

Judges - The Path From Chaos to Kingship Lesson 3

Ice Breaker - What is your favourite way to read a book - hard copy, audiobook, e-reader, or you don't read books?

Page 42 - The story of Deborah is often used as a justification for female pastors. See the attached article to understand the opposition to this application of the text.

Page 43 - Our impression of Barak is generally negative but he is mentioned in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 (v 32). Some commentators are more hesitant to see his insistence that Deborah come as a lack of faith on his part. Instead, they view it as him humbly seeking God's direction through his chosen servant Deborah. They also don't see Deborah prophesying that Sisera will be killed by a woman as judgement on Barak's cowardice but as a clear sign that Yahweh is the victor, not man, because this is not the usual human outcome of such a battle. (Judges: Such a Great Salvation by Dale Ralph Davis) I'm not sure I agree with this assessment but it is interesting to consider.

Page 44 - It is very easy to get wrapped up in trying to figure out the "why" of Jael killing Sisera, but I think that distracts from the main point here: God destroyed the enemy of Israel.

Page 46 - The author's note about those riding on white donkeys is only one possible interpretation. V 10 could also be referring to the Israelite leaders mentioned in vv 2 and 9 (The Reformation Study Bible text note) or caravan traders who traditionally moved through Israel but were prevented by the conflict with Jabin (A Commentary on Judges and Ruth by Robert B. Chisholm Jr.).

Page 48 - The prophecy in 5:31 is echoed and answered throughout the scriptures. See 2 Samuel 23:3-4, Daniel 12:1-3, Matthew 5:14-1, 13:41-43.

If you have extra time: Chapters 4 and 5 of Judges are very similar in structure to Exodus 14:1 to 15:21. It is likely that the author of Judges was intentionally copying the structure of Exodus here. Read both passages and note the similarity and differences.

What Deborah Does and Doesn't Say About Women in the Church PAUL CARTER JULY 22, 2017

The Book of Judges provides fuel for a variety of theological controversies. If you are running out of parking spaces in your church, try preaching a sermon on [Judges 19](#). If that doesn't work, try doing character studies on Jephthah or Samson. The Book of Judges shines the spotlight on a very unusual season in the life of the covenant community, and it tells the story of how God used a variety of unlikely heroes to deliver and lead his people.

One of those unlikely heroes is Deborah the prophetess. In [Judges 4](#) and 5, the people of Israel appear to be at an all time low in terms of political cohesion and military capacity. In the Song of Deborah she makes mention of how there was not a shield or spear to be found among 40,000. The army of Israel was ill equipped, and it lacked a competent leader.

When Deborah asked Barak to lead the upcoming military campaign he refused to do it without her. Deborah rebuked him and told him that the honour for the upcoming victory would now go to a woman instead of to him. It isn't clear whether that honour went to Deborah herself or to another woman named Jael; it was Jael who struck the final blow and killed the enemy of God's people. There is no doubt that this is an unusual story, and that it celebrates some unlikely characters.

But does it speak directly to the contemporary controversies regarding women in the church?

Throughout history, Christians have generally believed that men and women are equal with respect to dignity and worth and yet different with respect to role and responsibility. They have believed that, while there is a great deal of overlap, men have a specific stewardship with regard to Word ministry and women have a specific stewardship

with respect to the raising of children. In the Bible those roles are treated as equally valuable and necessary for the health and flourishing of God's people. As Paul makes clear in [1 Timothy 2:9-15](#), part of our submission to Christ involves submission to the particular stewardship that has been assigned to us by God.

But wait! Does the story of Deborah challenge the essence of that narrative? Consider [Judges 4:4](#) which says: "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time" ([Judges 4:4](#) ESV).

Clearly women can be prophetesses in the covenant community. They can exercise leadership and some people believe that this simple fact changes everything.

But does it?

While there is a spectrum to complementarian belief, no credible voice within that community is arguing that women cannot exercise leadership in the church. In fact, I'm not sure that I've ever heard anyone narrowly equate "leadership in the church" with "preaching from the pulpit". To say that Deborah was a prophetess and a leader in Israel, does not seem to say anything directly about whether or not women should be preachers in the church.

Suppose I had a cat named Lucy. Suppose I told you that because Lucy is a cat and because cats are animals and because dogs are animals, therefore Lucy is a dog. I'm not sure you would find that convincing because, while all cats are animals, not all animals are cats. My argument is built upon a significant category error.

Likewise, it is not true to say that because Deborah was a prophet and prophets are leaders, therefore women can be any type of leader including the preaching pastor of a church. The difference between a prophet and the preaching pastor of a church may well be as profound as the difference between a cat and a dog. Therefore the argument simply isn't relevant or compelling. What we know about prophets from the Old Testament seems to indicate that they operated outside the formal boundaries of the covenant leadership structure. In fact, the real value of the prophet in the Old Testament is their ability to speak truth to power. The prophet is regularly sent by God to rebuke those in formal office.

The role of the "judge" in Israel is less well known. The Hebrew word that is used in [Judges 4:4](#) could equally be translated as "leader" or "defender". Indeed, "defender" seems like the best option given the context of the story. Deborah's narrative therefore could be used to provide Biblical justification for Joan of Arc, but it's less clear that it provides Biblical justification for a female Charles Spurgeon.

All we can say for sure was that Deborah was some kind of leader in Israel. It seems she led alongside Barak and that their ministry was one of military defense and deliverance. Deborah was a leader – pastors are leaders, but that does not mean that Deborah was a pastor. She did not preach a sermon, discipline a member or determine a doctrine. Her story, while interesting and inspired, has no bearing on this contemporary controversy.

It does however remind us that God made us male and female and that a country benefits from a plurality of mixed gendered leaders just as much as does a family. In [Judges 5:7](#), Deborah says: "The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel" ([Judges 5:7](#) ESV).

Deborah had a remarkable capacity to inspire bravery and loyalty from the previously scattered warriors of Israel. "Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the Lord marched down for me against the mighty" ([Judges 5:13](#) ESV). Many an Englishman will tell you there is almost nothing that a man won't do to protect the Mother of his people. A man will march into hell for his wife, his daughter, his mother, his sister or his Queen. Women can lead in some ways that men cannot.

While the text isn't saying all that some would like it to, what it is saying deserves to be remembered.

<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/deborah-doesnt-say-wo>