

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

We will pick up at Judges 4:6, reviewing what was already covered. This review, this repetition is important. It will help you remember what was taught last week. It will help you focus on this week’s lesson.

Judges is a book on spirituality. It is a book on many topics: history, God’s faithfulness resulting in deliverance/salvation. It should have been used as a text for teaching Jewish teenagers about faith and the lack of faith. Each chapter deals with specific issues and how they were overcome by God in response to faith.

The emphasis is on the spiritual life – walking by faith. This has application for the Christian today, even if God’s implementation of spirituality today also includes indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit. If anything, it motivates us to focus on walking by faith.

Keep in mind as we read the rest of Judges chapter 4, that there is a physical world we see and a spiritual world we do not. Yet, the spiritual has great impact in the physical world.

Judges 4:6 Now she sent word and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has indeed commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

She sent *word* and summoned. “Word,” is in italics meaning it is not in the Hebrew text. She sent (as on a mission) and called (summoned). This summoning is the same word used of the calling of Samuel (1 Samuel chapter 3). Othniel and Ehud were commissioned. For Othniel, he was “raised up” or commissioned a deliverer in Judges 3:9. Ehud was “raised up” or commissioned a deliverer in Judges 3:15. Here, God uses an intermediary, Deborah, who was a prophetess to “call” Barak. His calling was an appointment, a commission. He responded in faith.

As a sidenote, there was a modern day Prime Minister of Israel (10th Prime Minister 1999-2001) named Ehud Barak. Ehud was a judge. Barak was a judge.

God ... commanded. The verb does mean to command. It is never used in the Old Testament in the basic stem, the Qal. It is always used in the piel, or intensive stem or the pual the passive intensive. So here, it is in the piel, intensive, from God. This is a command. The question is, will Barak obey and implement the command. The answer is of course, he does. And his name is in the list of faith heroes in Hebrews chapter 11.

Go. The Masoretic (Hebrew text) says “go.” But the LXX (Alexandrinus manuscript) says “to you.” The original Hebrew was written without vowel points. In the Hebrew, without vowel points, the consonants are the same for both words. So, the word was ambiguous except in a context. Here it is more than likely “go.” The ambiguity gives the word some emphasis. You might first read “to you.” This is apparently what the translators of the LXX did. Then you realize it is “to go.” The ambiguity emphasizes what is not there: You, Barak. This word is used for “walking.”

March. As this writer does often, when describing forces going into battle, he uses two words. The first word, go, is from the word to go, to walk. The word “march,” means march, deploy. It is interesting that it can also mean to draw out sound like blowing on the ram’s horn (Joshua

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

6:5). God is giving military orders to Barak via Deborah. He responded in faith. The word for faith is not found in the passage. But Barak receives instructions from God via Deborah. He obeyed the instructions.

God didn't appear to Barak as the Angel of the Lord. God tailored the command so that he would obey. He apparently needed a person to tell him what to do.

Why 10,000 men? Throughout the book of Judges, God makes it clear that He is the One that gives victory. In some cases, the sons of Israel do not even lift a sword. God doesn't need the men for victory in battle. So then, what is the function of the 10,000 men? God does use them. Let me present this is points:

Why did God send 10,000 sons of Israel to fight the Canaanites?

1. Most Obvious: Learn war.

- a. God said He left Canaanites in the land so the sons of Israel would be taught war. The verses from chapter 3 says that they be taught war. First time around, I interpreted the verses to say to learn war. In the simple form of the Qal in the Hebrew, it usually means learn. But in the Piel, intensive form, as in chapter 3, it is often translated "teach." So, if I go back to the word "taught," who is going to teach them? Now, the only answer I can come up with is, God.

Here is an interesting summary on this word from the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT):

"The predominating idea is that God is the ultimate teacher. In the earliest period he is viewed as the teacher of any special skill. In time, however, this view shifted to one of God as the teacher of the Torah and of all the regulations applying to ethical and cultic life. He was the source of all instruction concerning these vital questions. This also meant, however, that he was the teacher of all wisdom,

and was the only one capable of mediating this insight into the heavenly mysteries.”

Judges 3:1 Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them (that is, all the Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan;

Judges 3:2 only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly).

- b. When we came across these verses in Judges chapter 3, I just taught what was there. But, my thought was how are they supposed to learn war if they didn't have a standing army, once they are enslaved by various kingdoms?
- c. If God is the teacher and they are to be taught, how did He do that? Look at the text. With each deliverance there is a different tactic used. God slowly gave them different tactics to use.
 - i. In the Othniel narrative, the defeat of the enemy is described in a vanilla way. God “gave into his hand” the enemy and he “prevailed.”
 - ii. In the Ehud narrative, Ehud first kills the king (cut off the head of the snake) and then deal with the enemy by blocking his escape and encircling him.
 - iii. In the Barak narrative, God turns the advantage of iron chariots into a disadvantage by using terrain and weather.
 - iv. In the Gideon narrative, which we have not yet dealt with, God instructs the sons of Israel to use deception.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

So, with each narrative, God provides a new and different tactic which the sons of Israel are taught. Did they learn? Maybe not. But I suspect there was one person in Israel who did learn from these narratives: David. So much for the “most obvious” reason for sending 10,000 troops into battle. Maybe someone would remember the lessons taught.

2. Most Important: Witnessing the Work of God on behalf of the sons of Israel.
 - a. Previously mentioned in our study was the importance of tombs of the “judges.” The key issue is memory. What did God do for Israel? Witnesses pass on this memory in written form as in the book of Judges and in tradition by word of mouth from warrior to child and neighbor.
 - b. Also mentioned, is that God repeatedly reminds the sons of Israel about what He did during the Exodus. The Torah which is read during the feasts, the Passover in particular, each year. It is mentioned in Judges 2:1.
 - c. And with each deliverance, there are witnesses that can pass on the information to following generations. Not only that, I suspect there were foreigners who travelled through Israel from time to time and picked up information. It is suspected by some that Greeks picked up the concept of a loose confederation of tribes in Israel as a model to be used in Greece. Witness to what God did.

There is application for us.

- d. Each one of us should at some point witness God’s working in our lives, in our church, in our families, in our nation. We witnessed that. Now we can tell, witness, to others what God has done. For the Risley family, they give the gospel. Then a new believer, so delighted in what he found in believing in Jesus witnesses or tells a

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

neighbor about what he found, what God did in his life, even if that was only for a few minutes. And in eternity, there are rewards for walking by faith. We share in God's glory because He worked through us.

3. Most Unexpected: Fellowship with God.

- a. You are possibly looking at me with furrowed brow and saying, "Come on Kit. Are you saying that in war you can have fellowship with God?" And yes that is exactly what I am saying. You may think fellowship is drinking a beer with a buddy on your back porch. But what does the Bible say about fellowship.
- b. When I started studying the book of 1st John, I ran across the Greek word for fellowship. There was a master's thesis I read on that word. There are two main concepts associated with fellowship as it concerns God: a) participation and b) sharing.
- c. Rather than have a long drawn out study of these words, let me cut to the chase. In each of these wars to regain independence, the fighters fight as fulfilling God's will. God guaranteed success. But, he used men that were, even for a short period of time, willing to trust Him. As such they participated in God's outworking of history. They participated. They were in fellowship with God. When we walk by faith, we participate in God's outworking of history and have fellowship with Him.
- d. At the end of the battle, having participated in the victory, they shared in the glory. The issue of glory will come up in a verse or two.
- e. There is perhaps one more item to consider under fellowship that applies to us. I have to go to work. I have to go to the store. My physical body does the work. But, if I am walking by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit, I am in fellowship with God and

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

participating in His plan and will share in eternity with Jesus Christ rewards and glory.

Judges 4:7 I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will hand him over to you.”

Draw out. This is from the same root as the command God gave Barak to march or deploy troops. God uses the same Hebrew root here as in the previous verse when giving Barak instruction on positioning his troops. They are parallel. God instructed Barak to draw out the sons of Israel to learn war. Then God draws out the enemy. The irony is that the sons of Israel are numerically, equipment and training inferior to the opposing force. They cannot win from a human perspective. Only God can allow them to win. Only God can win.

This is made evident when God mentions the troops and chariots of Sisera.

When you are challenged with an impossible situation, what are you going to do? Break down; throw up your hands, cry? You belong to God. You are in Christ. God is your Father and wants only the best. But that means you must exercise faith.

River Kishon. This is a dry river bed, a wadi, except in the rainy season. According to Robbie Dean, “Now a wadi is a dry river bed except in times of the rainy season. If you've ever been to some place like Arizona, New Mexico or West Texas then you will know what that is; it's just a dry river bed but you get a heavy rainstorm and you'll have a flash flood that will come through there. And that was typical during the rainy season in Israel, but this does not take place in the rainy season because Sisera is a military commander and he would not be so foolish as to take

his chariot corps into a flooded area or an area prone to flood in the midst of the rainy season.”

So neither side would expect a rain storm at this time. And if one came up, the troops would likely decide not to fight. The conditions make the outcome unpredictable.

I will hand him over to you. God guaranteed Barak’s success.

Judges 4:8 Then Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”

Barak is criticized for demanding that a woman go with him. Deborah apparently herself criticizes him. Yet is it possible that he realizes he is deficient when it comes to understanding the plan of God? That is, here is a prophetess who has a direct line to God. Barak trusts God, but he wants the latest intel from God. And as it turns out, she is key in getting him to attack. If she hadn’t been there to goad him into action, he might have missed the opportunity presented by God. Remember that line from one of the Dirty Harry movies? “A man's got to know his limitations.” So perhaps Barak knows he is deficient in his knowledge and understanding of the grace life. So he brings along his connection to God and that information. King Hezekiah, many years after Barak, relied on the prophet Isaiah when Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem:

Isaiah 37:2 Then he (Hezekiah) sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

I am giving Barak the benefit of the doubt.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

So, is it possible that Barak is setting a precedent for the future leaders in Israel? Moses was a leader but he was also a prophet. Joshua was a leader but he was a recipient of God's instructions, like a prophet. Othniel and Ehud are designated deliverers. It is not said how they were so designated. But Barak was told by a prophetess what God wanted Him to do. So, it is not unreasonable that he would want this person by his side as he goes into battle at the behest of God. So much for giving Barak the benefit of the doubt.

Judges 4:9 She said, "I will certainly go with you; however, the fame shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

I will certainly go with you. Literally, "going I will go." This construction in the Hebrew is called an infinitive absolute. It is a means to emphasize the meaning. In this case, Deborah is emphasizing her commitment to travel with Barak.

The word for "go" is from the root meaning to go or to walk. This root, to go or to walk, is used TWELVE times in just this chapter. I can't just use my fingers to count them. I have to use some of my toes as well. We saw last week that when God gave instructions to Barak through the prophetess Deborah, there was an ambiguous word. In the Hebrew it means "to go." It was translated into Greek in the Septuagint as "to you," since the consonants without vowels could be either word. Just as a note to clarify, the Hebrew was originally not written with vowels. A group of Hebrew scholars that lived between the 6th and 10th centuries AD. And now we have an infinitive absolute using this root. We must ask some

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

questions. The motivation for taking a closer look at “to walk” is summarized in these points:

1. Ambiguity in verse 6
2. Command in verse 6
3. Infinitive absolute in verse 9
4. Repetition (12x) in verses: 6, 8 (x4), 9 (x4), 22, 24 (x2)
5. Infinitive absolute used as an adjective in verse 24.

Walking is both a concrete physical movement and a soulish/spiritual way of living one's life.

Enoch:

Genesis 5:22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he fathered Methuselah, and he fathered other sons and daughters.

Genesis 5:23 So all the days of Enoch were 365 years.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Noah:

Genesis 6:9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

Abraham:

Genesis 17:1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.

From the TDOT:

“For nomadic groups it is not surprising that halakh [transliteration of the Hebrew word being considered] should represent the focus of activity. They live “on the move”; their life is mostly spent wandering. This experience may lead to an understanding of human life as a way or a pilgrimage. After his many “goings,” a man finally “goes away”: he dies. Beforehand, however, nomadic groups know by experience, and their settled neighbors know by memory, that their wanderings have a purpose, that they follow this or that leader, that the success of their journey depends on their conduct. Thus the word halakh—above and beyond its concrete spatial meaning—takes on the meanings “conform to a norm, follow someone, behave.” Since it is impossible to think of a journey undertaken without a specific goal, halakh also means “plan, set about.”

“Whenever “going” is mentioned in Israel, there are echoes—more or less distinct—of the period of transhumance or transmigration, and any undertaking can be described with the work halakh.

“These “secular” experiences or memories lay the groundwork for a corresponding theological transposition. The tribal leader may lead (holikh), but he, too, must rely on divine assistance or inspiration. And so in the final analysis it is God who leads. Just as migratory groups follow the instructions of their leaders, so, too, do they and their descendants follow the instructions of God.”

Judges Chapter 4 Part 4

Judges 4:1-24

Note from Wikipedia: “Transhumance is a type of pastoralism or nomadism, a seasonal movement of livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures.

The author of this TDOT article [Helfmeyer] declares that there is a metaphorical meaning stating, “Human life is a journey or way.””

So from a purely linguistic perspective, the word to walk has both a physical and a theological (spiritual) component to it.

From the New Testament, Paul provides a commentary on the type of behavior (or walk) that got the sons of Israel in trouble. They walked according to the flesh.

Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:5 For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are in accord with the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

Romans 8:7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; (this is what the sons of Israel did from time to time in the book of Judges) for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

Romans 8:8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Indeed, the sons of Israel made God's anger burn, Judges 2:20)

10 Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him.

Is Barak not demonstrating his faith? What does Jesus say to “doubting” Thomas? Let us read John 20:19-29.

John 20:29 Jesus *said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you now believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”

This is why Barak is in the faith hall of fame. He trusted the Word of God spoken through a prophetess.