

## Deborah.

Judges 4:1-24.

Sunday afternoon, March 13, 2011.

### I. The need for salvation.

“When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” Judges 4:1.

- A. this statement tells us something about the piety of Israel. It tells us that if you take away the external restraint or motivation, then Israel immediately shows her true colors again by returning to the Baals and Asherahs.
- B. Something is profoundly lacking in a religion where, without outside pressures, influences and leadership, our loyalty ebbs away like so much water in the sink when the stopper is removed.
- C. The Old Covenant, ministered to Israel by the mediation of Moses, depended to a large degree on external motivation: “The blessings and the curses” of Deuteronomy 28. That is not to say that internal grace was altogether absent in the Old Covenant dispensation. Neither are we saying that the New Covenant is altogether void of external motivations. Church discipline for example is an external motivation.

What we are saying is that true religion ultimately depends on an internal work of grace, and that this work was brought out in the open by the greatest of all of Israel’s Judges, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into this world full of grace and truth, and who upon His return to heaven shed abroad His Spirit in our hearts, that He might do for us what we can not do for ourselves.

The OT anticipates for this reason the work of a Savior who would do for His people what the law could never do.

### II. The source of salvation.

“And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.” Judges 4:3.

- A. Somehow, when the oppression lasts long enough and is hard enough, we know who to cry out to. The oppressive rule of Jabin, a Canaanite king who should have been destroyed long before, had lasted twenty years, and with nine hundred iron chariots in his army, under the command of Sisera, Israel stood no chance of getting out from under him, humanly speaking.

Notice how the children of Israel did not cry out to the Baals and the Asherah’s, but they cry out to the Lord. In the spirit of carelessness and indifference and being self-willed they worshipped these Canaanite deities, but when real deliverance is needed only the Lord God will do. He only is the source of real salvation, and so they cry out to Him.

- B. That it was the Lord who worked salvation for His people is made abundantly clear throughout this chapter.
  - 1. In Vs. 6,7 Deborah calls for Barak saying: “Has not the Lord commanded, go and deploy troops...against Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army... and I will deliver him into your hand.”
  - 2. In foretelling, as only the Lord could do, that there would be no glory in this battle for Barak, for a woman would take Sisera’s life.

3. Again Deborah points to the Lord's work in vs. 14 saying: "Up! For this is the day that the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand."
4. Vs. 14,15 show how the Lord delivered Sisera and all his men and chariots in Israel's hand; not a man was left, except for Sisera initially, who escaped and hid himself in Jael's tent.
5. In vs. 21 as the Lord fulfills His word that a woman would take the life of Sisera, when Jael takes a tent peg and nails it through the head of Sisera.
6. Finally, and in summary, vs 21 states that it was the Lord who on that day subdued Jabin, the Canaanite king in the presence of Israel.

### III. The method of salvation.

- A. The Lord works through means. He is a covenant God which means that He has bound Himself to His people in a covenant, and that means that He involves His people in the saving work He undertakes in history.
- B. For that reason times never get so dark in history or the Lord preserves a remnant, for His use. So it is here: Deborah, Jael and Barak, a man and two women of faith; and although we detect a hesitancy on the part of Barak, where he says he will only go up against Sisera if Deborah goes with him, let us not underestimate Barak's faith for doing so. Apart from the Lord's super natural intervention Barak was on a suicide mission against 900 iron chariots.
- C. How did the Lord intervene and deliver Sisera and his army into the hand of Israel. All that chapter 4 records is that the Lord did do so, but it is silent as to the how He did it. Nevertheless, in chapter 5, in Deborah's song, written to commemorate this occasion much the same way as Moses wrote a song commemorating the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. In Exodus 15, there we have a reference in Vs. 24 as to how the Lord worked this victory.
- D. The battle took place in the southern part of the large valley of Jezreel in northern Israel. Through this valley ran a wadi or brook that often falls dry, but can transform quickly into a mighty torrent during heavy rain. Deborah says that "the torrent of Kishon swept them away" and that "the horses hooves pounded," meaning that Sisera's iron chariots got stuck in the mud. It would seem then that the Lord intervened with heavy rain to bring Sisera to ruin.

### IV. A Questionable salvation?

- A. Providentially Heber, one of the descendants of Moses' father in law, had separated from his clan in Judah and moved up north. There was a peace treaty between king Jabin and Heber's clan; that's why Sisera fled to them.
- B. Jael was Heber's wife and so in all likelihood had met Sisera before; she goes out to meet him, shows him hospitality, and nails his head to the ground.
- C. We need to distinguish between what Scripture reports and what it endorses. Yet Jael's actions seem to be endorsed by the Lord, Ch. 4:24 and 5:24-27.
- D. Sisera had oppressed the children of Israel harshly for 20 yrs, and he seemed to have enjoyed raping captive Israelite girls (5:30). Now it would seem that Jael becomes the instrument of divine retribution in the Lord's hand. This does not mean however that we need to endorse every aspect of what Jael did anymore than we endorse every aspect of what Rahab did in lying about the spies she hid.