

# Study Guide on the Book of Judges (2)

## Week 5:

### **Judges 4:1-24: Deliverance from the Canaanites by Deborah and Barak**

Chapter 3 recorded God's work of saving Israel from the Mesopotamians, the Moabites, and the Philistines. What wonderful deliverances!

These wonderful works Israel soon forgot, and the familiar cycle of history repeated itself—sin, bondage, repentance, and deliverance. One unique aspect of the deliverance of Israel from the Canaanites is that God used women. He used men also; He used Barak, who is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. But Deborah and Jael play a significant role.

We are convinced that the Scriptures do not allow women to hold any of the special offices in the church. But after examining this chapter, ask the question: What great role, positively, do women play in the church's deliverance from her enemies today?

1. What was the evil that Israel committed in the sight of the LORD? (Hint: look in chapter 5).
2. What part of Israel did Jabin especially afflict?
3. What do you know about the history of Hazor?
4. How oppressive was the bondage of Israel as here described, in comparison with her previous bondages? (Hint: also look in chapter 5 for the answer).
5. In what ways is Deborah a unique judge? Does the fact that she was a prophetess and judge mean that women may be ministers and elders today?
6. How is it evident that Israel's deliverance was a miracle? (Hint: look in both Judges 4 and 5 for the answer).
7. Was Jael's act good or bad—and why? Did her deception (vs. 18) make her act worse?
8. What does the chapter teach us about our salvation in Jesus Christ?
9. What points of application to our lives can we make from this chapter?

10. And what is that positive role which women play in the church's deliverance from her enemies today?

## **Week 6:**

### **Judges 5:1-31: The Song of Deborah and Barak**

When Israel saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians washing up on the shore of the Red Sea, they sang (Exodus 15). When David was given the victory over his enemies, he composed Psalms (Psalms 18, 60, and others). John, in his revelation, saw the church triumphant singing "the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb" (Revelation 15). Evidently singing is one way in which the church responds with gratitude and joy to the work of salvation.

Also in Judges 5 is recorded a song which was sung on the occasion of that great victory recorded in Judges 4. It is a song quite different from the lyrics and tunes on the lips of unbelievers. Studying this song, we ought to ask the questions: What kind of songs do *we* sing? do we sing? *To whom* do we sing? (Consider that all singing is done to someone, in worship of that being). And *why* do we sing? Are the songs we sing similar to this song—or does this song remind us of the need to throw out our current collection of favorite songs, and replace it with songs with which God is pleased?

#### **Questions regarding the singing of the song:**

1. Why would God's people *sing* on such an occasion?
2. Exactly who sang this song? Does this indicate that the whole church does not need to sing such songs?

#### **Questions regarding the content of the song:**

1. What does the song teach regarding the trouble that Israel endured at the hand of Jabin? What was Israel's sin? How severe was God's chastisement of Israel on account of this sin? (Some of these questions were also addressed in chapter 4).
2. What does the song teach regarding the battle?
  - Who fought? Who did not fight? What does it indicate that some tribes did not come to help?

- What does the fact that Jehovah fought teach about Him and His view of Israel? What particular means did Jehovah use to give Israel the victory? On what basis could Israel be delivered from her enemy?
- Significantly, this battle was fought by the waters of Megiddo (vs 19). What do you know of Megiddo? And what other great battle does this one point to (Revelation 16:16)?

3. Regarding particular verses:

- vs. 23: What is Meroz, and why is he cursed?
- vs. 23: Did Jehovah really need help against the mighty?

**Questions regarding the application of the song to us:**

1. How does the song indicate that it is relevant and instructive for the church of all ages?
2. What lessons do you take to heart, from the history recorded in this song?
3. Do we sing this song regularly? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Week 7:**

**Judges 6:1-40: The Call of Gideon**

“And...and...and...and...and...and”—notice the first word of verses 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 6. The Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures use the word “and” often in narratives, to describe the various events that follow one another. But the repeated use of the word reminds us again of a cycle of events that is being repeated now for the fourth time in the history of the Judges. We are by now familiar with it.

By now, one might think that Jehovah would cast off His people in disgust. He surely would have done so, if He were not *Jehovah*—faithful and unchanging. But, as He said through Malachi, “I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

So the sacred Scriptures record yet another instance of Jehovah’s marvelous deliverance of His people from their misery.

How comforting! Though we sin against Him a thousand times, in the way of repentance He will receive us again into His fellowship, and give us the enjoyment of His blessedness!

1. Israel's trouble, verses 1-6.
  - To what sin did Israel again return?
  - Describe how Israel suffered because of the oppression of the Midianites.
  - Why was this oppression so severe?
  - Do we ever experience such severity of oppression on account of our sins?
2. The prophet's message, verses 7-10.
  - Who was this prophet?
  - What was the point of his message?
  - What is the warning for us?
3. God calls Gideon to deliver Israel, verses 11-24.
  - Why is it so important that Gideon be called to this work?
  - By asking for a sign, does Gideon show he is weak in faith?
  - May we ever ask for signs from God to know His will for us? May we regarding the will of His law, which is clearly revealed in Scripture?
  - What does "Jehovah-shalom" mean? Look it up in a Bible dictionary.
  - As judge, Gideon is a picture of Christ. What similarities between Gideon and Christ can you note?
4. Gideon begins his work by cleansing his father's house, verses 25-32.
  - What was this grove that Gideon must cut down?
  - Did the fact that he cut down this grove by night indicate cowardice and fear on his part?

- Why was it so important that he begin his work in his own father’s house?
  - What does this say about the work of salvation that Christ will perform in the church?
  - What does this say about our own battle against sin? Find other Scriptures which indicate that we may not go to battle against sin in others without first being conscious of a battle against sin in ourselves.
5. Gideon prepares to go to battle, verses 33-40.
- Who comes to fight, at the call of Gideon?
  - What is the point of the two signs involving the fleece and the dew?

## **Week 8**

### **Judges 7:1-25: Gideon’s Battle With Midian**

Here is described the battle by which Israel was delivered from the Midianites. We are reminded of the great principle of the saving work of God: He saves in such a way that His own power and wisdom is evident. Jonathan, Saul’s son, later showed that he understood this principle, when he and his armorbearer went alone to fight the Philistines: “it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few” (I Samuel 14:6).

That church is foolish which judges her strength by her numbers; that child of God is unwise who judges his strength by his own human might and earthly courage.

Let us believe and trust in Jehovah, who delivered us from sin by one man, Jesus Christ!

1. The army gathered, verses 1-8.
  - How large was the army of the Midianites (7:12, 8:10)? How large was the army of Gideon at first? How large was the army when most were sent home? What is significant about the great difference between the sizes of the two armies?
  - What means did God use to reduce the size of Israel’s army at first? How is this significant? May we simply refuse to fight the spiritual battles of the church because we are scared?

- What other means did God use to reduce the size of the army? What did lapping like a dog indicate about those men who would later fight? What did bowing on one's knees indicate about those who were later sent home?

2. Gideon's encouragement, verses 9-14.

- What was significant about the dream and its interpretation, which Gideon overheard?
- Gideon did not ask for this encouragement; God gave it without his asking. Are there ways in which God also encourages us, at crucial moments, without our asking?

3. The battle, verses 15-25.

- With what weapons did Israel go into battle? What is significant about them? How are they a picture of the spiritual weapons we use today (2 Cor. 10:4)?
- The battle cry that Gideon's army was to shout out is this: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" Why does it speak of a sword, when there was no literal sword? And what is significant about this battle cry?
- How can it be that a large and strong enemy, which overpowered Israel for many years, is sent running, and made to fight against each other, by this simple battle cry by a small band of unarmed men?
- Using a concordance, look up "Oreb" and "Zeeb." In which other passages of Scripture are these names found? How do those passages relate to the battle that Gideon fought?

4. Questions on the chapter as a whole.

- What does it teach us about the salvation God gives us in Christ?
- What points of application to our lives can be made?

## Week 9

### Judges 8:1-35: Gideon's Judgeship.

The judges did not only deliver Israel from their enemies; they also ruled Israel in the fear of God. Previous verses in Judges have made this point only briefly (Judges 3:11,

3:30); but this chapter gives us more insight into the work of the judge after the enemy was conquered (verses 22-28).

Unfortunately, Gideon began his rule well (verse 23), but soon was led astray into sin (verse 27). He who will judge us rightly, and bestow on us perfect blessedness, must be one who is perfectly righteous, hating sin, and never turning aside from God's law. Gideon was but a shadow of our great Judge, Jesus Christ, in whom we have everlasting rest from our enemies.

We are reminded that we who have the victory in Christ must constantly fight against temptations to be brought again into the bondage of sin. Romans 6 calls us to such a life of service to God, being freed from sin's yoke.

1. The conclusion of the battle, verses 1-21.
  - Why is it significant that the men of *Ephraim* chided so sharply with Gideon, verses 1-3? What does Gideon's answer teach us about responding to those who are not happy with us (Proverbs 15:1)?
  - Why did the men of Succoth and Penuel answer Gideon as they did? Was Gideon right in responding to them as he did?
  - What lessons must we learn from the attitude of the men of Ephraim, Succoth, and Penuel, regarding cooperation of saints in the work of the church?
2. The judgeship of Gideon and the conclusion of his life, verses 22-35.
  - How did Gideon judge Israel after the defeat of her enemies?
  - Why is it significant that Israel asked for a king, and that Gideon refused to be Israel's king? What does the name "Abimelech" (the name of his son) mean?
  - Of what sins did Gideon become guilty?
  - What lesson are we to learn from Israel's ingratitude toward Gideon, after he died?
3. Questions on the chapter as a whole.
  - What does this chapter teach us about the salvation God gives us in Christ?

- What other points of application must be made to our lives?