

ENCORE | Judges 4-5: Two Strong Women

01) After the death of Ehud, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord so the Lord sold them into bondage to Jabin, king of Canaan (v. 4:1-2. Note Jabin is probably a dynastic title for the Canaanite kings of Hazor; see also Joshua 11:1) Do you see any differences between this enemy and the others God used?

02) Do you think believers today can expect stronger forms of discipline from the Lord if they willfully disobey Him? Why or why not?

03) Deborah was Israel's fourth judge and only female judge. How would you describe her?

04) In ancient Israel a woman normally held a subordinate role in society. Although Deborah appears to have been a very godly woman, her role as a judge probably indicates a breakdown in the normal structure of the Israelite community. Besides a breakdown in the normal social structure what else do you think the Lord's appointment of Deborah signifies?

05) Deborah was a strong woman. What does it mean to be a strong woman?

- a) Deborah was strong because she _____ the Lord (v. 4:4-5).
- b) Deborah was strong because she _____ the Lord (v. 4:6-7).
- c) Deborah was strong because she _____ the Lord (v. 4:9).

06) Barak seems to have been a weak or passive man. What demand did he make of Deborah (v. 4:8)?

- a) What does this indicate about Barak's faith?
- b) How did Deborah respond to his demand?
- c) What did Barak learn from Deborah's example?
- d) What did Barak do as a result?

07) Barak assembled his troops at Mount Tabor on the northeast corner of the Valley of Jezreel. Sisera prepared his soldiers and nine hundred chariots for battle. Armed with only primitive weapons and the promises of God, the Israelites rushed down into the valley to meet the Canaanites (v. 14).

- a) How did the battle go (v. 4:14-16)?
- b) What happened (v. 5:19-21)?
- c) What happened to Sisera (v. 4:17-21)?
- d) What can we learn about life from this account?

08) Chapter 5 records Deborah and Barak's song. Why do you think they sang this song after the victory?

- a) What kind of things did they sing about?
- b) How often do you sing thanksgiving and praise to the Lord?
- c) Should singing and giving thanks be a regular part of your life?

Looking Ahead | Judges 6:1-40: Gideon: Courage in Fearful Times

Monday (v. 1-6) – As we saw last week, the Israelites were harshly oppressed by Jabin and his armies under the command of Sisera. In Deborah and Barak’s song they say that village life was suffering (v. 5:7) and that travel on the main roads has ceased (v. 5:6). How are the social conditions in Israel described in this passage? Before we shake our heads at the Children of Israel and say something like, “Why don’t they get it? Serving the Lord equals peace; disobedience equals hard times,” let’s consider how easy it might be for us to miss what God is doing in our world today. When do people tend to look to God, when times are easy or when times are hard? I think the answer is found in the last part of verse 6.

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Num. 34-36; Lk. 1:57-80

Tuesday (v. 7-10) – The Children of Israel cried out to the Lord and He sent them an answer. God sent His unnamed prophet to remind the people of why they were suffering: their own disobedience. Now this might seem a bit harsh, but keep in mind that God is already working to bring deliverance to Israel. Why might God have wanted to remind the people of why they were suffering before He provided deliverance? Through each cycle of sin and deliverance God wants His people to learn something. What did God want them (and us) to learn in these verses?

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 1-2; Lk. 2:1-24

Wednesday (v. 11-16) – Notice that “Angel of the Lord” has a capital A, which means that this is God Himself appearing to Gideon (possibly a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ). This is readily affirmed as accurate by the context of the passage. There is a very interesting dynamic going on in this exchange: Gideon is fearful (hiding while treading out grain) but the Lord is challenging him to take courage. Gideon is doubtful about his own abilities but God is challenging him to put his trust in the Lord not in himself. Gideon is even doubtful about God and the stories he has heard about God’s deliverance, but God Himself is standing right there! Can you identify with Gideon? When you are fearful, anxious or doubting, what is the real issue God wants you to see?

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 3-4; Lk. 2:25-52

Thursday (v. 17-24) – Gideon, still doubting, asks for a sign (he will do this again later in the more famous fleece incident). How does God respond to Gideon’s request? Why do you think God allowed Gideon to see who He really was? What did God want Gideon to understand or believe (v. 23)? What was the resulting effect for Gideon (v. 24)?

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 5-7; Lk. 3

Friday (v. 25-32) – Gideon’s first test of obedience | God had just shown Himself to Gideon and told Gideon to take peace (I imagine this was a huge boost to Gideon’s faith and/or courage). Now God was calling Gideon to action; this would be his first test of faith. How did Gideon do on the test (v. 27)? Now let’s not judge Gideon too harshly; this was not an easy test and he did do what God had commanded him. Isn’t it interesting how God used Gideon’s faithfulness in the life of his father (v. 30-31)? Gideon’s father owned this Baal altar and “wooden image,” yet he was the one who defended his son and rejected the Baal worshipers. How might your obedience or faithfulness be used of God in the life of someone who doesn’t know Him?

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 8-10; Lk. 4:1-30

Saturday (v. 33-40) – Gideon’s test and God’s gracious answer | Here we have Gideon’s famous “fleece incident.” Have you ever heard a Christian say, “I am using (such and such) as a fleece”? Meaning that they are testing God’s will by some circumstance. Do you think God put this account in here to tell us that it is okay to test Him? Let’s ask a few questions about this incident: 1) What motivated Gideon to test God (God had already appeared to Gideon)? Fear motivated this test! 2) Should fear motivate Christians (God had already told Gideon to take peace)? No! Fear should not be a motivation for Christians; “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). 3) Why do people usually want to test God’s will today? Usually to avoid painful circumstances. 4) Has God guaranteed us a pain-free life? No; a life of peace and joy, but not necessarily a pain-free life. I think this account is less about God approving of us testing Him than it is about His grace, mercy and patience! God had already shown Himself to Gideon and spoken to Gideon; Gideon had already heard or read the word of God; yet God was gracious and allowed Gideon to test Him. What an awesome God we serve!

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 11-13; Lk. 4:31-44

Sunday

▪ Daily Bible Reading: Duet. 14-16; Lk. 5:1-16