**Deborah and Jael – Two Women Who “Nailed It”**

Judges 4:4-10

*Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 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. 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; 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’?” 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!” 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. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.* NKJV

Because in scripture, God does not permit women to hold ordained church offices such as evangelist, elder, or deacon, the false premise has arisen that that God does not value the work of women. To hold on to this false belief, you have to ignore the abundant evidence that God truly does value the work of women and gives to them hugely important tasks that benefit all men. There is a large collection of women who were listed as valuable in the 16th chapter of the letter to the Romans. The ultimate example of this is found in Galatians 4:4,5 – *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* This is Mary, who brought to us Jesus.

Our story in the book of Judges is another example of God’s trust in women to accomplish great victories. These events occur in the time of the judges of Israel. Judges were righteous people who served in leadership positions during the time of Israel’s entry into the promised land and the rule of their kings. Deborah is one of those judges. She was also a prophetess who brought God’s message and direction to the people of Israel. She enters the picture when Jabin, a Canaanite king, harshly oppressed the people of Israel for twenty years.

God speaks through Deborah and calls for an Israelite named Barak to raise an army to stop the oppression. The message Deborah gives to Barak is “*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; 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’?”* (Judges 4:6-7). Indeed, Jabin sends Sisera, his general, with the army, including 900 chariots of iron to put Israel in its place. Barak says he will go lead the fight, but only *“If you [Deborah] will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!”* (Judges 4:8) Deborah agrees to go but makes it plain to him that the Lord will give them victory, but the glory of defeating Sisera would be given to a woman.

To his credit, Barak does not worry about personal glory. Together with Deborah, he gathers an Israelite army and literally wipes out the forces of Sisera. Sisera flees on foot and runs to the tent of a woman named Jael, whose husband is at peace with Sisera. Exhausted and thirsty, Sisera asks for something to drink and a place to rest. Jael grants both, but while he is asleep, she nails his head to the ground with a hammer and tent peg. His death ends the power of King Jabin to oppress Israel, and soon Israel has the power to overthrow Jabin and destroy him.

In Judges 5, a victory song for Deborah and Barak is recorded. This song tells us interesting things about the relationship between Israel and God, and between the tribes of Israel themselves. Learn from it:

1. When leaders actually lead, and people go forth in the will of God, they will prevail, and God will be glorified.
2. There are times when people lose their confidence and hide from adversity until God raises up a “Deborah.”
3. While many choose a “new” god and fail to arm themselves for battle, there are still some who are willing to step up and lead.
4. There are people who remember the power of God and the blessing He has given them, and these will give themselves to the fight.
5. There are those who will avoid any conflict, but others will jeopardize their lives to the point of death to fight for God.
6. Evil ultimately does not win and even the stars of heaven will fight against evil. This is what happened to Sisera. When God stood with Barak and Deborah, the enemy was doomed to fail.
7. Those who stay out of the fight will find themselves cursed.
8. The real hero is Jael: *He asked for water, she gave milk; she brought out cream in a lordly bowl. She stretched her hand to the tent peg, her right hand to the workmen’s hammer; she pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, she split and struck through his temple* (Judges 5:25,26).
9. How sad for Sisera’s mother who waited for her son to bring victory.

*“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength.”* (Judges 5:31)