

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

Lesson 4B

JUDGES

CHAPTER 5

Judges 5:31, *“So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.”*

INTRODUCTION

Writings songs to serenade one's lover is common in the world today. Such songs are made up of sentimental mush mixed with a strong dose of empty promises. Songs sung to teach our children the alphabets and musical notes are fun and light hearted. Songs to stir the heart to loyalty and devotion to one's country are normally rousing and have marching beats. The lyrics are challenging and written to invoke national sentiments and gratitude.

But songs written to the LORD has to be in praise of Him. This was the theme in the song sung by both Deborah and Barak. Unlike the song of Moses where Moses's name was not mentioned at all and the focus was entirely God's power and His deliverance (see Exod. 15). The

enemies of the LORD were mentioned by Moses but only as to their demise and total destruction. The emphasis was obviously the LORD and not man even though Moses and Aaron were used by the LORD to bring Israel out of the land of bondage.

The song recorded here begins with the LORD. But soon it shifted its entire focus to the people involved including the tribes of Israel and the enemies and in particular Sisera the mighty captain of Jabin's armies and how he died a most shameful death i.e. in the hands of a woman! It was more of a historical song emphasizing the deeds of the LORD and His deliverance through certain people rather than a song emphasizing purely the deeds of God.

OUTLINE

1. Praise ye the LORD (5:1-5);
2. Time of adversity (5:6-9);
3. Time of deliverance (5:10-13);
4. Tribal Involvement (5:14-18);
5. Enemies routed (5:19-23);
6. Sisera nailed by a mountain goat (5:24-30);
7. Praise ye the LORD (5:31).

COMMENTARY

Praise ye the LORD (5:1-5)

This is a song of praise to the LORD God of Israel who handed victory against Jabin the king of the Canaanites and his army general Sisera over to His people, Israel. The enemy had severely oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years. It was a resounding victory and Deborah in an outburst of joy and jubilation composed this song which was sung by her and Barak (5:1).

The LORD was praised for avenging His people when they willingly offered themselves presumably back to the LORD in repentance (see 4:3). This is the only basis for the LORD's intervention in raising a judge to deliver Israel from her pain and sufferings for sins committed. This song of praise was a call to kings and princes to hear their praises of the LORD of Israel. The LORD's on Israel side, Israel fears no one.

When the LORD marched out of Seir and out of the field of Edom (Seir and Edom are the same – this is synonymous parallelism) the elements melted and trembled. The earth trembled and the heavens dropped and heavy rain probably followed. Mountains melted i.e. rain waters flowed from off them including from Mount Sinai. Water is man's source of life but it can also be man's source of death and destruction. Here, it is one of destruction.

The power of the LORD is

emphasized here. It is important to set the tone of the song from the onset. The rest of the song explains the power of God and how man played a part in the fulfillment of His deliverance of Israel against her enemies.

Time of adversity (5:6-9)

The dire conditions of the children of Israel are described here. The highways were deserted of travelers for fear of being robbed or killed. They travelled through the narrow byways, literally it means the narrow winding beaten track. This was to be home, not a war zone. But the circumstances were so dire that Israel had to hide in their own homeland. This demonstrates the great adversities that had befallen Israel.

The people were afraid. They lived in the hills or mountains for the villages were deserted. To live like animals in their own home land and to travel in byways described the tortured state of Israel. This was the just desert for worshipping idols. If not for such adversities will Israel turn back to their LORD? Surely not! God's rod of correction had to be used to bring pain for sins committed. Like a loving father, the LORD chastised Israel in order for Israel might turn from her evil ways and return to the LORD. The depth of Israel's sins is measured by the severity of Israel's punishment as the LORD never over or under punishes anyone. His chastisement is

always fair and equitable.

The deliverance came from Deborah who will be to Israel like a mother as the song testifies. It was not a reference to Deborah as a mother but her role was like that of a mother who protects her child who was Israel.

To further highlight Israel's vulnerability, the song boasted that there was no spear or shield among the 40,000 Israelites. The spear was an offensive weapon and the shield was a defensive weapon. Israel had nothing to fight with or to defend against. She was completely helpless. The reason was their worship of other gods. They chose new gods. The gods were novel and fresh compared to the "old" Jehovah! This is likened to the west today which has replaced Christianity with the "new" eastern religions.

Despite the frightful state of Israel, the governors of the land remained faithful and stood their ground to rule Israel. They served in a time of great distress. These were men like Barak. May the LORD be blessed. Leaders are raised by the LORD to defend and deliver. Even as the people thank their leaders, they must never forget to thank the LORD. Deborah and Balak were sued by the LORD to bring deliverance but the great and ultimate praises must always be unto the LORD.

This song mentions the leaders but always with the LORD in the

picture.

Time of deliverance (5:10-13)

And in a dramatic turn of events, the singer calls on the rich, the nobles and the common people to sing praises to God for His deliverance. This is what verse 10 means. Those who ride on white asses were the nobles, the ones who sit in judgement were the governors or judges and the ones who walk by the way were the ordinary people.

Deliverance has come. All must rejoice. Declare to all that the LORD has delivered. They can return home. Life can be back to normal. They can feel safe and secure in their own homeland again.

The leaders must arise to lead the people back to the LORD. The enemies are soundly defeated. The Canaanite nobles belonging to Jabin have been defeated by the ones who remained in Israel. Deborah was the leader whom the LORD raised to bring this about.

Tribal Involvement (5:14-18)

In this section, the song calls on the tribes who could help to come and help. The contribution of these tribes is listed here in the song. The tribes listed here are in greater detail than the ones listed in the previous chapter. Ephraim, Benjamin and Zebulun were commended for their willingness to fight. Ephraim followed the example of Benjamin who offered their

help first. They fought against the Amalekites, the fierce mortal enemies of Israel. Machir was a city in Manasseh. Therefore Manasseh also contributed in terms of governors or leaders to lead God's people. Zebulun was the most amazing of all in that those who handle the pen like the scribes put their pens down and took up arms to fight. Such was their devotion to the cause to deliver Israel when Deborah called.

Issachar sent their princes i.e. lords who aided Deborah in the leadership probably to gather the people for war. They were sent on foot to assist Barak. The enemies had 900 chariots of iron and Barak and the men from Issachar went on foot against them. This shows true courage and faith in following the prophecies of Deborah. Reuben wanted to go to help. The idea was there but they procrastinated and before they could decide whether to go or not, the battle was over. This record was to shame Reuben for not helping especially when it was the big brother tribe.

Dan and Asher cared more of their own interest than for their oppressed brethren. Deborah chided them. Zebulun and Naphtali put their lives in jeopardy unto death when they went into battle against the enemies with iron chariots.

The contrast between the state of adversity (previous section) and the

present state of courage and faith is clear. When God raise up Deborah and Barak, it was more than mere leadership that was involved. Spiritual leadership was most potently present. Israelites were transformed from their acts of cowardice to men of strength and courage, full of faith and valour for the cause of God.

Enemies routed (5:19-23)

The song registered the resounding victory of Israel over Sisera and the Canaanites. The kings came and fought and expected to win and obtain the spoils of war but they got nothing. Instead the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. What this verse (v. 20) means is that torrential rain came in courses like waves upon waves to neutralize their chariots of iron. The interpretation of torrents of rain is in line with verses 4 and 5. The river of Kishon probably rose and overflowed and swept them away. The enemies were soundly defeated. The strength of Israel's enemies was trodden down.

The LORD even intervened by crippling "the pransings of their mighty ones." How this was done specifically we were not told. The might of ancient armies was measured by the number of war horses they used in battle. In this case, their powerful steeds were crippled and rendered helpless and useless against the might of God. The inhabitants were invited by the LORD

to help fight against God's enemies but they refused. The angel of the LORD cursed them for their refusal to help. How sad when God's own people failed to see the privilege they had to help fight in God's battle and refused for whatever reason. No reason apparently was acceptable to God that would mitigate this severe curse from the Angel of the LORD.

**Sisera nailed by a mountain goat
(5:24-30)**

The song turns its attention to the bravery of Jael (her name means mountain goat) whose daring method in killing Sisera is described repeatedly in slow motion: *At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead (5:27)*. The courage of Jael was magnificent especially when seen from the backdrop of the fear that Israel was in as described in the earlier part of this song.

She served Sisera milk and treated him like a lord. His guard was down and trusted her implicitly and went to sleep asking her to watch over him while he slept. Sisera did not know that this was the woman who would then kill him in his sleep. With courage, Jael nailed Sisera to the ground by hammering a tent peg into his temples. The use of the plural for "temples" means that the nail went right through his head. Jael must be a very strong woman to do what she did.

The sad note is reflected from the perspective of Sisera's mother who pined for her son's return from battle. The maidens tried to comfort her but she herself knew the answer that her son would not return. The wait was too long. She wished and hoped that Sisera would come home with all the spoils of war. This incomplete account of the mother's continuous waiting and waiting against hope for the Sisera's return was deliberate. The unending pining of the mother for her son to come home is a sad ending to a man of Sisera's high caliber.

Praise ye the LORD (5:31)

The conclusion of the song is most appropriate. The song began with the LORD and ends with the LORD. *So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.*

The contrast between the enemies of the LORD and those who love Him are very clear. This is objective truth revealed and demonstrated. If Israel were to sin, she will become the LORD's enemies and will perish as well. If Gentiles love Him like Rahab and Ruth, they would be like the sun and go forth in His might. If Israel love the LORD, of course the LORD will also send Israel forth like the sun and go forth in His might as well.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Singing is one of the best ways if

not the best way to worship and praise the LORD. In this song of Deborah and Barak, it is a testimonial of God's greatness and His deliverance of a repented Israel. Although many names were mentioned in the song, the focus was definitely the LORD and not man. The opening and ending of the song ensures that. This is one of the good guidelines we must use in evaluating a hymn or a spiritual song to see if it is man centered or God's centered.

God uses faithful and obedient people to accomplish His holy will. Leaders and followers are to be faithful and of one mind and purpose if God's will is to be done God's way. There must not be bickering or slothfulness. The unity is not manmade. It is in Christ Jesus and through His precious blood that this unity has been wrought for us. Our duty is to guard and protect it. To do that, we have to put on the mind of Christ which is according to Holy Scriptures. The church has to be grounded in God's Word order for the church to move as one from the leaders to the members.

Those who do not fight God's battle will be rebuked by the LORD. They will lose out. The tribes like Reuben, Dan and Asher lost their privilege. The privilege was theirs to take hold of. But fear and carnality and spiritual apathy are crippling sins that can cause opportunities to be lost forever. Every minute lived for self and

the world is a minute lost for eternity. Life is so precious. Opportunities to fight God's battle are few. One generation was given to build the tabernacle in the wilderness and another to build the Solomonic Temple. Those born in a different generation who wish to contribute toward the respective building projects could not, even if they wanted to. But they have they own battles to fight for every generation is given their own battles. Today our battle is the doctrine of VPP whereas 80 years ago, it was VPI. The leaders in the past fought a good fight of faith and they gave us the doctrine of VPI. Now it is our time to fight our battle which is the doctrine of verbal plenary preservation (VPP). Will you rise to the occasion as the LORD commands all His children to fight for God's Truth?

As a prophetess, speaking on behalf of the LORD God, Deborah rightly and sternly rebuked those who did not come to help their fellow Israelites. This should not be so, particularly amongst Christians in a church. In the church, we should be our brother's keeper. Those of us whom God has blessed should help those who are in dire need. It does not please or honour the Lord our God by only caring for ourselves and not our fellow brethren. This is selfish living and is not what the Lord teaches us (Philippians 4:10). AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 5:1-31.

TUESDAY: Judges 5:1-31.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 5:1-31.

THURSDAY: Judges 5:1-31.

FRIDAY: Judges 5:1-31; 2 Corinthians
12:9; Philippians 2:4.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the hymns sung in CPBPC
in line with biblical guidelines? What
about those sung in our Fellowships?

2. Is it OK to praise the leader
whom God used to fight His battle or
to found His church? Give reasons for
your answer.

3. Who are the enemies of God
today? Can you identify them
specifically?

4. Both opposing sides will claim
that they are fighting God's battle in
most cases. How ought members to
determine who is truly of God or not?

5. Was it right to mention those tribes who failed to contribute their part in fighting God's battle? If so, should we do the same today by naming the BP churches that are no longer conservative or fundamental? Give reasons.

6. Is the leadership of Deborah the basis for the ordination of women as pastors and elders?

7. Songs are expressions of deep emotions. What emotions do you think are reflected in the song by Deborah and Barak?