Bible Study 91

August 23, 2023

 “The Women of the Bible” (continued)

Somewhere around the 12th century BC the twelve tribes of Israel were settle in the land of Canaan. The tribes spread out north and south. Still they were not alone. First, they had to share the land with the Canaanites who were there first. The Canaanites were not a warlike people, but culturally they had a big influence on their neighbors. Israel were also surrounded by enemies: Moabites, Philistines, Amalekites, Ishmaelites and many others.

After the death of Joshua, the tribes struggled to elect a new leader as his successor. They should have been united around the Ark of the Covenant at Shechem, but that was no longer the case. Now the tribes squabbled among themselves, and no longer followed the Law of Moses. Instead, they were following the false Gods of their neighbors. Festivals, feasts, sacrifices found the children of the twelve tribes deserting Yahweh and turn to idols.

The twelve tribes met to pick a leader. The person that they picked would be the new leader and he would be called a ‘Judge’. When we hear that word ‘Judge’ we immediately think of someone sitting on a bench ruling over the law. But, that is not the sense of use for “The Book of Judges.” Instead Judges were charismatic leaders, chosen because they had some kind of gift or talent; a great warrior, a wise man, a wonderful communicator. All judges were not men as we see with Deborah.

The job of the Judge was to return the people to the worship of Yahweh and to defeat Israelites main enemy or threat. Deborah was first a prophet and the Fourth Judge of Israel. She was the wife of Lapidoth. In Hebrew she is sometimes referred to as ‘a fiery woman’. Deborah was a leader in Israel for some 40 years.

The threat at the time was King Jabin of the Canaanites and his mighty general Sisera. Deborah communicates her prophecy to her general Barak to go into battle on her behalf. For twenty years the Hebrews had been oppressed by king Jabin. Deborah had the ability to bring tribes together who had formerly been in conflict. So she instructs Naphtali and Zebulun to take ten thousand men to concentrate them at Mount Tabor. Barak will not lead the tribes unless Deborah is with him.

Deborah faces 900 chariots of Iron and many men lead by Sisera. Barak goes to Mt Tabor and Sisera the mighty is defeated. Sisera escapes by foot and makes his way to Haroshheth Haggoyim. He comes to the tent of Jael and lies down to rest. Jael gives him a drink of milk, and while he is asleep she hammers a tent peg through his temple.

The “Song of Deborah’ is found in Judges 5: 2---31. This is one of the oldest written parts of the entire Bible. It dates to the 12th century BC. The Song was supposedly sung by Deborah and Barak as a victory song.

Deborah uses the victory and the role of Jael to point out that all glory belongs to Yahweh. As peace spreads though the land and the tribes, Deborah, presides over all disputes among the twelve tribes. Now everyone will return to the worship of the one true God the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Read Deborah. The Book of Judges