

Judges Chapter 5

Verses 1-31

In a manner similar to Moses and Miriam (Exodus chapter 15), “sang Deborah and Barak” of God’s triumph over His enemies (4:4).

Their lyrics outline God’s victory over Israel’s enemies in graphic detail, giving Him all the glory.

Judges 5:1 "Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,"

“Sang ... on that day”:

The song (verses 1-31), was in tribute to God for victory (in Judges 4:13-25).

Various songs praise God for His help, e.g., Moses’ (Exodus chapter 15), David’s (2 Sam. 23:1-7) and the Lamb’s (Rev. 15:3-4).

This chapter gives an expanded poetic account of the prose narrative (in chapter 4).

Many scholars believe that Deborah penned this 5th chapter of Judges.

We do know that she composed the song.

Perhaps she sang it, and someone else penned it.

We really should not be concerned with the penman, regardless of who it was, because God is the author of the Bible.

This song is because of the victory over Jabin, Sisera, and all their people.

Barak enters in the singing because he was the leader of the troops.

Judges 5:2 "Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves."

“For the avenging of Israel” is a difficult phrase in the Hebrew text.

It may anticipate the thought in the parallel line “when the people willingly offered themselves”, and be translated “when volunteers enlisted willingly”.

A merciful God always has His ear tuned to the needs of those who willingly yield themselves to Him.

Notice her first praise is to the LORD.

It was the LORD who avenged Israel in this battle.

The battle was won even before the troops took the field.

God had given them into their hands.

The second praise goes to the people who still had enough faith in the LORD to go to battle.

They were not forced to go, they went willingly.

Judges 5:3 "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."

The prophetess begins her song with summoning the attention of the neighboring kings and princes.

That they might understand and lay to heart what God had done for Israel.

And learn from thence not to oppress them.

Lest the same vengeance which had fallen upon Jabin and his people should be inflicted on them.

I, even "I, will sing unto the LORD":

She declares that Jehovah should be the object of her praise.

Who, she would have the world to know, was superior to all in power, and would defend his people while they depended on him alone.

Deborah calls the kings and princes to hear her song of praise to the LORD.

Her praise is to the LORD God of Israel.

Deborah is totally aware of who actually won the war.

Verses 4-5

These verses recall the LORD's triumphant march from "Sinai" to the Jordan River (compare Deut. 33:1-2a; 2 Sam. 22:8; Psalms 18:7; 68:8; 144:5-6; Hab. 3:3, 10).

Judges 5:4 "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."

Here properly begins the song, what goes before being but a preface to it.

And it begins with an apostrophe to the LORD, taking notice of some ancient appearances of God for his people.

Which were always matters of praise and thankfulness.

And now they are taken notice of here, because of some likeness between them and what God had now wrought.

And this passage refers either to the giving of the law on Sinai, as the Targum and Jarchi (see Deut. 33:2).

Or rather, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and others, to the LORD's going before Israel, after they had encompassed the land of Edom.

And marched from thence towards the land of Canaan, when they fought with Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites, and conquered them.

Which struck terror into all the nations round about them, and the prophecies of Moses in his song began to be fulfilled (Exodus 15:14).

And which dread and terror are expressed in the following figurative phrases.

"The earth trembled":

And like the figure Homer uses at the approach of Neptune, whom he calls the shaker of the earth, perhaps borrowed from there.

It may design the inhabitants of it, the Amorites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, Canaanites, and others.

"And the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water":

Which, as it may literally refer to the storm and tempest of rain that might be then as now (see Judges 4:15).

So may figuratively express the panic great personages, comparable to the heavens and the clouds in them were thrown into, when their hearts melted like water.

Or were like clouds dissolved into it.

Judges 5:5 "The mountains melted from before the LORD, [even] that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel."

The inhabitants of them, through fear, the LORD going before Israel in a pillar of cloud and fire.

And delivering mighty kings and their kingdoms into their hand.

"Even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel":

Or, "as that Sinai", the note of similitude being wanting.

And the sense is, the mountains melted, just as the famous mountain Sinai in a literal sense did, when it trembled and quaked at the presence of God on it":

The tokens of it, the fire and smoke, thunders, lightning's, and tempests that were seen and heard":

And which being observed, would call to mind the benefit Israel then received.

Which required praise and thankfulness, as well as would serve to express the awe and reverence of God due unto him.

Deborah is praising the LORD for bringing Israel out of Egypt.

She reminds them that the presence of the LORD on Mount Sinai made it appear to be on fire.

When God spoke to them from the mountain, the whole mountain quaked.

The mountains, the skies, the rain, in fact all of nature is at God's command.

Judges 5:6 "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways."

Of whom (see Judges 3:31).

Who succeeded Ehud as a judge, but lived not long, and did not do much.

At least wrought not a perfect deliverance of the children of Israel.

But during his time till now, quite through the twenty years of Jabin's oppression, things were as they are after described.

"In the days of Jael":

The wife of Heber the Kenite, spoken of in the preceding chapter (Judges 4:17).

Who appears to be a woman of masculine spirit, and endeavored to do what good she could for Israel, though not a judge among them, as Jarchi suggests.

And who before this affair of Sisera had signalized herself by some deeds of hers in favor of Israel, and against their enemies.

Yet far from putting a stop to the outrages committed.

For in the times of both these persons:

"The highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways":

The public roads were so infested with thieves and robbers, who stopped all they met with.

And robbed them of what they had, that travelers and merchants with their carriages were obliged either to quit their employments or not travel at all.

Or, if they did travel, were obliged to go in private roads, and roundabout ways, to keep clear of those bandits the highways and public roads abounded with.

This is speaking of Shamgar the judge, who killed 600 Philistines with the ox goad.

There were terrible times in the land before Deborah became judge.

The children of Israel were greatly oppressed. There was danger on the roads.

Judges 5:7 "[The inhabitants of] the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."

Deborah's reference to herself as "a mother in Israel" could mean simply that she was a woman of influence in the nation; it does not necessarily mean that she bore children.

Scripture does not record whether she and her husband, Lapidoth, had children, but Deborah is lauded for her courage and her commitment to God.

This is saying there was no one who came forth to lead the people against their oppressors, until God gave the message to Deborah to call Barak to battle.

She was a mother to them in that she judged them.

Judges 5:8 "They chose new gods; then [was] war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?"

They did not only submit to idolatry when they were forced to it by tyrants, but they freely chose new gods.

New to them, and unknown to their fathers, and new in comparison of the true and everlasting God of Israel, being but upstarts, and of yesterday.

"In the gates":

I.e. in their walled cities, which have gates and bars.

Gates are often put for cities (as Gen. 22:17; Deut. 17:2; Obad. 1:11).

Then their strongest holds fell into the hands of their enemies.

"Was there":

I.e. there was not.

The meaning is not that all the Israelites had no arms, for here is mentioned made only of shields or spears.

So they might have swords, bows, and arrows to offend their enemies.

But either that they had but few arms among them, being many thousands of them disarmed by the Canaanites.

Or that they generally neglected the use of arms, as being utterly dispirited, and without all hope of recovering their lost liberty.

And being forced into other employments for subsistence.

"Shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?"

They had no heart to resist their enemies.

Israel had sinned greatly in turning from the One True God to the false gods of Canaan.

It was chastisement from God that brought the enemy against them.

They made no resistance, because they knew it was from God.

Judges 5:9 "My heart [is] toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD."

The fact that even in this extremity Israel had men (literally, law-givers) who were willing to brave any danger to rescue their people fills Deborah with gratitude to them and to God.

To go along with them, and march at the head of them, to fight Sisera and his army.

Thereby setting a good example, and filling the people with boldness for battle.

And inspiring them with courage and fearlessness; when they saw their chiefs and the heads of them exposing their lives with them in defense of their country, and the rights of it.

"Bless ye the LORD":

For giving them such spirits, to engage so willingly in this service, and for giving them success in it.

This is speaking of those who came forth willingly to fight with Barak against Sisera.

This is blessing the LORD and the people who fought.

Verses 10-11

All the people of Israel, from the highest to the lowest, were to tell of God's mighty deeds and "righteous acts" on their behalf.

Judges 5:10 "Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way."

"White asses":

Because of this unusual color, they were a prize of kings and the rich.

The nobles rode on white asses, so this is to them.

Judges 5:11 "[They that are delivered] from the noise of archers in the places of 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."

"In the places of drawing water":

The wells were at a little distance from towns in the east away from the battles and often places for pleasant reflection.

The "Gates", the scene of legal and business activity, would also be the logical places for a muster of local troops (see the note on Ruth 4:1).

This is saying they can now draw water from the well without worrying about getting shot with an arrow.

They need to remember and praise God.

It is good to reflect on the miracles that God has done.

It encourages faith to believe for new miracles.

God is with his people if they will just stay faithful to him.

Judges 5:12 "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

Either perceiving some drowsiness and negligence in her spirits, while she was delivering this song, and therefore arouses herself to attend to this service with more enthusiasm and zeal.

Or rather finding herself more impressed with a sense of the great and good things the LORD had done for Israel, she calls upon her soul to exert all its powers in celebrating the praises of the LORD.

And therefore repeats the word "awake" as often as she does.

"Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam":

For though the whole army of Sisera was destroyed, and that not a man was left (Judges 4:16).

Yet as Barak pursued to Harosheth of the Gentiles, many there and in other places which fell into his hands that belonged to Jabin might be taken captive by him.

And though the Canaanites were to be slain, yet they might first be led captive in triumph.

And besides, there might be some of other nations that were taken by him in this war (see Psalm 68:18).

Deborah is remembering the wake-up call from God to her here. God gave her the charge for herself and for Barak.

She must sing praises of the outcome.

She encourages Barak to stop sitting and come and fight for the LORD. She told him of the victory God had promised.

Judges 5:13 "Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty."

The people of Israel that remained, who had been under the yoke of Jabin king of Canaan, under which many of the Israelites very probably died.

But now the few non-caring and miserable that remained were raised to a high estate, and made to have dominion over the nobles among the people.

That is, over the Canaanites' nobility, that were among the people under Jabin.

But he being conquered by the Israelites, his people and even his nobles became subject to them. And this was the LORD's doing, as the following words show.

"The LORD made me have dominion over the mighty":

That is, Deborah, to whom God gave dominion either over the mighty ones of Israel, being raised up to be their judge.

Or over the mighty Canaanites, she having a concern in the conquest of them and triumph over them, through her direction, advice, command, and presence, though a woman.

This mighty army of Jabin is defeated and those left are ruled by Barak.

Deborah herself was judge of all Israel, and that included their captives.

Verses 14-18

These verses tell of the roll call and battle assignments of the various participating tribes, as well as the report concerning the tribes that did not respond to Deborah's call to arms.

Judges 5:14 "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."

"Root of them against Amalek":

Ephraim as a tribe took the central hill area, which the Amalekites had held with deep roots.

Machir was a son of Manasseh.

We see that Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, and those of Zebulun came forth.

Judges 5:15 "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."

"Were with Deborah":

I.e. ready to assist her.

"Even Issachar":

Hebrew: "And Issachar".

I.e. the tribe or people of Issachar.

Following the counsel and example of their princes, and being now at their commandments, as they were afterwards upon another occasion (1 Chron. 12:32).

"And also Barak":

Or, even as Barak.

I.e. they were as hearty and valiant as Barak their general.

And as he marched on foot here and (Judges 4:10), against their enemies' horses and chariots, and that;

"Into the valley":

Where the main use of horses and chariots lies.

So did they with no less courage and resolution.

"The divisions":

Or separations.

Whereby they were divided or separated, not so much one from another in their thoughts, counsels, and carriage in this war, (for they seem to be all too well agreed in abiding at home with their sheep, as it follows).

But as all from their brethren, from whom they were divided no less in their designs and affections, than in their situation by the river Jordan.

And they would not join their interests and forces with them in this common cause.

"Great thoughts":

Or great searchings' (as it is Judges 5:16).

Great and sad thoughts, and debates, and perplexities of mind among the Israelites, to see themselves deserted by so great and potent a tribe as Reuben was.

We remember the enemy had 900 chariots of iron and the men of Israel were on foot.

This battle took place on the land of Reuben.

Verses 16-18

Like the tribes of Israel, today's believers are tempted to let the comforts of home ("Reuben, Gilead, Asher"), or the cares of life ("Dan"), keep them from engaging in God's mission.

See also 5:23, where the people of Meroz did not enlist in the LORD's service.

In contrast, "Zebulun" and "Naphtali" model the willingness to risk everything, including one's life, to pursue God's purposes in the world.

Judges 5:16 "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben [there were] great searchings of heart."

Why was thou so unworthy and cowardly?

So void of all zeal for God, and compassion towards thy brethren.

And care for the recovery of thy own liberties and privileges, that thou wouldst not engage thyself in so just, so necessary, and so noble a cause?

But did prefer the care of thy sheep, and thy own present case and safety, before this generous undertaking?

Reuben thought neutrality their wisest course, being very rich in cattle (Num. 32:1).

They were loath to run the hazard of so great a loss by taking up arms against so potent an enemy as Jabin was.

And the bleatings of their sheep were so loud in their ears, that they could not hear the call of Deborah and Barak to this expedition.

It seemed, the Reubenites had their flocks grazing here.

They did not know whether to join their brother Israelites, or to remain tending the sheep.

God had not really called them to this battle.

Judges 5:17 "Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches."

"Why did Dan remain in ships":

Danites migrated from their territory to Laish north of the Lake of Chinneroth (sea of Galilee) before the Israelite triumph of (Judges Chapter 4), though details of it are not given until (Judges Chapter 18).

They became involved with Phoenicians of the northwest in ship commerce (compare Joppa as a coastal city Joshua 19:46).

As with some other tribes, they failed to make the trek to assist in the battle of (See Judges Chapter 4).

This is just telling where the other tribes were and what they were doing.

They had not sinned, because God had not called them to this battle.

The tribe of Dan had the inheritance which included the famous harbor of Joppa.

The breaches were speaking of the bays where the ships for fishing were kept away from the sea.

Judges 5:18 "Zebulun and Naphtali [were] a people [that] jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

These two tribes were chiefly concerned in this war.

Out of them were the 10,000 men that followed Barak, who willingly offered themselves, and were the most active and vigorous.

"That jeoparded their lives unto the death":

Exposed their selves to the utmost danger, fearless of death itself.

Or reproached their lives; were careless of their lives and valued them not; they were not dear to them.

But were ready to part with them freely, in the cause of liberty in which they were engaged.

"In the high places of the field":

On the top of Mount Tabor, where they were mustered, and from whence they beheld the vast host of Sisera surrounding them.

And yet, with an undaunted bravery and courage, descended the hill to fight with them.

The ten thousand fighting men had come from Naphtali and Zebulun.

They had gone to battle, not thinking that they might die for the cause.

Had they lost, they would have all died.

Verses 19-21

The Canaanites' military superiority in iron chariots proved to be their greatest liability.

Soggy ground and a well-timed cloudburst immobilized Sisera's forces.

The thunderstorm forms part of God's battle weaponry (compare Psalms 18:7-15; 77:16-18; 144:4-6; Hab. 3:10-11).

The mention of the "stars" and "river" suggests in poetic terms that the forces of nature fought on God's side.

The Canaanite deities that supposedly controlled those forces withered in the face of God's power.

Judges 5:19 "The kings came [and] fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money."

Compare (Joshua 11:1).

Jabin did not stand alone.

"In Taanach":

See (Judges 1:27).

The word means "sandy soil."

"By the waters of Megiddo":

The streams of the Kishon, or the swollen waves of the river itself.

There is an abundant spring at Lejjûn, the ancient Megiddo, which in rainy seasons rapidly turns the plain into a morass.

"They took no gain of money":

Literally, silver they did not take.

They had doubtless hoped, if not for much actual spoil, at least for ransom from the numerous captives which they expected to win.

Or from the gain derived by selling them into slavery.

The fact that they took no gain of money is perhaps because these Canaanites died in this battle.

It perhaps was mentioned because that was what they went to war for.

They plundered every area where they fought.

This battle was near Megiddo.

The tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun went to battle, because God had instructed them to.

Judges 5:20 "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

"Stars ... fought":

A poetic way to say that God used these heavenly bodies to help Israel.

They are bodies representing and synonymous with the heavens, the sky from which He sent a powerful storm and flood (compare "torrent" of the Kishon River, verse 21), that swept Syrians from their chariots.

God also hid the stars by clouds, increasing Syrian ineffectiveness.

God sent a storm that fought against Sisera and his men.

This could be the discomfiture spoken of in a previous verse.

All of nature was against Sisera.

Judges 5:21 "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."

Though not great in itself, and therefore fordable, was now much swelled and increased by the foregoing storm and rain, as Josephus affirms.

And therefore drowned those who being pursued by the hand of God, and by the Israelites, were forced into it.

And thought to pass over it, as they did before.

"That ancient river":

So called, either, first, in opposition to those rivers which are of a later date, being made by the hand and art of man.

Or secondly, because it was a river anciently famous for some remarkable exploits, for which it was celebrated by the ancient poets or writers, though not here mentioned.

"Thou hast trodden down strength":

I.e. thou, O Deborah, though but a weak woman, hast, by God's assistance and blessing upon thy counsels and prayers, subdued a potent enemy.

Such apostrophes and abrupt speeches are frequent in poetical scriptures.

From the fact that the river rose and drowned them, we can assume there was a torrential storm. God was fighting for the children of Israel.

Judges 5:22 "Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones."

Either through the force of the waters of the river, where they pranced and plunged, and could have no standing.

Or through the swift haste they made to run away, striking the earth so quick, and with such force and vehemence, that their hoofs were broken thereby, especially on stony ground, and so their speed retarded.

"The prancings of their mighty ones":

Either their riders, princes, and great personages, who made them prance, leap, and run with great speed and force.

Or horses strong and mighty, being such as were selected for this purpose, and trained to war.

The storm frightened the horses so badly that they broke their hoofs prancing up and down.

With 900 chariots in this small area, it would have been difficult for them to move very far.

Judges 5:23 "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."

The inhabitants of Meroz (a village 12 miles from Samaria), hung back and gave no help in the day of battle. Although it was Yahweh who called them.

Hence, the curse pronounced by the Angel of the LORD.

The word "Meroz" means refuge.

There is very little known of this place which proves that God indeed, did curse them.

Those who are not for the LORD, are against Him.

They did not help the LORD in the battle against the extremely large enemy of the Canaanites lead by Sisera.

Verses 24-27

Though this act was murder and a breach of honor, likely motivated by her desire for favor with the conquering Israelites, and though it was without regard for God on her part, God's overruling providence caused great blessing to flow from it.

Thus, the words of (verses 24-27), in the victory song.

Judges 5:24 "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

Under the same influence that Meroz was cursed, Jael is blessed.

The one for not helping Israel in a public way, the other for doing it in a private manner.

This blessing is pronounced, either in a way of prayer that it might be, or in a way of prophecy that it should be, and indeed in both.

"Blessed shall she be above women in the tent":

Above all women that dwell in tents.

This being a proper description of a woman, whose character it is to abide in her tent, dwell at home, and mind the business of her family.

And may have respect to the manly action she performed in her tent, equal, if not superior, to what was done in the field.

For "Kenites" (see the note on 1:16).

The fame of the battle went to her.

She was the opposite of Meroz (in verse 23).

She took a stand on the side of the LORD.

God blesses Jael for her bravery and loyalty to God.

Judges 5:25 "He asked water, [and] she gave [him] milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish."

That is, Sisera asked it of her, as the Targum expresses it, when he turned into her tent.

"She brought forth butter in a lordly dish":

Which signifies either the same, the milk with cream on it, for that is meant by butter.

Or having first taken off the cream, she gave him milk to drink, and then brought the cream in a dish for him to eat, and thereby the more inclined him to sleep.

She gave him the milk to make him sleepy.

She had served him in her very best dishes pretending to respect him.

Judges 5:26 "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."

Her left hand, as the Septuagint, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin versions express it.

And as appears by what follows: she having taken up a pin from her tent, with which it was fastened to the ground, she clapped it to the temples of Sisera.

"And her right hand to the workmen's hammer":

In her right hand she took a hammer, such as carpenters, and such like workmen, make use of.

Then she went about her business she had devised, and was determined upon.

Being under a divine impulse, and so had no fear or dread upon her.

"And with the hammer she smote Sisera":

Not that with the hammer she struck him on the head, and stunned him, but smote the nail she had put to his temples and drove it into them.

"She smote off his head":

After she had driven the nail through his temples, she took his sword perhaps and cut off his head.

As David cut off Goliath's, after he had slung a stone into his forehead.

Though as this seems needless, nor is there any hint of it in the history of this affair.

The meaning may only be, that she struck the nail through his head, as the Septuagint, or broke his head, as the Targum.

"When she had pierced and stricken through his temples":

That being the softest and the most tender part of the head, she drove the nail quite through them to the ground (Judges 4:21).

In the 4th chapter, it tells of her driving a spike through his temples and penning him to the floor.

Perhaps the statement about she smote of his head is not speaking explicitly, but speaking of the fact that the deadly wound was to his head.

Verses 25-27

A contradiction has been imagined between the poetic account here of Sisera's death and the prose account (compare 4:17-22).

The details are supplementary:

- (1) Jael receives the fleeing Sisera into her tent;
- (2) Sisera receives the offered refreshment and falls heavily asleep on the tent floor (compare 4:21);
- (3) As he sleeps, Jael drives the iron tent stake "through his temples" (verse 26; 4:21);
- (4) Subsequently, Sisera's pursuer, Barak, arrives and is shown the grisly deed (4:22).

Judges 5:27 "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."

Perhaps at her first approach to him, and attempt to drive the nail, or at the blow she gave, he rose up.

But she had done the business so effectually at the first stroke that he dropped at once, and laid down his head again.

"At her feet he bowed, he fell":

When she redoubled her blow.

"Where he bowed, there he fell down dead":

And struggled and stirred no more; thus ingloriously did this general of a vast army die.

This action is not otherwise to be justified, but by its being done through an impulse of the Spirit of God upon her, to take away the life of an implacable enemy of God's people.

The spike through his temples was fatal.

He was at her feet, dead.

Judges 5:28 "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?"

Which perhaps looked towards the high road, in which she expected Sisera to return in his chariot with his victorious army.

And she was looking out for him, not through fear of any ill that had befallen him, or suspicion of misfortune, but through impatience to see him in triumph return, wreathed with laurels.

"And cried through the lattice":

Which is but another word for a window, which was not of glass, that being of a later invention, but made in lattice form, in a sort of network, full of little holes to let in air and light, and look out at.

Here she stood and cried with a very loud uneasy tone.

The word signifies a sort of a groaning howling noise, discovering impatience and uneasiness.

And so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions render it, "she howled"; saying in a whining way.

"Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

She did not doubt at all of victory, and concluded it would soon be obtained.

And there would be very little trouble and difficulty in getting it, and therefore wondered his chariot was not in sight.

"Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?"

The nine hundred he took with him, of the return of which she made no doubt.

Only was uneasy until they appeared, that she might be delighted with the glory of the triumph.

The Targum is, "why are the runners hindered, who should bring me a letter of the victories?"

The mother of Sisera was not used to him losing in battle.

She was looking for the return of her boy, but he is dead in Jael's tent.

Judges 5:29 "Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,"

Every one in their turn endeavoring to comfort her and make her easy.

The Vulgate Latin version is, "one that was wiser than the rest of his wives".

But they seem rather to be her maids of honor, or ladies of her acquaintance, who were come to pay her a visit, and share in the pleasing sight they expected to have of Sisera.

"Yea, she returned answer to herself":

Before they could well give theirs, she soon recollected herself what might be, and must be, the occasion of this delay.

And this, according to the Targum, she made in her wisdom.

What her great wisdom quickly suggested to her was certainly the case, and with which she comforted and quieted herself.

This is speaking of the women around her not being able to answer why he has not returned, so she answers herself.

Judges 5:30 "Have they not sped? have they [not] divided the prey; to every man a damsel [or] two; to Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needlework, of divers colors of needlework on both sides, [meet] for the necks of [them that take] the spoil?"

Literally, are they not finding?

Are they not dividing the spoil?

Is not the wealth of their booty the cause of their delay?

Compare Exodus 15:9: "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil".

Or "found" the enemy, Barak and his army, or the spoil of them? No doubt they have.

"Have they not divided the prey?"

Doubtless they have, which being large, and the captives many, has taken up much of their time to look over, and make an equal and proper division of, and that most certainly is the cause of the delay.

"To every man a damsel or two?"

Or "a womb or two", using both unchaste and contemptuous language, and pleasing themselves with the virgins of Israel being abused by the common soldiers.

Which was too frequently the case with the Heathens at gaining a victory.

"To Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needlework, of divers colors of needlework on both sides":

Suits of clothes of different colors, such as were the works of the women of Sidon.

And those curiously interwoven or wrought with a needle, and that on both sides of the silk or material of which they were made.

And so such as were of great worth and esteem, and such it was expected, and with confidence and assurance of it, Sisera would bring with him, and make presents of to his mother and her ladies.

Or which he would have for his own wear and use, or both.

"Meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?"

The general of the army, and the chief men to whom the spoil was brought.

And then divided suitably to the rank and quality of every soldier.

Pliny says, the Phrygians first invented the art of needlework; hence the garments wrought, and those that made them, were called after their name.

But it is certain it was known by the ancient Hebrews and Canaanites (see Exodus 26:36).

His mother is imagining that he has won the battle and has taken a damsel or two captive.

He is delayed because they are dividing the prey.

The mother would never believe what happened to her son.

When they win a battle, they take all the animals and all the goods the defeated owned.

Judges 5:31 "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."

The intercessory prayer committed to God's will ends a song that has other aspects: blessing God (verse 2), praise (verse 3), affirming God's work in tribute (verses 4, 20), and voicing God's curse (verse 23).

Victory songs such as Deborah's are paralleled in the ancient Near Eastern literature of the same era.

This began with praise to the LORD, and ends the very same way.

The battle is won, there is peace and rest for forty years.

The battle of good and evil rages on for all ages.

Jesus won the victory for all believers at Calvary.

He defeated sin and Satan at the cross.

He defeated death, when He rose from the grave.

He has made life everlasting available to all who will have faith enough to receive it.

Judges Chapter 5 Questions

1. Who sang the victory song?
2. Many scholars believe that _____ penned the 5th chapter of Judges.
3. Who composed this song?
4. Why is it not important who penned it?
5. Who does she praise first?
6. Why were the people who went to battle, praised?
7. Who does Deborah call to hear her song?
8. In verse 4, Deborah is praising God for bringing Israel out of _____.
9. What did the presence of God appear like on Mount Sinai?
10. When did the mountain tremble?
11. The mountains, the skies, the rain, in fact, all of nature is at _____ command.
12. Who was Shamgar?
13. What was the condition of the Israelites, before Deborah began to judge?
14. What did Deborah call herself in verse 7?
15. What was Israel's sin?
16. What brought their enemies against Israel?
17. Who is verse 9 speaking of?
18. Who rode on white asses?
19. What could they do, now, that Deborah is judge that they could not do before (at the well)?

20. What good does remembering past miracles of God do?
21. In verse 12, what is Deborah remembering?
22. What had Deborah told Barak would happen, if he fought this battle for God?
23. The mighty army of _____ is defeated.
24. Machir was the son of _____.
25. Who fought with Deborah and Barak against Sisera?
26. The battle was fought near _____.
27. What is verse 20 speaking of?
28. The river of _____ swept them away.
29. What happened to the horses in the storm?
30. Why was Meroz cursed?
31. What woman was blessed for helping the LORD against Sisera?
32. Why did she give him milk, instead of water?
33. How did she kill Sisera?
34. Who looked out the window for her son's return?
35. Why did the mother think him to be delayed?
36. The battle of _____ and _____ rages for all ages.
37. When did Jesus defeat Satan and sin?
38. When did He defeat death?