

Judges Ch 4-5

Ch 3 introduces the 1st 3 judges in Israel, Othniel, the “James Bond” of the judges, Ehud, who gave the nation of Israel it’s longest period of rest 80 years. And the chapter closes out with this guy who really we don’t know anything about, he gets 1 vs dedicated to his name and accomplishments by the grace and calling of God for the nation of Israel. Lets look at vs 31 of ch 3.

Vs31

And that’s all we have, now why was there so little told about him? We don’t know, and anything that I could say would be conjecture or speculation, it could be that what he did for the nation was so well known at the time that this was written that there was no need for exposition concerning his life and accomplishments in the nation. I mean anyone who could single-handedly take out 600 men would probably have a decent reputation, and so it’s possible that at the very mention of his name there was a certain renowned awareness that was just present amongst the people, they all knew who he was and what he’d done. Therefore the writer didn’t feel it necessary to expound on his accomplishments, we see mention of his name again in ch 5 but there, there’s even less said. But trusting that the Holy Spirit inspired that which He felt necessary to be in God’s word, ultimately that’s why we have what we have, and his story is a bit reminiscent of a certain incident in the life of Samson. You recall that Samson (who we’ll read of later on in the book of Judges) killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. And here we read where Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad, now what was an ox goad?

It was a pole about 8’ long with a sharp metal point on one end that was used for prodding the oxen and urging them to keep working when they were being stubborn, and at the other end was a spade for cleaning off the plow. You recall in Acts ch 9 when the Lord met Saul (who would later become Paul) and revealed Himself to him, that He spoke to Saul and said, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”* You see there would be times when the oxen would kick back against the prodding only to wound themselves more deeply, and Saul was doing just that. He was going against his own conscience and conviction of the Holy Spirit, and he just kept hurting himself deeper but his pride and unbelief wouldn’t allow him to stop doing what he was so convinced in his mind was the right thing to do. But all that it took to convert Saul of Tarsus was an accurate revelation of Jesus Christ, when he saw who Jesus was in truth; he gave his life to Christ. As long as there was a misconception in his heart he went against the Lord, and I believe that that will be true for anyone, when they see Jesus in truth, they’ll give their life to Christ, but as long as there are misconceptions in their heart, they’ll fight it, kick against it, what are we to do? Pray that the Lord would reveal Himself in truth to those who we know are in need of Him that they might see Him for who He truly is, because I believe that it’s impossible to truly see Jesus and reject Him.

Well what about people who come to the Lord and then turn away? Same thing, by the time they turn away, they're no longer seeing the Lord for who He is, their point of view has become so distorted and inaccurate (generally through sin, if not legalism and self-imposed standards) that they've lost their desire to serve Him. But all that to say that this goad was the weapon that Shamgar used to kill 600 Philistines, now Israel at this time had no weapons, because they'd been living under oppression, and when you conquer a people, if you have any wisdom at all you disarm them, so as to aid in the resistance to a rebellion. But you can't take away peoples trade tools or else you have to provide for them.

And so it would seem as though Shamgar was a farmer, Jeff what are you saying? We see in this the same lesson that we see time and time again in scriptures and most all of you have probably heard it before and we'll see it again before we're through tonight. God is willing to take whatever is in your hand and use it to His glory if you'll just offer it over to Him. Shamgar didn't have any special military skills that we're aware of, the guy was a farmer, but what did he do? He availed himself to the Lord, offered over what he had to the service of the Lord and God used him mightily. What's in your hand tonight, what is that you possess that God might utilize for His purposes if you'd only be willing to avail it to Him? Now that's not saying that He's going to, but does He even have that option. And you've heard it before, "Moses, what's in your hand?" "A rod", well with it I'll smite a nation, I'll part the sea, I satisfy and quench the deepest thirst of millions. "David, what's in your hand?" "A sling", you know the story, "with it I'll take out Israel's most formidable foe" God wants to use the practical things of your life. With Peter and John it was fishing nets, the Lord said, "I'll make you fishers of men", with Paul the apostle it was a pen, he was a scholar, God used him pen the majority of the NT. Shamgar had an ox goad, an old farmers tool (which consequently made a ferocious weapon) and God used it to deliver a nation, that portion in which he lived. A lot of the things that we read of in judges were on a regional level, not a national level, so a certain area of Israel may've been being oppressed while other areas weren't and at another time those areas may've been in servitude while *they* (the other areas of the nation) were enjoying rest. But God wants to use your life and He has equipped you accordingly, but it's up to you to be open and available to God using those things, and using you for His glory. Now in ch 4 the pattern continues, Ehud dies and the people once again revert back into rebellion in the sight of God.

Vs1-2

Now Jabin was the king, but Sisera seemed to really be the one who was in control in that Jabin is mentioned here, and a few places following but Sisera is the one who takes the spotlight, not that that's a good thing in his case.

Vs3

You know each time that we see this cycle reoccur we're often prone to observe and emphasize the rebellion of Israel, but maybe what we should be careful to draw more attention to is the grace and mercy of God in responding to their cry. And for loving them enough to allow them to fall into such an intense oppression that they're reminded of their need for a savior, someone to rescue them from their situation in life and they know who they should cry to and God in His mercy will always respond to the individual who cries out to Him. I would think that if I were God I'd be prone to say you know 3 strikes and you're out, I've forgiven you and forgiven you and that's it, you've drawn the last straw and it's over, enjoy your life of bondage because I'm through dealing with you. But God doesn't do that, instead we see in this a couple of things concerning the Lord that direct light was shone upon in the NT, #1 the principal of forgiving 70x7 God's forgiveness being inexhaustible. And then also we see that which Paul brings out in Rom 5:20-21 when he said, "*Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Now we know that in Christ having died to sin how then can we live any longer in it, but the point being you can't out sin the grace of God, in other words God's grace always runs deeper and stretches farther than our sin, and we see that illustrated for us over and over again in God's relationship to the children of Israel.

But it says here that they "cried" out to the Lord, that's the word that I want to draw your attention to in this vs, because we see it quite a bit, but I believe that it's important. Because this word "cried" means just what it says, it means to "cry out for help" to "cry out in distress or need", or to "cry aloud in grief", in other words there was a passion and fervency to their cry. What does the bible say, James 5:16, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

They were in need, and that need impassioned their prayers and their cry, what if God responded to us with the same degree of fervency that we addressed Him? "Lord, (as we try to resist sleeping) today's been a hard day so I don't have much time (yawn) but I could sure use some help with the rent (zzzz)"

God would have to say something like, "(Yawn) really, I don't know I'm sure tuckered Myself having had a long day tending to all the needs of the universe (stretch), I don't know I'll see if maybe I can get around to it," and then He'd sleep on your issues if you know what I'm saying.

You see as believers, it could be that we so often don't see results to our prayers because we're busy talking about the Lord, eager to receive counsel, but reluctant to cry out. "Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer." We need to cry out to God, take our bondage, and strongholds and oppressions to Him that He might deliver us from those things.

And let me give you a little advice, learn from the children of Israel, I don't know how long you've struggled with a particular vice or bondage, but you don't have to wait 20yrs to cry out over whatever's going on in your life, you can cry out tonight; and lift your voice tonight before your head hits the pillow that God might deliver you from that snare, whatever it may be. But listen, "to ask God for comfort and not cleansing is only to sow seeds of selfishness that will eventually produce another bitter harvest." (Wiersbe) Instead we need to like David pray, "create in me a *clean* heart o God, and renew a right spirit with in me."

But we see mentioned in vs 3, 900 chariots of iron, and the reason that that's brought out is to let you know how they could dominate so fiercely and oppress the children of Israel, because Israel hadn't even entered the iron age yet and here these guys have 900 of which for that day would be the equivalent of 900 tanks. You've seen the movies where it shows these chariots with the swords spin around on the axle of the chariot wheels, well Hollywood didn't invent that concept; these guys had those sorts of things. Armored vehicles with weapons attached to them that could cut you in ½ if you got near them when they were moving and Israel at this time didn't have any swords or shields or anything, we'll see that in ch 5. So needless to say that had a pretty intimidating and oppressive dominance over Israel, but one thing about chariots of Iron (not chariots of fire), they don't float.

Vs4-5

So Deborah was both a judge and a prophetess, not a priestess, but a prophetess, and she would give wise counsel to the people, now I will say that I believe that it says something about the men of Israel at this time concerning the fact that God used her over anyone else. But that's not an insult to her, it's a complement to her and a rebuke to the men, but as far as her role as a prophetess goes, there's absolutely no reason why this would be unacceptable. You see there are certain people that want to say that women aren't to have any role of spiritual influence in the church or concerning God's people. But that's unfortunate because the bible doesn't support that at all, Moses' sister Miriam was a prophetess, Huldah in 2 Kings 22:14 was a prophetess as was Noadiah in Neh 6:14, Anna in Luke 2:36 and all 4 daughters of Philip in Acts 21:9 we find were prophetesses.

Women can pray in the church, prophesy in the church, teach other women, have teaching roles over the youth; the only role that the bible forbids for the woman is that of usurping authority over a man due not only to the order of creation, and the fact that the woman was made to be a help meet to the man, but also in the order of the fall, Adam was not deceived but Eve was. But other than that there is no field that a woman can't function in when it comes to biblical order, and so she was a prophetess and gave godly counsel in circumstances that the people would bring to her. And she would sit under the tree of Deborah, now I point this out to you just because I found it kind of interesting, but it's not saying that she sat under a tree named after herself. But rather if you reference (you don't have to turn there) to Gen 35:8 you read there, "*Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.*"

So this is the tree that was named after Rebekah's nurse (Allon Bachuth means "oak of weeping") and this is where this prophetess Deborah would set and judge Israel, so just an interesting little side note.

Vs6-8

You see that? With men like this it's no wonder that God raised up a woman, Barak is saying that he's going to stay in the Barracks if she doesn't go with him. I'll go to war ma'am but only if you go with me, and if you won't I'm not going either, and we get a good smile out of that but men listen up. I've seen happen over and over in the home, the men won't stand up and be the spiritual leader who goes before the family and sets the godly standard and so the God uses the wife, or if the wife won't do it and she won't set a godly standard and husband won't correct the situation, generally the whole family takes a nose dive. Because the man does whatever it takes to "keep the peace" and allows compromise after compromise only to the destruction of their walk with God.

Now I will say (to Barak's defense) that there may've been a certain element of wisdom in this particular case because she was apparently about the only one that the people trusted and respected (which again is a rebuke to the men) but he's probably saying they won't follow me unless they see you endorsing this movement, because they trust you. Because again she's saying that it's time to go to war and yet they don't have any weapons and they're going up against the most modern technology available. So this is a pretty huge step of faith that she's encouraging them to take, and so he's saying they're not going to follow me in this, but if you (their judge whom they respect and trust) goes with me they'll all come.

Vs9-12

In other words he marked them out, and said hey they're all pigeon holed up there in the MT right now and they're fixing to insight a rebellion. You see Heber didn't see how Israel stood a chance and so rather than being understood as being a part of the whole thing and being punished after the fight, he thought he'd tell Sisera what was going on and save his own neck.

Vs13-15

In Ch 5 we find out by what means God "routed" them, but word actually means to "discomfit" or to "vex" "humiliate" or "confuse" thereby throwing them into a panic. It speaks of much the same thing like what God did to the Pharaohs chariots in the Red Sea, now how did he do this, we'll see in ch 5 that He caused a flash flood which made the river of Kishon overflow. Now Iron chariots do well on dry ground, but they're not light and so when the ground under you turns to mud and marsh, they become a great handicap and actually work against you, because you get stuck.

And then the waters are rising and you've got all this armor on and you have to jump out into the river that may be knee deep or waste deep (because as you know in a flash flood a dry river bed will fill up quick) and so you can barely move and yet the Israel didn't have anything

so they could maneuver around fast and take these guys out. You see again the fact that they really weren't qualified as soldiers, no weapons, no shields, no armor, in reality meant that they'd have nothing weighing them down and being all cumbersome. God loves to make a way when there is no way, and He takes our inabilities and weaknesses and uses them as His strength. And so when Sisera saw what was going on, he took off.

Vs16-20

Now it was absolutely unacceptable for a man to go into a woman's tent if he wasn't her husband and so by all intents he would be safe here, because no one would look for him there. And he's been running all night or whatever (being used to being on a chariot) and so he's tired and thirsty, gets a little something to drink and he crashes.

Vs21

You talk about nailed; this guy got it. Now understand that in those days and even still today when the Bedouins move their tents, the women put them up and so it wasn't like we would be in our culture where the average woman would maybe be all awkward with a hammer and hoping she could hit the peg on the 1st hit. She was very familiar with those tools and so even though her skills may've been limited to cooking for her family and putting up tents, God took what was in her hand and used it to His glory bringing the ultimate destruction of the enemy through her hand.

Vs22

So Heber was a nark but I guess, he never made sure that his wife was with him on the deal.

Vs23-24

Ch 5

Vs1-3

I don't know maybe Deborah and Barak weren't the best of singers, and maybe you feel that your voice is lousy, but don't let that stop you, God is listening to your heart, there's no where in the scriptures that says that God receives a good voice more than a lousy voice. God is listening to your heart, and you can claim this vs, "I, even I will sing to the Lord."

Vs4-7

In other words the oppression was ferocious, they couldn't openly walk down the streets, but they had to take the back roads and all or else they might get killed. Because there was no law and order and so the people were so scared that they'd take the back roads.

Now vs 7 doesn't say that she was "the" mother "of" Israel, but rather "a mother *in* Israel" so even though she was a poet, a prophetess and a judge, the place that she held in highest esteem as far as the platforms in her life was the place that she held at home as a mother. So you see even in this we see the balance, she never tried to be something more than God had called her to, yeah God uses my life tremendously she might say, but my 1st calling is at home.

Vs8-

You see there it is they were completely disarmed, and when your enemy oppresses you he wants to disarm you as well, that you would be vulnerable to him and easy prey.

Vs9-11

In other words they were so oppressed by their enemies that their enemies would just sit in the bushes near the places they would draw water and when they'd go to get water they'd pick off like they were target practice. So you can see how fearful it would've been to be in such a situation.

Vs12-18

Basically what we're seeing here is that unlike in the days of Moses and Joshua when one tribe fought they all fought, here if it didn't directly affect them they stayed out of it, some would fight others wouldn't. It just depended on what they had to lose or gain, and so there were 2 groups of people in Israel, those who would fight and those who wouldn't and would let everyone else fight for them and they'd enjoy the spoils of war. Well we still have those same 2 groups of people, there are those who rush into the battle, desiring that God use them and they avail themselves to the Lord and trust Him for the victory. And there are those who think, na, I'll just hang out with the flocks, or take a smooth cruise, or just hang out at the beach or the lake you know. And they don't get involved, but they want to enjoy the benefits of those who do the fighting, so things haven't really changed.

Vs19-23

Now I don't want to read into this too deep but to those who don't want to get involved in the Lords battle plan you might just want to consider this vs.

Vs24

Now this sounds familiar doesn't it? You remember when the angel announced the news to Mary regarding her being the one who would bring forth a Savior? Luke 1:28 we read where having come in the angel said to her, "*Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!*" Why because she was bringing deliverance and salvation to Israel (and all nations) Well, in reality though obviously on a different level, Jael did the same thing, she brought "salvation" and deliverance to Israel.

Vs25-31

Now I can't stand on anything in what I'm about to say but it's appearing as though there continues to be a generational problem. Each generation needing a fresh move and outpouring of the Spirit lest they fall back into apostasy and rebellion. So we should be praying for God to start revival a fresh in this generation, that we wouldn't seek to ride on the coattails of the past but that He would do a new fresh work lest this generation be lost in rebellion against the Lord, the land had rest for 40 years.