

Deborah's Song.

Judges 5.

Sunday afternoon, March 20, 2011.

I. A new song.

Singing has always been an important part of the worship of God's people. "Sing, O daughter of Zion! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart O daughter of Jerusalem!" Zephaniah 3:14. Later in vs. 17 Zephaniah shows us why: "The Lord your God in your midst, the mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

The Lord Himself rejoices and sings over His people; being made in His image it follows then that His people would be a singing people too.

In the ordinary course of the weekly worship of God the church uses the hymns she has gathered up over the course of her history in both Old and New Covenant times. There are times and occasions however in the unfolding of redemptive history, and God's ongoing dealings with His people, that new songs are added.

God's deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea was such an occasion, marked by Moses with a new song recorded in Exodus 15.

In the book of the Revelation the multitudes in heaven, gathered around the throne, are said to sing a new song in Rev. 5:9 and 14:3.

Mary composed a new song while carrying the unborn Christ, Luke 1:46-55.

The Christ Event (His birth, life and ministry, death and resurrection) have inspired the Church rightfully to write many new songs.

Deborah similarly composes a song on the occasion of God's miraculous deliverance.

II. Deborah's Song.

The opening verse suggests that both Deborah and Barak sang this song to Israel and therefore may have co-authored it. However from the words in vs. 3 and 7, "I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel," and "...until I, Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel," it appears that Deborah alone was the author, which is generally believed to be the case.

The song has three parts and each part centers around a basic contrast:

- A. The first part (vs. 2-11) centers around the contrasting ideas of the God who acts in history and marches on, and on the other hand the people who are humiliated because they chose new gods.

The omnipotent and sufficient God is placed side by side with a desperate and defeated people.

Why does Deborah do so, and is this not so often the pattern in Judges and in all of redemptive history?

Always are the two placed side by side so that a desperate and defeated people may learn to come to, and to lean on, and find rest in the all-sufficient God.

Have you known times like these in your own life? It is a theme that plays itself

out on an individual level in the lives of believers as well.

B. In Vss. 11-23 the contrasting idea is that of daring warriors and cautious brothers.

Not all of Israel came out to help Barak and Deborah in the battle against king Jabin and the commander of his army, Sisera.

Vss. 12-15 and 18 speak to us of those who went to the battle. There is the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Benjamin. There is mention of Machir helping out. Machir was in the western half of the territory of Manasseh, West of the Jordan river. By contrast Eastern Manasseh, also called Gilead, East of the Jordan River, did not come to help. The tribes of Zebulun and Issachar did join the battle.

By way of contrast the tribe of Reuben; they weighed the matter carefully, had great searchings of heart, but in the end chose to stay with their flocks of sheep. Similarly with Gilead, Dan and Asher. They were pre-occupied with other activities. It was like the Lord's parable of the excuses: "I can not come for I have bought a field etc." Luke 14:18.

Finally there is mention of Meroz (presumably a town, but it is unknown). They must have been nearby the battlefield and so were especially accountable. They choose not to help the Lord in His battle against the mighty, and so incurred a curse by no one less than the angel of the Lord himself.

In NT language, they chose to save their lives and lost them whereas their brothers risked, or lost, their lives, and so saved them.

Where do you fit into this scheme? The epic battle against Sisera and his iron chariots is not over yet. Have you chosen sides and joined the battle, or will you in the end incur the curse for "not helping the Lord against the mighty?" Vs. 23.

C. The final section, Vss. 24-31, contrasts Jael and the mother of Sisera.

Almost in slow motion are the actions of Jael set before us, Deborah seemingly savoring every detail, and Jael is called "most blessed among women."

By way of contrast the mother of Sisera is standing by her window anxiously awaiting the return of her son. Why is it taking so long?

Her attending ladies, and she herself, answer: "Are they not busy dividing the spoil and raping the girls?" This is the inference of the Hebrew, for the line translated "to every man a girl or two" reads literally in the Hebrew, "to every man a womb or two." Sisera's mom would be waiting in vain; Sisera was not coming home again. The raping, oppression, and pillaging had come to an end.

Deborah closes her song with an eschatological wish and twofold prayer.

1. In this way may all Your enemies perish O Lord! (And they will!)

2. Let those who love You be like the sun coming out in full strength!.

This rising of the sun has dawned upon us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Deborah's closing prayer leaves us to grapple with the question where we stand; do we love the Lord? Are we at least asking and learning to do so?