

BLESSINGS THAT FOLLOW WILLING SERVICE

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Judges 5:1-31

LESSON 191 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel" (Judges 5:3).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Judges 5:1-31

¹ Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

² Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

³ Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

⁴ LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

⁵ The mountains melted from before the LORD, *even* that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

⁶ In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

⁷ *The inhabitants of the villages* ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

⁸ They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

⁹ My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

¹⁰ Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

¹¹ *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places of

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

I The Preamble to Deborah and Barak's Song

- 1 Praise is given to God for His deliverance, Judges 5:1-3
- 2 God's glory, majesty, and power, manifested in Israel's behalf, is recounted, Judges 5:4, 5;

Deuteronomy 33:2

² And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them.

Psalms 68:7-8

⁷ O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:
⁸ The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Habakkuk 3:3-4

³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

⁴ And *his* brightness was as the light; he had horns *coming* out of his hand: and there *was* the hiding of his power.

- 3 Israel's shameful condition, because of idolatry, is stated, Judges 5:6-8

- 4 Commendation is given the faithful governors of Israel, Judges 5:9
- 5 Israel's future of peace, righteousness, and just government is revealed — speaking, perhaps, also of the Millennium, Judges 5:10, 11;

Isaiah 2:1-4

¹ The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2:10-21

¹⁰ Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹² For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every

drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

¹² Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

¹³ Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

¹⁴ Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

¹⁵ And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

¹⁶ Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

¹⁷ Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

¹⁸ Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

¹⁹ The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

²⁰ 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

one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: ¹³ And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

¹⁴ And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up,

¹⁵ And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

¹⁶ And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

¹⁷ And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹⁸ And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

¹⁹ And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

²⁰ In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

²¹ To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

II Commendation for Willing Service; Denunciation for Laxity

- 1 The call to leadership and responsibility is repeated, Judges 5:12, 13
- 2 Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh (Machir), Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali are commended for willing service, Judges 5:14, 15, 18
- 3 Reuben, Gad (Gilead), Dan, and Asher are denounced for their self-interest and laxity, Judges 5:15-17;

Genesis 49:3-4

³ Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

⁴ Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch.

- 4 The people of Meroz are cursed by God for their apathy and indolence, Judges 5:23

III The Battle's Course and Outcome

- 1 Israel is told that the tribes who responded did so willingly, without thought of financial gain, Judges 5:19
- 2 They are also reminded that God fought and won the battle for them, Judges 5:20-22;

Judges 4:9

⁹ And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Judges 4:14-15

¹⁴ And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

¹⁵ And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and

Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

²² Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

²³ Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

²⁴ Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

²⁵ He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

²⁶ She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

²⁷ At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

²⁸ The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

²⁹ Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

³⁰ Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey; to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?

³¹ So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

fled away on his feet.

Judges 4:23

²³ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

3 Jael's faithfulness to God's cause, in spite of a league with the ungodly, is commended, Judges 5:24-27;

Judges 4:11-12

¹¹ Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, *which is* by Kadesh.

¹² And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

Judges 4:17-21

¹⁷ Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet 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 went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

²⁰ Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

²¹ Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

4 The carnal security of the ungodly, and its futility, is brought to Israel's attention, Judges 5:28-30

5 A stirring benediction is given, Judges 5:31;

Hebrews 11:32-34

³² 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:

³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Hebrews 11:39

³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

NOTES:

The Song of Praise

Practically the whole of Judges 5 is devoted to the song of Deborah and Barak, sung after their battle with the Canaanite army had ended. Its context reveals some deep and heart-searching truths, excellent for personal application today, even though the song was inspired and sung in a period more than 3,000 years ago.

When comparing this song with others contained in the Bible, one can see a striking similarity in their first parts, or opening hymns of praise. The Song of Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea (**Exodus 15:1-27**) ¹ Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. ² The LORD is

my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he *is* my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. ³The LORD *is* a man of war: the LORD *is* his name. ⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. ⁵The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. ⁶Thy right hand, O LORD, *is* become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. ⁷And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, *which* consumed them as stubble. ⁸And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, *and* the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. ¹⁰Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders? ¹²Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. ¹³Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people *which* thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided *them* in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. ¹⁴The people shall hear, *and* be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. ¹⁵Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. ¹⁶Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be *as* still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, *which* thou hast purchased. ¹⁷Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, *in* the place, O LORD, *which* thou hast made for thee to dwell in, *in* the Sanctuary, O Lord, *which* thy hands have established. ¹⁸The LORD shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁹For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea. ²⁰And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. ²²So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. ²³And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. ²⁴And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? ²⁵And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, ²⁶And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee. ²⁷And they came to Elim, where *were* twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters), as well as the final song at the end of his life (Deuteronomy 32:1-43), opens with an ascription of praise to God and a testimony of His greatness. The thanksgiving of Hannah (**1 Samuel 2:1-10**) ¹And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. ²*There is* none holy as the LORD: for *there is* none beside thee: neither *is there* any rock like our God. ³Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD *is* a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. ⁴The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. ⁵*They that were* full have hired out themselves for bread; and *they that were* hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children *is* waxed feeble. ⁶The LORD killeth, and maketh

alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. ⁷ The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. ⁸ He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. ⁹ He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. ¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed), many of the Psalms, Isaiah's hymn of thanksgiving (**Isaiah 12:1-6** ¹ And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. ² Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. ³ Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. ⁴ And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth. ⁶ Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee), the Magnificat of Mary, the mother of Jesus (**Luke 1:46-55** ⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. ⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. ⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. ⁵⁴ He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy; ⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.), the prophecy of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (**Luke 1:67-79** ⁶⁷ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸ Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹ And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; ⁷⁰ As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³ The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴ That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. ⁷⁶ And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, ⁷⁹ To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.), and the songs of the redeemed around the Throne of God (**Revelation 5:9-14** ⁹ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. ¹¹ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; ¹² Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. ¹³ And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory,

and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ¹⁴ And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever. **Revelation 7:12-17** ¹² Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. ¹³ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ¹⁴ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. **Revelation 15:3-4** ³ And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. ⁴ Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.) all open with ascriptions of greatness to God and praise to the Almighty. The prayer given by Jesus as a model prayer, known as the Lord's Prayer, also opens in the same manner (**Matthew 6:9-13** ⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.). Therefore, the first lesson to learn from this song of Deborah is the necessity of coming to God in the proper attitude — in worship and praise.

God's Deliverances

The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai was a high point in the history of the Israelites. It was there that God made a Covenant with Israel — a specific Covenant — different from the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it was there that the Israelites drew back from the responsibilities given them under that Covenant. God, in His glory and power, was manifested to them on Mount Sinai, as they heard His voice declaring unto them His commandments and covenant terms. And every event in their national history, as well as the personal, that demonstrated the interposition of the divine Hand in their behalf, reminded them again of Sinai and of the glory and power that they saw manifested there.

The Lord fought for Israel against the armies of Jabin, king of Canaan. It was not the military might of the Israelites that won the battle, for among 40,000 Israelites there was not found one shield or spear. We have seen in our former lesson that they had been terribly oppressed during the two past decades. But when they cried to God for help He heard them and delivered them.

We are not told exactly what means God used to rout and destroy the Canaanites, other than that the river swept many of them away to their death and that the very heavens allied with the forces of nature against the heathen. It was by the hand of God that victory was given, because Israel obeyed the commandments of God and willingly gave themselves to the cause of God. Because of this victory, Deborah was filled with

the joy and ecstasy that naturally comes with victory.

It was the same God who spoke on Mount Sinai who fought against Sisera and the armies of Canaan. It was the same God who piled the waters of the Red Sea and Jordan, allowing the Children of Israel to walk over on dry ground. It was the same God who sent quail for them to eat, and who provided manna, also, six days out of every seven, for a period of four decades. It was the same God who brought water out of the flinty rock; who confounded their enemies, who sent hornets to deliver them; who shielded them in the daytime from the heat of the desert sun by the pillar of cloud; and who led them in the night by the pillar of fire. It was the same God who appeared over the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies; who opened the ground and swallowed up the rebels against His holy commandments; who threw down the walls of Jericho; and who sent plagues upon the Egyptians and yet delivered Israel from the devastating effect of the plagues.

It is a good thing to look back over the deliverances that God has given us from trouble, sin, and evil. It is good to do this in times of adversity. It is better to do it when our spirits are flushed with the excitement of God-given victory. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High" (Psalm 92:1).

The Call, with the Commendations and Denunciations

Our last lesson showed us the characters of Deborah and Barak, as demonstrated to us in their answer to God's call and their faithfulness to Him. But, unfortunately, all the Israelites were not like these two servants of God.

Only ten of the tribes were mentioned in the lines of this song. Simeon and Judah are not included. Perhaps the great distance between Simeon and Judah's territory and the scene of the battle is the reason they were not present to fight with the rest of Israel. The half-tribe of Manasseh, who had settled east of Jordan, was included in the denunciation given to Gilead, as the term "Gilead" includes that part of the land occupied by these people.

Barak assembled his army of 10,000 from the area near his home, which was the territory occupied by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. They marched southward to Mount Tabor and shortly afterward engaged the enemy, because the Canaanites had been advised by Heber, with whom Jabin had previously made peace, that the Israelites were assembling at the mountain. The battle took place in the territory occupied by Issachar and the half-tribe of Manasseh that had crossed Jordan to take up their rightful inheritance in Canaan itself. Ephraim and Benjamin were settled south of this battle area and joined in the battle, probably by coming up to the rear of the action.

The two and a half tribes east of the Jordan were not too remote from the scene of action to take part. Even if they did reason that they were too far away their remoteness was of their own choosing. Since they had chosen the area by their own free will they should have been willing to suffer the temporary inconvenience of joining Israel in this decisive battle for the welfare of the whole nation. If their hearts had been right with God they would have done so without question or argument.

But Reuben stayed in the sheepfolds, being more interested in their own personal welfare than in the cause of God. They were not setting their affections on things above, but were concerned with the temporal issues of this life. The people of Gad, also, stayed beyond Jordan, with the half-tribe of Manasseh that failed to go all the way into the Promised Land years before, demonstrating

again the laxity of their zeal for God's work.

Asher stayed on the seashore — as far from the scene of the battle as they could go and still remain in their own territory. They stayed in their own defenses, or breaches. They were guilty not only of neglect to the call of God but also of a lack of concern in the welfare of their brethren. Little they cared if the other tribes were subjugated and destroyed. It was sufficient, they thought, for them to man their own defenses and stay in their own territory. How miserably they missed the spirit of the call that God had given all Israel, when He wanted them to be messengers of the Covenant to the people of the entire world, to bring the news of the peace, safety, and salvation, as well as the other covenant-blessings, to them all! The Asherites were guilty not only of failure in filling these Covenant responsibilities to the world of Gentiles, but were guilty of malicious neglect and deliberate unconcern for their own people -- the chosen nation of Israel! Such is the condition that follows when an individual begins to lay up treasures on earth instead of in Heaven

The people of Dan, also, were self-centered. They stayed in their ships, carrying on their commerce with the outside world. Their attitude was extremely shortsighted; for what value would their seaport towns and commerce be without a friendly hinterland behind them? If the rest of the Israelites were wiped out, what mercy and fair trade could the Danites expect from the oppressing conquerors? They were typical of many who remain unconcerned about the Lord's coming, filling their days with activities to please themselves, to provide comforts and wealth for their declining years, and to serve the desires of their own hearts.

But the sternest denunciations of all were given to the inhabitants of Meroz. The angel of the Lord pronounced a curse upon them, because they allowed an opportunity for service to go by without taking advantage of it. They were not guilty of active rebellion against the Israelites. It is not recorded that the reason for their neglect was that they were completely occupied with their own personal activities, as were the people of Reuben, Asher, and Dan. The inhabitants of Meroz simply did nothing; and the sin of doing nothing brought upon them a denunciation that was more severe than was given to any of the others.

Was Meroz in a vital position and invaluable to the scheme of the battle, without whose help the battle would be lost? No, for God can carry His plans through to a successful conclusion without any of us, individually. None of us are indispensable. We do not know if the people of Meroz were near to the scene of battle, or on one of the escape routes open to the enemy, and because of that might have been able to do an important service to the rest of Israel. What we do know is that they were situated in a place where they could have done service for God, but they did not do it. They did nothing!

The curse against Meroz was carried out so completely and so thoroughly that there is neither memory remaining of its people nor ruins left of its location. It has been completely destroyed. The striking lesson for us in this destruction is the fact that it was cursed because its people did nothing; which reminds one of the words of the Lord: "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 12:47).

The blessing of God came especially upon the six tribes who fought valiantly and faithfully against the enemy. They came and fought, and took no gain of money for themselves as compensation for the time they had lost from their own occupations. "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29, 30). It is easy to see what rewards are accruing to those who faithfully serve the cause of God and are obedient to His every command. They "jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." But they earned an eternal reward for doing so!

The standards and requirements for us in this New Testament dispensation are certainly no less than those for Israel. Two of God's fearless messengers in New Testament days were referred to in a similar manner. The sacred writer said they were "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26). Jesus Himself gave us a very exacting standard, when He said: "If any man come to me, and hate [love less] not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33).

There is an incomparable reward in store for all who take up their cross to follow Jesus, who jeopardize their lives in the "high places of the field," who hazard their lives for His name. And there is a stern denunciation, as well as an eternal loss, for those who fail to do it and "remain in ships," who content themselves in the "sheepfolds" of earthly responsibilities, who remain in their own selfish defenses and fail to fulfill their covenant obligations, or who never attempt to rise to the help of the Lord — and, instead, do nothing!

QUESTIONS

- 1 With what attitude does the song of Deborah and Barak open?
- 2 Name some other famous songs of Scripture and relate the background of each one.
- 3 In what condition was Israel at the time Deborah was called as a prophetess?
- 4 Why were the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali commended?
- 5 Why were the tribes of Gad and Reuben denounced?
- 6 Quote a New Testament verse that shows what our attitude is to be toward the work of the Lord.
- 7 Why were the inhabitants of the city of Meroz cursed?
- 8 How completely has this curse been carried out?
- 9 It can be said that the mother of Sisera felt a certain security about the safety of her son. What spiritual parallel is there in this?
- 10 Jael, the wife of Heber, was given a sublime blessing. Name another woman who received a similar blessing.