

## **Judges 4:1-24 – Weak Men, Weak Leaders, Weak Country**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You have seen the details of 2 protectors of God's people so far: Othniel, and Ehud, the left-handed executioner from the "right-handed" tribe. They were good leaders. But as we come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> major judge of Israel, you will see a **marked decline in leadership**. Because of the stirring similarities in the churches today, hear what God said about this troublesome time in Israel.

Our headings are:

**The Pollution & Punishment**

**The Prayer**

**The Protector**

Our goals are: **That you will see the danger of weak leadership in the home and church, and that you will learn to guard yourself from weak leadership that causes danger to you and disgrace to your Redeemer.**

### **The Pollution and Punishment**

1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned **in Hazor**. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim.

**1. You will notice that God did not go into the details of the pollution of the children of Israel here.** It was as if he were saying: "You know what they did." Indeed you will remember that Israel let the Canaanites live among them. They intermarried with them. And they joined the Canaanites in worshipping idols. **But you will see that there was another area of sin. This area was the failure of the men to lead properly.** It is not too difficult to decipher (解读, 破译) why this happened. We saw a similar thing in the 1800, when the Industrial Era allowed men to work long days and make a lot of money so their families could be at ease. The result: Women started leading their families in devotions (灵修) at home, then started teaching in church schools, and then became elders and ministers in the church. Today, most Pentecostal churches and many Baptists churches are dominated by women leaders. Like Israel, and like the Garden of Eden, the home and the church have been feminized (女性化). It is not surprising that in concert with this, men have abdicated (放弃) their responsibilities at home and in church.

**2. As evidence that things were worse in Israel, you see an increasing severity of punishment.** This punishment hurt more because the punisher was closer to home and was from a smaller nation. The king of Mesopotamia was from far way. The kings of Moab, Ammon, and Amalek were from across the Jordan. Now Jabin, a Canaanite, was their immediate neighbor. They had special hatred and bitterness for Israel because Israel had razed (摧毁) Hazor earlier. Now Israel received a severe battering from Jabin, a truly wicked king with an equally wicked commander named Sisera.

**3. If you take yourself out of God's service, can you expect to get his protection?**

### **The Prayer**

3 And the **children of Israel cried out to the LORD**; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and **for twenty years** he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

**1. It is not strange that the children of Israel cried out to the Lord as they faced severe suffering under the hand of Jabin.** He ruled them (even Deborah suffered) with 900 chariots of iron. These chariots were not made of iron. They had sharpened iron scythes (大镰刀) on the side. The charioteer would run his chariot into a crowd so the spinning wheel with the scythes so it would cut up those it came into contact with. With the chariots of iron it would have been easy for them to control the plains of Israel. But Israel only cried out when the punishment became unbearable!

**2. How far into trouble does the Lord have to allow you to go and suffer before you call upon him for help and be restored to him?** Every Christian sins, but every Christian must quickly call on God to forgive us. Don't live in a backslidden state (退步、下滑的状态). Don't rob yourself of the blessings of being part of God's family!

### **The Protector**

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, **the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel** at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

**1. The Lord raised Deborah up to be the protector of his people.** She was a woman or wife from Lapidoth. Lapidoth was

not her husband. Lapidoth meant "torches." You will see the significance later. To have a woman judge was a shame and a curse to the nation. It was not normal for a woman to be the judge. It was not a woman's place to rule over her husband, and yet, because there was no one better or willing, God used her as the judge and deliverer of Israel – like Zipporah who had to circumcise Moses' son. Deborah was judge so long that a tree was named after her.

6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "**Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded**, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of **Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun**;' 7 'and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'"

**2. Because Deborah was not a usurper of authority (夺权者) and understood male headship,** she didn't want to be judge or go out as leader of Israel's army. So under God's directions, Deborah called for Barak to lead the troops into battle against King Jabin and Commander Sisera, and told him to call soldiers from Naphtali and Zebulun who were close by. She even told him where Sisera would attack and assured him of victory. She did this to strengthen his faith. Micah 4:11 Now also **many nations have gathered against you,** Who say, "Let her be defiled, And let our eye look upon Zion." 12 **But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD,** Nor do they understand His counsel; For **He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor.**

**3. You too are assured that Christ will rule until all his enemies become his footstool.** Psalm 110. Do you trust him? Will you work for his rule fulfilling your covenant duties?

Revelation 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 **"that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people,** free and slave, both small and great."

8 And Barak said to her, "**If you will go with me, then I will go;** but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" 9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, **for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.**" Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

**4. But even with the command of the God of Israel,** Barak was afraid. He forgot that "God will fight for you and you shall hold your peace." He lacked courage. He demanded Deborah go with him. In doing this he insulted every woman in Israel. Men are to defend women. In doing this he showed how the men of Israel lacked trust in Jehovah. And in doing this he robbed himself of the spoils of war, or glory, and of honor.

**Do you ever sing: "I am in the Lord's army," but yet be afraid to engage friends and relatives with the Gospel?**

Do you sing: "My Jesus I love thee," but are afraid to die for his kingdom? If you want to imitate (效法) your Savior you ought to be willing to be confronted or be crucified for him. Do you refuse to confront sin in your children because you are afraid that they might lose their faith? Do be! The Lord is with you.

**5. Deborah agreed to go with Barak into battle with the caveat (警告、告诫) that because of his cowardice he would not get the honor of killing Sisera, but a woman would kill him.** God had to take away the honor from a man who was weak in faith! **Do you not lose the rewards in heaven if you lose sight of your calling on earth?**

10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with **ten thousand men** under his command, and **Deborah went up with him.**

**6. Barak then got his army together with Deborah at his side.**

11 Now **Heber the Kenite,** of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh. 12 And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 **So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron,** and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

**7. But God had been planning for over 100 years for this event!** God had planted a certain woman's family in Zaanaim.

They were a small clan of foreigners, Moses' father-in-law's family, who started serving the true God. Gentiles were always welcomed by God's family. **What wonderful providence of God (上帝的意旨)!** It is not by accident that you or your family came to be in Scarborough today! Stand amazed at how God works in amazing ways...even with strangers you meet! This is where God has placed you to work now. Rejoice. Work.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor

with ten thousand men following him. 15 And **the LORD routed Sisera** and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

**8. Then Deborah told Barak when it was time to fight.** This would make Barak know that the victory was from the Lord and strengthen his faith. According to Jewish history, Sisera had surrounded the mountain where Barak was with the troops and he started to panic. **But on God's call, and his faith aroused,** he went down into battle...even where the iron chariots could hurt them. **The mountains could not save Barak; God could!** Then the Lord destroyed Sisera's army completely. He **literally caused confusion** (routed) so that his people had greater advantage. (Josephus said it was a violent hail storm.) With his situation humanly hopeless on the mountain, but with total victory, **Barak could take no credit for what the Lord did.**  
**Isn't it good to know that God always goes before his people?** Is this not a great encouragement to keep fighting the Devil, the world, and your flesh? Shouldn't you be bold when you tell others about Jesus, working to conquer their souls for him?

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

**9. Then Sisera ran away on foot, like a scared dog with its tail between its legs. Oh, how the mighty have fallen!** Where were the iron chariots, the hope of the Canaanites? God loosed their wheels like he did to Pharaoh's chariots.  
**Isn't it true that whatever you put your trust in that is apart from God will be brought to nothing?** Isn't it true that those who trust in chariots and horses will fight in vain?

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a **little water to drink**, for I am thirsty." So she opened a **jug of milk**, gave him a drink, and covered him. 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'" 21 Then **Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg** (帐篷的橛子) **and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple**, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22 And then, as **Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek."** And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple. 23 So on that day **God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel.** 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

**10. And even as he escaped, Sisera ended up at that certain house a 100 years in the making.** Jael, a semi-foreign woman, invited him in, gave him his last meal, warm milk instead of water, and allowed him to have his last rest! Maybe Jael mixed something in the warm milk. We don't know. But she was right to deceive him as it was war and he was the enemy of her adopted people. Believers always come first. She didn't say that it was none of her business and that it was Israel's fight.

**Galatians 6:10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (所以有了机会, 就当向众人行善; 向信徒一家的人更当这样。)

Then she killed Sisera, as God had said, nailing him through his temple, into the ground. **She did this by faith.** She did not worry that her hand might shake and wake him! **Love throws out fear.** In doing this good work she gained honor. So much for pacifists!

**11. Barak, Israel's general, whose name meant "lightening," was outshone by Deborah, a lady from "torches" and a lady, Jael, "mountain goat."** When Barak arrived at Jael's house, Sisera was dead. Barak's abdication of leadership caused him to lose the honor that could have been his!

**12. Ultimately, the whole deliverance was done by God, not Deborah and not Jael.** Israel eventually crushed Jabin.

**Whatever you may achieve in life, remember it is only because the Lord was pleased to work through you. Be humble!**

## **Conclusion:**

The punishment upon Israel was severer than before because their sins were severer than before. Israel undermined 破坏 the foundations of society by placing women in positions of leadership. So Jabin, a small local king, terrorized them for 20 years. After they called upon God he provided a deliverer-2 deliverers -2 women. God saved them, not because they were good, but because 1. **They made their prayer through the coming sacrifice of Jesus,** and 2. to honor his covenant promise to Abraham.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. You have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ from the slavery into which you sold yourself.** Your redemption reminds you who you are! You belong to Christ. Rejoice. Worship. Serve.

**2. Then fulfill your duty God has assigned to you.** Do let your wife, or your mother, or the state, or the elders, or the church, or your husband take your place?

**3. Specifically to men, are you a good leader under the Good Shepherd?** It is hard work, but you don't assume the role as proper leaders in the home, church, and state, we will wither and die! I urge you, get yourself equipped for the job...and this is for single men as well.

Finally, if you are not a Christian your end will be in eternal death in the fires of hell. But you can be saved if you surrender to the King of kings and ask him to bear your sins before his Father in heaven. He is willing to save anyone who calls upon him.