without overthrowing the design of the Creator. We faithfully proclaim. We respect the design. We respond to the calling. May God ever lead and keep us on His narrow path!

However, on that narrow path there is also a distinct line that might help in further applications. It is important to recognize the special revelations God gave to Deborah, Huldah and others. Prophets, in the narrow sense of the word, were given direct messages from God and served an important purpose in the historical setting of the church. The Lord led His people with prophetic messages through men and women of various backgrounds. Some of God's prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah were men that formally served the Lord through ministry and prophecy for their entire lives. Others were called for brief periods of time and given special revelations like some of the minor prophets and these women. The point is, these direct revelations from God were a unique and special calling to serve. Aren't we all like Deborah as we share Christ, His love and wisdom with others? In the narrow, specific sense of the word, no, we are not all prophets! God no longer leads us with visions, voices or a roll of the dice. We cannot thoughtlessly incorporate a broad understanding of prophecy as we seek to apply God's principles or we fail to uphold the honor of those given direct, prophetic revelations from the Lord.

There are no quick, cut and dried answers here but helpful insights can be observed as we give meditative thought to the historical context, attitudes and motivation of people in these accounts. The historical settings of Deborah and several other prophetesses were not flattering times for Israel. Lethargic leadership can creep into the church and the fear of disinterested men stepping back while passionate women rush in to take over is a danger we rightfully guard against. But perhaps we are tempted to act like the Pharisees in our fear, turning to human additions and safeguards added to God's law as our confidence. If we establish more rules and minimize the callings of women we fail. Devaluing the gifts and importance of other Christians in the body of Christ is destructive. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). If we put our hope in establishing extra rules to safeguard the principle of head and helper while losing biblically legitimate ways for women to use their God-given gifts in the body of believers, we are saying much more than Scripture says. Instead, our hope is in the power of the gospel. God's grace to us in Jesus doesn't lead us to ignore God's principle of head and helper, instead it empowers us to put it into practice as the good gift it is. So, we prayerfully seek to apply that principle in ways that make biblically wise use of the gifts of both men and women. The example of Deborah in particular clearly demonstrates her godly attitude toward Barak. She doesn't push him aside with bitterness or speak with resentment. She wants to see God's will be done; she wasn't drawing Barak to her wisdom, she was pointing him to God. What happens if our relationships in the church patterned God's holy design? What if agape love compelled us to help one another grow in Christ and use our gifts according to His callings, striving for wise law

and gospel distinctions that let both God's Law and God's Gospel stand for the purposes for which He gave them? Let us long for women who respect and uphold the men who are called to spiritual leadership. Let us be blessed with men who love to see women involved in Gospel ministry, valuing their gifts and faithful labors. Deborah gives us a beautiful example of a prophetess who speaks God's Word in a respectful attitude of love for the purpose of building up the Church. God help us attain such a love for one another that delights in mutual service that honors God and blesses His people!

But what more can we see? It is evident throughout Scripture that women encourage others, including men. What pastor or teacher has not needed uplifting words of Scripture and reminders of God's faithfulness from those he serves? What servant-leader is so unwise as to overlook the insights and perceptions of the women in his midst? What woman would deny the living water of Christ to someone God has put in their path of life? The limitations of formal, authoritative teaching over men are exceptionally clear throughout Scripture, and so are the examples of God using women who are witnesses and influential encouragers to men. Both practices are a part of our loving adherence to God's will! Caleb practically quotes Rahab, the prostitute, when he reports to his military commanders. She says, *"I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you"* (Joshua 2:9). Then he reports to Joshua, *"The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us"* (2:24). Whose influence does that reflect? It is GOD'S influence given through a prostitute. Later in history we see Abigail plead for mercy from David to save the lives of the men in her household after her husband foolishly refused food and hospitality to David and his men. The mighty warrior of Israel lost his patience but the gentle words of a woman deterred him from a sinful blood bath because she was seeking David's good and the Lord's glory! *"Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself"* (1 Samuel 25:28, 30-31). Abigail's humble plea, quick action and sincere faith honored the Lord and blessed King David, who responded, *"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands"* (1 Samuel 25:32-33). The woman at the well in Samaria returned to her town with news of the Messiah and had a huge impact! *"They came out of the town and made their way toward him"* (John 4:30). The story concludes that *"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed him because of the woman's testimony"* (4:39), but, most importantly, *"They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world'"* (4:42). None of these examples put women in a position of formal, spiritual instruction or authority but these and many others show faithful women serving God by influencing, encouraging or offering advice to men in a God-pleasing way. And those men serving as leaders are honoring the Lord as they consider the insights of the women God put in their lives, working together for the glory of God's Kingdom. The women in Scripture who were called upon to deliver the word of the Lord give us no conflicted message or cause for concern. We know that God has and does use women in the work of the public ministry; He just does not do so in a way that asks them to exercise authority over men.

## Deborah, a judge

The next key descriptor of Deborah can be equally confusing as she was "leading" Israel at that time and held court under the Palm of Deborah. It seems widely accepted that the position of leadership was that of *judging*, and it is noted as an alternate translation in the New International Version for the word "*leading*." Remember the period of the judges was right before Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. During this time the nation of Israel was ruled by a theocracy; God was their ruler. Prof. John Lawrenz suggests an interesting metaphor when he writes, "The covenant that Moses delivered and that Joshua affirmed was the nation's 'constitution'" (pg. 1). Yet because of Israel's cycle of rebellion, the thematic words from Judges ring repeatedly in Scripture, "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*" The spiritual condition of Israel was like a tire stuck in mud, rocking in and out and then back in. Judges 2:16 says, "*Then the Lord raised up judges*" and in verse 18, "*Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge.*" God's hand is always in authority over those who rule, and shapes history to serve His purpose even when it is not clear to us. The Lord chose to respond to the cries of His oppressed, unfaithful people and when He did, we see a judge. Lawrenz provides these insights on the judges:

Othniel and Ehud, the NIV calls, 'deliverers.' The same Hebrew word, used also to describe the ministries of Shamgar, Gideon, Tola and Samson is identical with the word from which the name of Jesus, the 'savior,' is derived. Jephthah was a 'mighty warrior' whom his people made 'commander' and 'head.' The one woman in the group, Deborah, was a 'wife' 'prophetess' 'a mother in Israel' and the only one described as deciding disputes in a court of law (pg 2).

One might note the strength and leadership in the words used to describe the men, yet the description of Deborah seems not only feminine but relational. A wife and mother who speaks the Word of God seems to have a different countenance than deliverers, saviors, and commanders - yet, God made her a judge. Undoubtedly, Deborah was not trying to throw off her womanhood and step into a man's world. On the contrary, it seems very evident that her faith, wisdom, and gifts made her well suited for her calling. Swenson points us to the hand of God, "We aren't told how she came to be a judge, but God put her in that position to do His will" (pg 29); and so she did. Her willingness to serve seems to be in stark contrast to the majority of the men in Israel at the time. Spiritual apathy and neglect were widespread. Lawrenz points to Deborah's song in chapter 5, which "leaves the distinct impression that the warriors of Israel simply lost their zeal for the defense of their heavenly Father's land" (pg 55). Most people just didn't care about their faith or the nation of Israel, but Deborah did and her faith had a pivotal impact.

We understand Deborah's leadership of Israel as that of a civil servant in the realm of law. Civil courts had been set up to serve the people of Israel with legal matters, and Judges 4:5 affirms that "*the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.*" Again, our knee jerk reaction is to wonder whether God is making a statement about women in secular positions of government or other leadership over men. And again, our practice remains the same; we look to all of Scripture to understand God's teaching about men and women in the world. We do not

look at one account in Scripture and elevate one person in history to set a precedent. Nor do we overlook the way God uses people and forget that He raises up whomever He chooses. The point of this account is not to either affirm or deny women's callings in the world. The point of this account is the grace and power of God! We see His calling to men and women as the body of Christ and praise God we see them respond in faith! There is both mutual respect AND an honoring of headship. There is both mutual submission AND an orderliness that benefits and blesses His people. It isn't one or the other; we must speak both truths. God's perfect plan includes callings to men and women that are both common and unique. He has our attention here to consider this account as a part of what all of Scripture teaches. It is only sin that causes conflict and unrest as we strive to make application.

### **Barak, the commander**

Barak, whose name means "thunderbolt" was from the tribe of Naphtali. Several commentators noted that he needed Deborah's "divine enthusiasm" to initiate the charge on Sisera's army and this is certainly how we remember the story. Yet Barak is listed as one of the four judges who appear as heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32, *"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets."* It might seem unusual that Barak is listed here, especially since the *"honor of the battle"* (Judges 4:9) went to Jael, but Barak did lead the army of 10,000 men down Mount Tabor. *"At Barak's advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left"* (Judges 4:15-16). Barak may have had a shaky start, but he finished strong. A careful look at Hebrews 11:33-34 brings a beautiful truth to light; it was faith in God that moved these men to action, not strong armies or military strategies. God was the one who called Barak to battle and Deborah was merely the mouth piece that delivered the message. Describing these heroes of faith the writer of Hebrews reveals that they, *"...quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; **whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.**"* God prompted Barak to action through Deborah but He Himself strengthened Barak into the mighty warrior who overcame Sisera's cruel and oppressive army. Yes, Barak doubted and doubted, seeming to need Deborah more than he should have. But the goal was always to use the body of Christ to do the will of God. We rejoice seeing our brother step up to the calling of God and receive the blessing of both strength and victory. Let us strive to emulate such confidence in God that we can encourage others to respond to His calling rather than grumble with dissent at their repeated failures.

The application for us today is crystal clear. Rather than belittling our spiritual leaders when they struggle, God calls each of us to offer them encouragement and respectful, gentle correction if necessary so they fulfill their calling to duty. Deborah did address Barak's weakness and refusal to go without her as she replied, *"Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours"* (Judges 4:9). But God was calling Israel to repentance long before Deborah spoke to Barak. The entire book of Judges records the Lord's displeasure and rebuke of Israel's sin; then it reveals His grace motivated intervention after their repentance. It was the Lord that sold His people into the hands of Jabin (4:2) and the Lord who subdued Jabin

(4:23). Christ's love. Christ's calling. We can do no less. God's Word calls us to action as royal priests to share that same message in our own destitute social setting. As society and government undermine the designs God gave for marriage, life and Christian faith, we must all be Deborah with a message of spiritual encouragement to our fellow Christians, "*The LORD, the God of Israel, commands [us]: 'Go!'*" In the church, we honor and respect those who are called to leadership and work together with humility and understanding. We labor side by side to the end, sharing Christ's love and truth. We work as a team under the spiritual headship which God has established; we work hard and support those whom God has called to various positions of leadership. We marvel at the grace of God which miraculously transforms all of us as weak sinners to warriors of active faith and fearless prayer. Everything is done with respect so that the body of Christ honors the Lord in her actions. Hope is ours as we look to the Lord and serve one another with His love. We press on to fully use our gifts in keeping with His Word, knowing that at times we will struggle in our understanding. We will wrestle trying to live out God's design in a sinful world but we must encourage and value all those in the body of Christ. Rather than driving us to be divided in our applications, let this drive us to the Word for wisdom and Gospel motivation.

### **The side story**

We cannot complete our meditation of this account without echoing Scripture's praise of Jael, a Kenite wife. Though the Kenites appear already in Genesis 15, this clan is directly related to Moses' father-in-law, Jethro; and Judges 4:11 refers to them as "*descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law.*" Jael and her Kenite husband, Heber, had moved near Kedesh, 30 miles south of Hazor (the home of King Jabin) and 10 miles east of Mount Tabor (the sight of the battle). They would not have lived far from Barak, and Heber would have blended right in as a weak-willed man of compromise. Scripture doesn't shed a favorable light on Heber and it seems possible that he may have been one of the iron workers who helped create Sisera's chariots. Judges suggests he was an opportunist and reveals that "*there were friendly relations between Jabin king of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite*" (4:17). Apparently Jael was "*the better half*" in her marriage (Lawrenz p. 62).

Even in the setting of her difficult marriage, God had a plan for Jael. Her strategic placement between the battle site and the city of Hazor was a perfect check mate on the part of God. Sisera was losing the battle and abandons his army, fleeing for refuge. It is interesting that Sisera goes to the tent of Jael and asks her to stand guard in the doorway of the tent (Judges 4:20). "*Come right in*" is Jael's hospitable response as she gets him milk and a covering. Then when exhaustion drives him to a deep sleep, Jael pounds a tent peg through his head and the fierce captain Sisera is slain by a woman.

Had Jael ever questioned God about her marriage, Heber's ungodly associates, or the place where they lived? Most women ask those questions. Few Christians understand the reasons or purposes of God's plans but all can trust His gracious rule of His world and, in particular, of His church. Hardships and unpleasant situations don't indicate the absence of God; they call us to remember His gracious eternal purpose in working all things for the good of His Kingdom and the spiritual growth of His people. "Why this? Why here? Why now?" are desperate



questions we ask as we try to tie our circumstances to something that has eternal value. Rather than giving answers, God shows us time and again how *"in Him all things hold together"* (Col. 1:17). Yet another message of hope streams from these pages as a lesser-known wife in a less than ideal setting champions the calling of God like Sarah, Esther and Ruth.

### **The song**

Deborah's song isn't a rival of Mary's beautiful Magnificat or Hannah's humble prayer but it, too, is meant to give us hope! While Deborah is named as the composer of the song, it was written as a duet for both Deborah and Barak to sing together; another testament to Deborah's respect for Barak. The song fills in some of the details missing from the account in Judges Chapter 4 such as the rainstorm that disabled Sisera's chariots in the mud of the Kishon River. However, verse 9 captures a more intimate dream of our heroine, *"My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people."* What a beautiful reflection of God's image! Thoughts, words and actions which lovingly support those in the Kingdom of God. Deborah's godly attitude preceded the victory and shaped her actions. Is our heart *"with"* those who lead and volunteer among us? Does that attitude shape our thoughts and actions? Let us hope that it does.

The stanza which follows in verses 19-23 is a reality check in stark contrast to the miraculous intervention of God. Like the 7,000 who had not *"bowed their knees"* (1 Kings 19:18), God brought 10,000 men which would outnumber the Canaanite army in battle. But in the midst of the faithful who volunteered, *"there was much searching of heart...And Dan, why did he linger by the ships? Asher remained on the coast"* (5:17). Don't think that all God's people responded; six tribes met at Mount Tabor, four did not. Deborah has no harsh words of condemnation for them but God's angel does. Perhaps we can take a cue that we let God take care of those who don't respond to His repetitive calling. We hear it mentioned in the song so we can brace for the impact in our own lives, but Deborah spends little time bemoaning the disobedient tribes judged by God.

In the closing verses we see Sisera's mother waiting for the spoils of war. Where is her portion of the plunder? Where is her son? Lawrenz points to the Hebrew poetry which skillfully *"dissolves [her speech] into the babbling of someone beyond hysteria"* (p. 76). A fitting closure to a war story from a woman's perspective, this account actually shows us several perspectives. Deborah, the wife and mother in Israel, reminds us of the importance of relationships and how the battle was won. The desperate cries of Sisera's mother and the curse of the damned in Meroz remain only as a contrasting back drop to those who live in the hope of the Lord. The power, mercy and preeminence of God fill us with confidence though we often see ourselves as those who are like unfaithful Israel.

### **In conclusion**

There is no doubt that some questions still linger and give us reason to search the Scriptures in our quest for learning. However, the hope and encouragement of the account is not lost in the darkness or the grey. Shining like stars, Deborah, Barak, Jael and 10,000 men gave glory to God in their actions. The setting of widespread spiritual corruption and lethargy did not hinder or excuse God's people from action. Do not let the moral demise of our society draw you away from strong citizenship and active faith. God called His people, they responded and triumphed! He calls us today and we have opportunity to respond in our homes, churches, neighborhoods, and beyond. Speak His life-giving words of forgiveness and truth to others! The message of God has been given to all His children as royal priests and yet, like the appointed Levites, there are also divine callings to leadership. We pray for Deborah's attitude to carry those leaders in our hearts, to build them up, labor with them and encourage them with the Word. It is a blessing to remember that spiritual leaders are human in need of our love and support. It is our Christian service to uphold, nurture and take care of them. Resist the struggle to recast the picture with stronger, idealized characters, and trust that God does all things well even as He uses imperfect people. See the lost tribes of Israel among us who have let go of God's Word and no longer heed His voice. Pray for them, love them and continue to invite them to Mount Tabor where the words of God are esteemed and followed. Let the account of Jael give us confidence that despite difficult situations or feelings of alienation God puts people in the right place at the right time. Pray for eyes to see the opportunities rather than a heart weighed down by limitations or circumstances. Trust that He has a divine purpose for your life and exact placement in eternity. Be confident that He has called you to faith and life that has a purpose and serves His glory.

There may, at times be a backdrop of darkness as we deal with pain or disappointment. We will see the evils of this world have their way, and the consequences of sin blacken the shadows. Even in the church we will fail and hurt one another. But let the contrast merely point to the power of the Gospel's light. There is hope and encouragement in the Word. Our strength is not in our attempts to work harder or be more faithful than the Israelites. Our power is in the comfort of the Gospel and the love of Christ which compels us to work together amidst the frustrations and set backs of a cursed world.

Long for His Kingdom, holiness and grace. Pray for it. Work for it. Rest in it.

**Works Consulted:**

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