

ZOOM NOTES

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Sunday Morning

THE FAITH OF BARAK

Heb 11:32 (KJV) "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of **Barak**, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:"

Years may go by between mentions in the pulpit or the Bible Class of Barak, yet he is cataloged with the faithful in Hebrews 11, and the faith of Barak and the battle that he fought at Megiddo is remembered in the Revelation from Jesus recorded by the Apostle John in Revelation 16:16 as a symbolic fighting of a battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, the Lord suddenly reveals his power in the interest of his distressed people and defeats the enemy as they are gathered at Armageddon (*hAr* - mount; Megiddo - unknown meaning). The use of the word Armageddon, like Euphrates, Babylon, and Jezebel, is more an expression of an idea, the idea that swift and overwhelming destruction shall overtake all who gather themselves together against the Lord.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

- A. After the death of Ehud, "the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord" (Jdg 4:1) resulting once again in the Lord allowing them to be oppressed. This time the oppression was for twenty years at the hand of Jabin (4:2) who is simply identified as "king of Canaan."
- B. At this time in history, God's people were not a nation with a central government, a standing army, and a king, but rather, a leaderless loose confederation scattered over a broad territory with indefensible borders. With store houses of implements of war being non-existent, Deborah poetically will ask, "was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" (5:8). Even later, in the time of King Saul, we are told that "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel . . . Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears" (1 Sam 13:19). Considering Jabin's imposing nine hundred chariots of iron (Jdg 4:3), any deliverance from an oppressing nation or any "avenging of Israel" (5:2) would necessarily be by the hand of God.
- C. The oppression was so great that the roads were unsafe, resulting in travelers having to find roundabout ways to reach their destination (5:6); furthermore, small communities "ceased in Israel" (5:7) as people could not congregate, likely for fear of being discovered. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had their inheritance trans Jordan (in Gilead), had "great searchings of heart" (5:16) to help, but stayed home. Dan "remained in ships" and Asher stayed hiding at the sea shore (5:17) leaving only ten thousand men (4:14) of Zebulun and Naphtali, of whom it is said "jeopardized their lives" (5:18), rising to help in this time of oppression.

II. THE FAITH OF BARAK.

- A. We are first introduced to Barak when Deborah, a prophetess and Judge of Israel, summons Barak telling him, "Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?" (4:6). God's intent is to draw Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, "with his chariots and his multitude" (4:7), unto Barak for destruction.
- B. Barak's response, saying that he would go if Deborah went with him (4:8), should not be considered a response of fear or hesitation in his readiness to do the will of God, but a response which assures him that Deborah's words truly are from God. If she is unwilling to go with Barak, Barak will know that Deborah herself does not believe the validity of her testimony. **For Barak to respond in faith, he must be persuaded that the message is truly from God.** It would be foolish for Barak to go against the army of Sisera if God has not really said that he would deliver Sisera into Barak's hand. Once assured of the testimony of God, we see Barak's celebrated faith come to life acting immediately with no shred of indecisiveness or trepidation.
- C. Though chapters four and five of the book of Judges record in parallel the defeat of Sisera, the style of each chapter is unique: **chapter four is a historical narrative, chapter five is a song sung by Deborah and Barak** (5:1) of God's victory. The historical account is noted for its brevity simply stating that the "Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak" (4:15), while in the poetic structure of chapter five the discomfiture is described, "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. 21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength" (Jdg 5:20-21).
- D. Let us note that Barak is nowhere described as slaying six hundred men with an ox goad delivering Israel as was Shamgar (Jdg 3:31), nor possessed with great strength as was Samson who "found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith" saying "with the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men" (Jdg 15:16-16); yet, it can truthfully be said that Barak and those like him, through faith, **"escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens"** (Heb 11:34) following the command of God.
- E. Developing the character and strong faith exemplified by those standing for their beliefs in the pages of God's book, begins by spending time with people who have spent time waxing valiant in fight. It is an inspiration, stimulation and motivation to read of Barak, Daniel, Moses, Joseph, David, and Paul, not just because of their strengths, but also because of their weaknesses. It is both a blessing and a curse that we generally become like the ones with whom we associate. It is a blessing when we associate with the strong and righteous, and a curse when we are with the weak and the sinful. In the pages of scripture we spend time with those who have stood under adversity for that which is right giving no excuses, dodging no responsibilities, and accepting the loss of all things as they "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Heb 11:10).
- F. A common misconception is that "the Bible speaks about extraordinary individuals, and then it speaks about me," the extraordinary individuals only being seen in the pages of the Bible. We must not conclude that we are not now, nor can we ever be in the same class as the righteous of the Bible. In our times we may not hear of names like Noah, Joseph, David, Daniel, and Paul, but **God still has his people.** They are just as mighty, strong, faithful, sacrificing, humble, willing to fight battles, and teach the way of righteousness.