

JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

Lesson 7: Righteous Triumphs

Key Verse: To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the LORD, the righteous triumphs of His villagers in Israel...~ Judges 5.11

Sex toys thrown onto the basketball court during Women's NBA games, the high-profile sex trafficking ring for powerful and wealthy men developed by Jeffrey Epstein, as well as sexual abuse purposefully covered up within Christian church denominations are a strong message to woman of how broken and sick American society has become towards women. If we are taking notice, how much more so is God paying attention to how men treat His handcrafted women. In Deborah we see God's singular purpose for women: whole-hearted devotion to Him. He chooses how women are to serve Him to His Glory. The power struggle between men and women is a result of sin's curse (Genesis 3.16). Yet God's power provides **redemption** to *all* His people, without consideration of gender! As we see in the godly, theologically mature leadership of Deborah, God uses any godly woman seeking His Will and His Glory to teach, lead, and preach the truth of God as **Jehovah Nissi** (Judges 5). How glorious and freeing it will be to dwell with Him in heaven, where His conquering Banner of Love has already defeated the power struggle and sexual victimization, and united His people in praise and worship of Him (Revelation 7.9-12; 14.6-7; 21.1-7, 21-27; 22.1-5, 21-27).

This lesson references the rape of women as one of the spoils, or privileges, of war (Judges 5.30). Please remember to take good care of yourself, sister-in-Christ, using coping mechanisms and trusted professionals for your best mental health. Never, ever forget that you are a prisoner of HOPE (Zechariah 9.12)!

High King of Heaven, nothing is too powerful for you to defeat. Thank You that You are a Warrior-Deliverer who has defeated Satan and sin through the sacrifice and resurrection of Your Beloved Son. Thank You for choosing women to serve, lead, and exhort in Your name and to Your Glory. Send us out, Lord! Give us courageous faith in Your faithfulness so that we too may say, "Let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; but let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might." (Judges 5.31)

Judges 4.1-5.31 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD after Ehud died. **2** And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. **3** Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years.

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth¹, was judging Israel at that time. **5** She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. **6** She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, "Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. **7** And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?'"

8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go." **9** And she said, "I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. **10** And Barak called out Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. And 10,000 men went up at his heels, and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaananim, which is near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera was told that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, **13** Sisera called out all his chariots, 900 chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. **14** And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?"

¹Was Deborah married? The answer is a bit murkier in the original language. A more direct translation of the original language and structure could also be read as her being "a fiery woman". (Schneider, pp. 63-69) Her unique role as both a prophetess of the LORD in addition to her assuming a more traditional role as a judge (rather than a warrior-deliverer) don't provide enough context clues to definitively answer whether she was married. What we do know is that marriage, or being unmarried, didn't validate her role as God's servant. God chose her, and her roles, for His plan and purpose, and she was faithful and obedient to Him.

So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. **15** And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. **16** And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

17 But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. **18** And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord; turn aside to me; do not be afraid." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. **19** And he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. **20** And he said to her, "Stand at the opening of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" **21** But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.

22 And behold, as Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went in to her tent, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg in his temple. **23** So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the people of Israel. **24** And the hand of the people of Israel pressed harder and harder against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

CH 5 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day: **2** "That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD! **3** "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the LORD I will sing; I will make melody to the LORD, the God of Israel.

4 "LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. **5** The mountains quaked before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel.

6 "In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways. **7** The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. **8** When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel? **9** My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the LORD.

10 "Tell of it, you who ride on white donkeys, you who sit on rich carpets and you who walk by the way. **11** To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the LORD, the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel.

"Then down to the gates marched the people of the LORD. **12** "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, break out in a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam. **13** Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the LORD marched down for me against the mighty.

14 From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant's staff; **15** the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels.

Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. **16** Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. **17** Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, staying by his landings.

18 Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the death; Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field. **19** "The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan, at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver.

20 From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. **21** The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might! **22** "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.

23 "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. **25** He asked for water and she gave him milk; she brought him curds in a noble's bowl. **26** She sent her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple. **27** Between

her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; between her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.

28 “Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sisera wailed through the lattice: ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoofbeats of his chariots?’ **29** Her wisest princesses answer, indeed, she answers herself, **30** ‘Have they not found and divided the spoil?—A womb or two for every man; spoil of dyed materials for Sisera, spoil of dyed materials embroidered, two pieces of dyed work embroidered for the neck as spoil?’

31 “So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.”

And the land had rest for forty years.

Diamonds: Once again, God violates common sense expectations of how and who will be the deliverer of His people. Noting that this study’s audience is largely women, we are not surprised by Deborah’s strong leadership, direct approach, and theological intelligence! Instead, it is the suddenness of His rescue and the verve of the volunteers under the leadership of both Deborah and Barak that surprise the audience. In one day, God’s people went from total despair to total victory. The defeat was so marvelous and miraculous that they erupted in a song of joy to God (Judges 5).

1. Judges 4 provides an outline of the deliverance of God’s people while Judges 5 provides more finite details of God’s deliverance. Judges 4.1-3 and 5.6-8 set the stage for how desperate, helpless, and powerless God’s people had become. From those selected verses, what do you think it was like living at that time?

Deborah is the only character in the book of Judges with multiple roles: a traditional judge (4.5), and a prophetess (4.4). Her summoning of Barak, whose name means “lightening” and is derived from mythology of Baal’s use of thunder and lightning to battle “the chaos monster of the sea”², reinforces her stellar reputation and commanding leadership of God’s people. Both Judges 4 and 5 confirm her as a devout follower of God whose theology of God is accurate and filled with humility. Thus, Barak’s response to God’s command (4.6-7) that Deborah join him can be considered a shortcoming or as his recognition of her as God’s spokesperson and his need for continued God’s Divine direction in this battle³. No matter his motivation or intention, the result is that Deborah will go and that God will defeat Sisera through a woman (4.9), not Barak.

2. Intriguingly, Barak is listed among the “Faith Heroes Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11.32-34. His faith descriptor is discovered in verse 34, “...put foreign armies to flight.” Whether he was right or wrong to request Deborah’s presence, it doesn’t disqualify, nor qualify him from being included in this extraordinary list. His faith in God as proven by his actions is what placed him there. What is God calling you to do through faith in Him? What might be placed next to your name to describe actions you took in faith in God?

God’s miraculous method of deliverance came in the form of flash-flooding in the watershed of the Kishon River (Judges 5.4, 19-21). This technical detail made possible the loud hoofbeats of the “steeds” (Judges 5.22) of God’s people under Barak’s command able to descend and destroy Sisera’s warriors (Judges 4.15-16), even as their chariots had been converted from military strength to a battlefield liability (Judges 4.15).⁴

Unfortunately, not all of God’s people joined their brothers and sisters in this battle. A special and unusual curse is pronounced on Meroz by the “angel of the LORD” Himself! (Judges 5.23) Meroz was likely geographically located next to the site of this battle⁵, so rather than joining God’s people, they popped popcorn and took bets on who would win – God or Sisera! Reuben’s clan didn’t think it was “a good time to leave the sheep”⁶, the people of Gilead refused to cross the Jordan River, “Dan and Asher evidently were preoccupied with profitable maritime trade”⁷. (Judges 5.15b-17)

²Webb, p. 85

³ Van Pelt, p. 558 & Webb, p. 99

⁴I have seen this firsthand in Central Texas. On a sunny, cloudless day we were enjoying the cool springs along Hamilton Creek. I noticed leaves and tree debris slowly passing by us as we played inside the creek. It took me a minute, but I looked beyond what was floating by me to the rocks we had passed to get to one of the springs. It was then I noticed that the water was steadily rising! The rocks were disappearing while we played! We exited the creek immediately and marveled at its minor flash flooding while the sun shone brightly with no clouds in the sky. However, there was heavy rain at the watershed, or source of Hamilton Creek. Thus, it flooded even as we stood on its dry banks!

⁵Davis, pp. 85-86 & Webb, p. 110

⁶ Davis, p. 85

⁷ Davis p. 85

3. This song reminds us of the pain of disappointment among God's people. Unity of God's people to fight together to possess the land God had given them was expected⁸, and these tribes' refusal fractured God's people. Today we call this pain and disappointment "church hurt". How have you handled times when God's people disappointed you? (Please keep your answer to the healing you have found in Christ, not the story of the hurt.) What scripture helps us heal in Christ?

In contrast, the tribes that did unite did so commendably. Not only did those expected to fight rise up alongside Barak and Deborah, so did many volunteers!

4. List the kinds of volunteers that fought alongside Barak and Deborah from Judges 5:9, 11c, 13-15a, 18:

5. What does this teach you about who comes alongside us to help us in our struggles with sin and circumstances?

Deity: Jehovah Nissi~ (Judges 4.23, 5.11) Jehovah-Nissi or Yahweh Nissi is Hebrew for "The LORD is My Banner". This name for God is recorded only *once* in the Bible, in Exodus 17.15, after Israel defeated the Amalekites in a battle.

This battle was won in an unusual manner. Exodus 17.11 says, "Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed." When Moses' arms grew weary, his brother, Aaron, and a man named Hur held them up. After the battle, Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-Nissi, "The LORD is My Banner."

"Yahweh Nissi still leads the way for His people today. He is our defense, the One who protects us under the banner of His holy name (Isaiah 51.22a). Though our spiritual adversary seeks our defeat, our victory is assured because we belong to Yahweh Nissi (Song of Solomon 2.3-4; 1 John 2.1-2)."⁹

In Judges 5, we see two contrasting "banners" over two main characters: the mother of Sisera and Jael. While Jael is a woman who chose to fight for the LORD (Judges 5.24), Sisera's mother is a woman whose sinking heart seeks assurance in delusions (Judges 5.30). Jael's pedigree as a Kenite (Judges 5.24) reveals the "checkered history"¹⁰ of the Kenite clan that would have made her murder of Sisera surprising. The Kenites had fought alongside Judah in routing the Canaanites to possess their land in Judges 1.16. However, later in history, Heber entered a treaty with Jabin (Judges 4.17) thus Sisera's expected refuge from Heber's wife, Jael, is not surprising.

The mention of Heber's decision to later break away from his Kenite clan in Judges 4.11 triggers the suspense of Jael's enigma (Judges 4.18-20): fight for the LORD in violation of her clan's legal peace treaty or remain faithful to her clan's legal obligation secured through her husband.

6. What does Jael choose to do, and how does this place her under the Banner of Jehovah Nissi? (Judges 4.17-24, 5.24-27)
7. Under what banner does Sisera's mother place herself (Judges 5.28-30)? How does this mother "suppress the truth" of God, even as He has revealed Himself to her through this circumstance (Romans 1.18-19)?

⁸ Webb, pp. 21-23 + "Lesson 1: Ruin of Sin"

⁹ Ava Pennington, One Year Alone with God: 366 Devotions on the Names of God

¹⁰ Webb, p. 126

8. Suppose you have the cell phone number of Sisera's mother. What would you text her as she struggles to accept her loss? What would you say to draw her under the Banner of Jehovah Nissi? What scripture verse(s) would you use to empathize with her loss while also drawing her to personal salvation in Christ?

Doctrine: Redemption¹¹~ (Judges 4.9, 5.11-12) Used to describe a commercial transaction, to redeem is "to purchase out of the marketplace". Thus, a redeemer is one who acts to buy another back or release another from blame or debt; one who acts to free another from what distresses or harms: to make worthwhile: to free from captivity by payment of ransom.

9. Where, and how, do you see God redeeming His people in these first chapters of Judges? What do you think motivates God to redeem His disobedient, non-compliant, idol worshipping, guilt-ridden people?

Deborah's reference to the God of Sinai in Judges 5.5 reveals her extraordinary theological intelligence. You studied the frightening and spectacular event of God giving Moses His Law at Mount Sinai in "Lesson 3: Covenantal Righteousness" (specifically through the doctrine of "covenants"). The precipitating event to Mount Sinai was God's redemption of His people from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 14-15).

10. Notice that God's miraculous and swift defeat of the Egyptian army in Exodus 14 mirrors the same method He used in Judges 4-5. The people's response of worship through song in Judges 5 likewise mirrors the people's response in Exodus 15. List as many deities (characteristics) and doctrines (truths) as you can about God that Deborah references in her worship song in Judges 5:

Through God's instructions about vows in Leviticus 27 we discover a key truth about redemption that unlocks a treasure chest of God's love for His people in His law: redemption is costly to the one redeeming but also *adds value* to what is being redeemed!

Leviticus ends with a strong theology of God's character and nature, revealing God's value of you. The elementary truth that redemption costs but also adds a significant value to what is redeemed reveals God's value-added view of you through Christ. God paid the cost to redeem you from sin's enslavement and eternal death, or removal from His Presence today and forevermore. Only the owner of what is being redeemed has the legal right to redeem it. Only God has the legal right to redeem you. Through the sacrifice of His Son, God not only paid the cost to redeem you, *He added value to you!*

11. According to Paul in Romans 3.21-26, how did God add value to you? (Use the deity and doctrines from "Lesson 6: Righteous by Faith" to help you understand the value He added to you.)

12. Now it's your turn to explode in worship of God using any creative method He has given to you! Rather than finding yourself unable to be creative, ask God how He wants you to explode in worship to Him (see your list of God's character and truths in Question 10). Poetry, song, art, sculpture, dance, photography, emoji's (haha!)...creatively worship the God who redeemed you. Then, like Deborah, allow your group the privilege of joining your worship by sharing it:

¹¹MacArthur & Mayhue, pp. 533-536

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: In Christ, a believer's victory is guaranteed.

- I. Lifting A Standard (Judges 4) **T1:** A believer's guaranteed victory over sin and death is the result of Christ's finished work.
 - a. What is oppressing your spirit?
 - b. Which of sin's shackles are keeping you stuck in a cycle of defeat?
 - c. Where do you need the Spirit of God to lift a standard over you and guarantee your victory? How earnestly will you persist in the fight?
- II. Lifting A Song (Judges 5) **T2:** A believer's guaranteed victory over sin and death is a mighty deed to be celebrated.
 - a. How often do you set aside time to simply celebrate God?
 - b. Which specific mighty deeds of God could you celebrate in your daily time of prayer?

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Webb, Barry G., *Judges and Ruth: God in Chaos* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015) pp. 93-131