

Introduction: Anyone who says God favors men over women has never read The Bible from cover-to-cover with a proper understanding of the words God has given to all people. Men and women are different, and have different roles; but this is true of all people: each person is a unique individual with a unique role to play in God's Plan for all humanity. God has no favorites. All people have equal value in His eyes. And, all people face disappointments and trials to a greater or lesser extent. *** God has said He will be with His people at all times. This promise of His Presence runs through every book of the Bible from beginning to end. *** Today, we are considering Deborah, a prophetess and judge in Israel; and, Barak, the man God called to be general of His army in Israel. *** These two people run counter to many American stereotypes. Deborah is a strong woman with great faith who hears directly from God. Barak is a good man, but timid with doubts and he needs to have Deborah with him as he goes to battle. *** The good news is Deborah motivated Barak to lead ten thousand men to attack the Canaanites, and God came through for His people with great power and might. Both Deborah and Barak lead the people in blessing God. Then the people had rest for forty years. *** In the portion of Luke's Gospel we heard how Jesus and His twelve chosen men were supported by three women, and other women, as they ministered to Jesus from their possessions. *** Let's go deeper to learn from these people.

I. Deborah commands Barak in Yahweh's Name to fight, but he needs her with him; when he leads his men, Yahweh acts for Israel and Barak fulfills his God-given role. (*Judges 4:4-9, 14-16, 23-24*)

- A. Deborah, a prophetess in Ephraim, summons Barak and says Yahweh has commanded him to fight a Canaanite king, he needs her to go with him. (*Judges 4:4-9, 14*)
1. Deborah, prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, judging Israel sitting under palm, between Ramah and Bethel, in the hill country of Ephraim; then the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. (*Verses 4-5*)
Deborah: The root of her name (d-b-r) means 'word'; because words can sting, the feminine form of the word means 'bee'. Her husband's name means 'torch', so he can burn. They lived near where Hannah later lived.
Prophetess: She was a woman who received messages from God, and she was a female judge.
 2. She called Barak, son of Abinoam from Kadesh in Naphtali, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, commands thee to go and gather at Mt. Tabor ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun; and, I will draw to thee, by Kishon River, Sisera, general of Jabin's army and give him to thy hand. (*Verses 6-7*)
Location: Kadesh ('holy') in Naphtali is west of the Sea of Galilee, sixty-five miles north of Deborah.
Mt. Tabor: Mt. Tabor, near the Mediterranean Sea, is the source of Kishon River, going south of Naphtali.
Message: Barak must gather an army from his tribe to conquer un-conquered Canaanites (*Judges 1:31*). Yahweh says He will deliver the general, and his men and weapons, over to Barak and his men.
 3. Barak said, 'If thou will go with me, I will go; but, if thou will not, I will not go'; she said, 'I will surely go with thee, nevertheless it will not be to thy glory the way thou are going, because Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman'; then Deborah rose and went with Barak. (*Verses 8-9*)
Barak: Barak ('lightning') says he needs Deborah to be with him, ironic: Yahweh kills with lightning!
Deborah: Deborah gives in, but tells Barak the glory he might have will go to another strong woman.
 4. Deborah said, 'Thou must rise up! Today Yahweh has given Sisera into thy hand; Yahweh has gone before thee'; then Barak went down from Mt. Tabor with ten thousand men. (*Verse 14*)
Command: Because of her strong words, Barak obeys Yahweh's command through Deborah.

Women can encourage weak men to trust God for victory

- Application:** We must realize and thank God that at times He uses strong women to motivate weak men.
Barak attacks: God's will is done as Barak fulfills his God-given role to lead men into God's battle.
- B. When Barak leads his men, Yahweh acts for Israel and Barak finishes what God started. (*Judges 4:15-16, 23-24*)
1. Yahweh destroyed Sisera, his chariots and men before the sword of Barak, then he jumped down from his chariot and fled on foot; Barak pursued to Harosheth of the nations, and all the army fell before the sword, was not left even one. (*Verses 15-16*)
Yahweh acts: Yahweh was out in advance of Barak and his men.
Barak follows through: Barak and his men were able to bring their enemy down with their swords.
All this is because Deborah strongly and effectively spoke The Word of God to Barak.

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2. God subdued on that day, Jabin, king of Canaan, before Israel; and the hand of Israel proceeded and prevailed on Jabin until they destroyed him. (*Verses 23-24*)
God triumphed: Ultimately God subdued Israel's enemy in the battle and killed Sisera through a woman from the tribe of Moses' father-in-law (verses 11, 17-22).
Israel prevails: God used Barak and Israelites of the tribe of Naphtali to prevail over the king's army.
- Application:** Let us, like them, seek God's role for us; and communicate with each other to do together what God has for us in His battle against the ignorance, confusion and death prevalent in our culture.

II. Deborah praises Yahweh for what He did through people willingly offering themselves, many tribes fought in His battle; three women are named as supporting Jesus. (*Judges 5:1-3, 7-9, 12-16, 20-21, 31; Luke 8:1-3*)

- A. Deborah and Barak bless Yahweh in song for what He did through His people, who willingly offered themselves. (*Judges 5:1-3, 7-9*)
1. Then sang Deborah and Barak, son of Abinoam ('my father delight'), on that day: 'When the leaders in Israel took the lead, the people offered themselves willingly: Bless Yahweh!' (*Verses 1-2*)
Leaders: Besides the prophetess Deborah and Barak the leader of the army, there were commanders.
People willing: But the most importantly, ten thousand Israelites willingly offered themselves to God's will through His words by Deborah!
Praise: They bless and praise Yahweh because He is The One who moved leaders and volunteers!
 2. 'Y'all must hear kings! Y'all must give ear princes! I indeed to Yahweh I will sing; I will make music to Yahweh, God of Israel'. (*Verse 3*)

Taunt: The prophetess-judge is taunting the rulers of the Canaanites who were not driven from the land.

3. They ceased, villages in Israel, ceased until I arose, Deborah, arose a mother in Israel; when new 'gods' were chosen, war in the gates; shield not seen, spear in forty thousand in Israel; my heart to Israel's commanders, those among people offering themselves willingly: Bless Yahweh!' (*Verses 7-9*)

Ravages of idols: She says she arose because of God's strong discipline of His people for their idolatry.

Helplessness: They were conquered by war and were utterly defenseless, with no weapons.

Leaders and volunteers: But when she saw military leaders and volunteers, her heart went out to them.

This also caused her to bless and praise Yahweh.

- B. The northern tribes, with Benjamin in the south, fought; and, they were joined by heavenly beings. (*Judges 5:12-16, 20-21, 31*)

1. Thou must awake! Thou must awake, Deborah! Thou must speak a song! Thou must arise, Barak! Thou must take captive thy captives, son of Abinoam! Then came down the remnant of the noble; the people of Yahweh came down against the mighty. (*Verses 12-13*)

People's cry: The people cried out to Deborah to get up and speak, and to Barak to take their enemies captive.

As a result of Deborah's strong words to Barak, and his faith in her words from Yahweh, noble commanders and volunteers from the people responded in faith, and God gave the victory!

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2. From Ephraim, their root against Amalek; after, Benjamin in Thy people; from Machir (Manasseh's son, 1 Chronicles 7:14), came down commanders; from Zebulun, those wielding the rod of authority; and, the princes of Issachar with Deborah: so Barak was sent on foot into the valley. (*Verses 14-15a*)

Faithful tribes: Five tribes faithfully fought Sisera of the Canaanites: two (Zebulun and Issachar) from Galilee with their southern border on the Kishon River; and the three Rachel tribes (Manasseh by) Machir, Ephraim and Benjamin from north to south.

3. Among the clans of Reuben: great searchings of heart; why did thou stay among the sheepfolds to hear the bleating of the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben: great searchings of heart. (*Verses 15b-16*)

Reuben: The tribe of Reuben searched their heart if they should leave tending their sheep east of Jordan River to help their brothers defend the land they had previously helped them win by obeying Yahweh's commands through Moses (Numbers 32); but, now they are deaf to Yahweh's call.

Application: May none of us be like the people of Reuben who refused answer God's call to come to the aid of their family members.

4. In the heavens, the stars fought; from their orbits they fought against Sisera; the Kishon River swept them away; the ancient river Kishon: thou must march on, my soul (in) strength. (*Verses 20-21*)

Stars: Because of our Bible study on angels, I now know that 'stars' is a poetic reference to God's spiritual warrior beings. God used both His spiritual and physical beings to win this victory!

River: And, God used the wadi river, Kishon, which He created and controls to also aid in the victory.

5. 'So they will perish, all the enemies of Thee, Yahweh; and those loving Him, (being) as the rising sun in His might'; then the land rested forty years. (*Verse 31*)

Love Yahweh: Yahweh's enemies will perish; and, those obeying the greatest commandment to be fully loving Him always will be made strong in His might.

Rest: Then the people and the land had rest for a generation.

Application: We must all volunteer to willingly do God's will and persist in it until He gives us rest.

- C. Three named women, including Mary of Magdala, minister to Jesus from their possessions. (*Luke 8:1-3*)

1. After that, He (Jesus) was going throughout each city and village, preaching and bringing Good News of The Kingdom of God; and the twelve (were) with Him. (*Verse 1*)

Jesus' 'Good News' tour: Jesus was touring, heralding the 'Good News' of God's Kingdom in Him.

Twelve men: The twelve men He had chosen as apostles were with Him.

2. Several women, having been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary being called Magdala from whom seven demons had been cast out; Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's administrator; and Susanna and many others. (*Verse 2-3b*)

Mary of the 'tower': Magdala means 'tower', perhaps suggesting that because of the astounding deliverance Jesus gave her, she became a tower of faith of Him.

Joanna: Joanna was the wife of a man in the inner circle of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who executed John and allowed Jesus' crucifixion.

Susanna: All we know about Susanna is her name – 'lily'.

3. They were ministering to Him from their possessions. (*Verse 3c*)

Gave possessions: They ministered to Jesus by giving Him financial support. Joanna would have wealth through her husband. Apparently, Mary and Susanna also had acquired possessions.

Apostles: Jesus had called His male followers to leave everything to learn from Him, and they did; but, the women voluntarily gave to Him, as did the volunteers under Deborah and Barak.

Complementarian: Men and women are different; but they are equally valued by God. We see here that the apostles

and the women are following Jesus in different ways, but both give to Him according to their callings and what He had given them.

Women have as much to give to Jesus as men

Conclusion: Deborah gives Barak the command of The Covenant God, Yahweh, that he must lead Israel to fight the Canaanites west of the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Barak requires Deborah to accompany him to the battle. As he leads the men, Yahweh acts for Israel and Barak fulfills his God-given role. Then they praise Yahweh, with Deborah taking the lead, because Yahweh used leaders and willing volunteers to win the victory; but, some stayed home. Three women are named as financially supporting Jesus and His twelve men.

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