

Judges Chapter 5 Part 6

Tonight, I want to spend less time on individual words and the impact they have on the meaning and more time on the big picture of some verses. Read Judges 5:14-31. Note the categories of people:

Judges 5:14-23 Israelite tribes, both volunteering and non volunteering

Judges 5:24-27 Non-Israelite woman delivering Israel

Judges 5:28-30 Non-Israelite woman, the mother of the enemy general

This week we will consider the Israelite tribes. Next we will get to the non-Israelite women.

Judges 5:14-23 compares those tribes that volunteered for the battle against the Canaanites to those tribes that did not volunteer. Understand this comparison, as faith versus hostility toward God. Next week I want to meet Jael, so I need to cover some ground this week. The single underlines in the following quote from Judges chapter 5 are for the tribes that volunteered. The double underlines are for the tribes that did not volunteer.

Judges 5:14 (NASB) From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek came down, Following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; From Machir (Manasseh) commanders came down, And from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office.

Judges 5:15 (NASB) And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed at

**his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great determinations of heart.**

**Judges 5:16 (NASB) Why did you sit among
the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the
flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben There
were great searchings of heart.**

**Judges 5:17 (NASB) Gilead remained across
the Jordan; And why did Dan stay on ships?
Asher sat at the seashore, And remained by
its landings.**

**Judges 5:18 (NASB) Zebulun was a people
who risked their lives, And Naphtali too, on
the high places of the field.**

Based upon the text of verses 14-18, the following tribes volunteered to engage the enemy. In essence, these tribes exercised faith, or as I have said previously, faith in action.

Ephraim

Benjamin

Machir [Manasseh]

Zebulun

Issachar

Naphtali

In some cases, they did so understanding their lives were in danger, or as we sometimes say, they placed themselves in harm's way. Yet, it was not a foolish move. It was a spiritual move based upon believing Barak who believed Deborah who believed in God Almighty, the "Lord of hosts"

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which is really the “Lord of the armies.” And their freedom was worth fighting for and if necessary, dying for. Observe that the narrative of chapter 4 mentions only two tribes, Naphtali and Zebulun. This Song of Deborah provides information we did not glean from the narrative.

The following is a list of the tribes that refused to volunteer and had “excuses” not to fight for the protection of Israel:

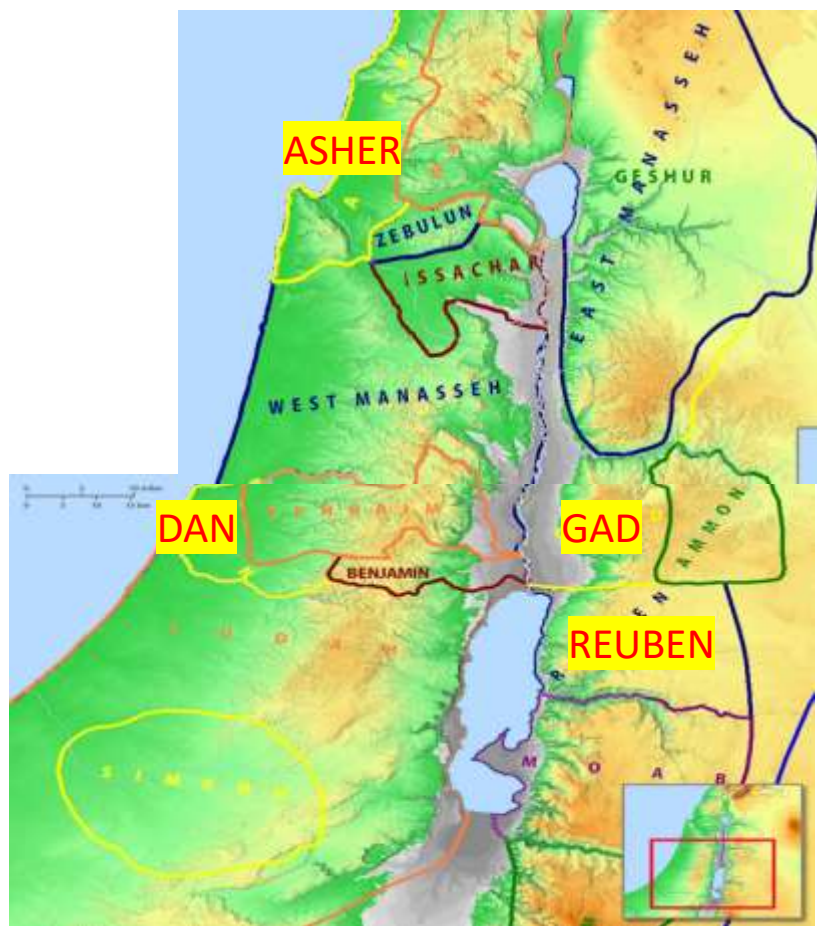
Reuben

Gilead [Gad]

Dan

Asher

And here is a map



Non-Volunteering Tribes (from Biblos.com/FreeBibleImages.org)

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There is a sense in which Israel was a divided country, somewhat like the United States is today. There were several tribes that decided not to help the rest of the nation defend against the Canaanites. There were enough people who did have faith to save the nation. The question for the believers in the United States is, are there enough believers walking by faith daily for God to save our nation? Or will we become like Sodom and Gomorrah and be destroyed? But even in that destruction, the few believers were delivered from destruction.

This brings us to the topic of discussion, the “wicked son.”

Each year, observant Jews celebrate Passover, the historical event during which Jews were liberated by God from Egypt and “passed over” by the destroying angels who killed all the first born in the land. This is a ritual to evoke memories of what God did and an opportunity to teach children about the savior/deliverer. Let us read from the Haggadah for the Passover after reading Exodus 12:23-26. Per Wikipedia the “Haggadah” “...is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder.” Just a reminder for the non-Jewish reader, like myself, once we enter the world of the Old Testament, we tread on unfamiliar ground culturally.

Exodus 12:23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; but when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you.

Exodus 12:24 And you shall keep this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.

Exodus 12:25 When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has promised, you shall keep this rite.

Exodus 12:26 And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’

Exodus 12:27 then you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord because He passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

From the Haggadah is the following based upon Exodus 12:26:

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The Four Children

The Torah describes four children who ask questions about the Exodus. Tradition teaches that these verses refer to four different types of children.

The wise child asks, "What are the laws that God has commanded us?" The parent should answer by instructing the child in the laws of Passover, starting from the beginning and ending with the laws of the *Afikomen*.

The wicked child asks, "What does this Passover service mean to you?" The parent should answer, "It is because of what God did for me when I came out of Egypt. Specifically 'me' and not 'you.' If you had been there (with your attitude), you wouldn't have been redeemed."

The simple child asks, "What is this Seder service?" The parent should answer, "With a mighty hand God brought us out of Egypt. Therefore, we commemorate that event tonight through this Seder."

And then there is child who does not know how to ask. The parent should begin a discussion with that child based on the verse: "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'We commemorate Passover tonight because of what God did for us when we went out of Egypt.'"

Our concern here is the Jewish "wicked child" or "wicked son." The point is that we have encountered here in Judges chapter 5, those Jews who were trying to blend into the local indigenous culture, rejecting their God and spirituality by faith. This is happening today in the United States and indeed, throughout the world, as Archbishop Chaput said in the quotes at the beginning of this session.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither. The French mystic Simone Weil once said that “the destruction of the past is perhaps the greatest of all crimes.”

7 Along with all of its achievements, the world we’ve built ensnares us today in a permanent present, a narcotic cocoon of distractions and appetites, here and now. It erases our past. It makes us forget. It steals the memory of who we are as Christians and why we’re in the world.

Charles J. Chaput

Things Worth Dying For: Thoughts on a Life Worth Living

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So it is instructive to see this very thing in Judges and carried through history to today. Indeed, even Zephaniah refers to such people in the future “Tribulation.”

There is a Jewish playwright who used to be a very liberal Jew and tried to blend into the non-Jewish society. Today, he is a conservative Jew who realizes that he was once the “wicked son.” He wrote a book by that name. Let me read a chapter from that book entitled “The Wicked Son.”

**Judges 5:19 “The kings came and fought;
Then the kings of Canaan fought At Taanach
near the waters of Megiddo; They took no
plunder in silver.**

Note the mention of Megiddo. As mentioned when studying chapter 4 previously, the plain in front of this tell/mountain is a historic battleground both in the past and yet to be in the future.

**Judges 5:20 The stars fought from heaven,
From their paths they fought against Sisera.**

From Trent Butler, “Canaanite kings might defeat Israel’s army without weapons, but they cannot stand before God’s weapons. Canaanite kings might pay allegiance to the fertility power of Baal in the north to send the rains, but Yahweh comes from the south accompanied by clouds streaming rain.”

At the beginning of chapter five there is a reference to kings and princes. I suggested, this was a reference to the angelic conflict. Here again, perhaps clearer, is a reference to the angelic conflict. Since the understanding of the angelic conflict is limited to a few Bible churches, it is no surprise that commentators word around that term.

The angelic conflict is mentioned throughout the Bible. It is not as prominent as sin, redemption and faith among other topics. There are many Old Testament books that touch on the angelic conflict: Job starts with Satan approaching God concerning Job. Genesis narrates the Satanic temptation of Eve. There is history of Satan in Isaiah and Ezekiel. In the background of pagan societies that worship idols of wood and stone are demonic “gods.” And in various books we see the heavens and stars which are more than physical entities.

Let's make a short trip to the book of Daniel, chapter 10 to see the angelic conflict mentioned there.

Judges 5:21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, The ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. My soul, march on with strength!

Here we have confirmation of what Josephus said about this battle. Let me quote from him.

“So the battle began; and when they were come to close fight, there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes, that their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them, nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords; while this storm did not so much incommode the Israelites, because it came in the backs.” Antiquities of the Jews Book V, chapter V para 4. [The Complete Works of Josephus, translated by Wm. Whiston]

Torrent. The word means “wadi.” From the TDOT, “a nahal is the valley cut by a stream, often quite deep. The water which runs down the mountains with great force during the rainy season (cf. Dt. 9:21), carves a channel in the soil.” And again, “Watercourses, often cut deep into the land, are well-defined markers; not rarely they are difficult to cross.”

From Trent Butler, “Mention of the Kishon River or wadi occurs only in reference to this section (see Ps 83:9 [Heb. 10]) and in Elihah’s adventure on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:40). The Kishon drained the western Jezreel Valley, supplying water for its great agricultural productivity, but heavy rains could turn it into a marshland, inhibiting all movement. The Kishon apparently served as the boundary line between Asher and Manasseh and between Zebulun and Manasseh. It may also have formed part of the border of Issachar and Manasseh.”

Judges 5:22 Then the horses' hoofs beat From the galloping, the galloping of his mighty stallions.

Judges 5:23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord, 'Utterly curse its inhabitants, Because they did not come to the help of the Lord, To the help of the Lord against the warriors.'

Angel of the Lord. This is the second person of the Trinity, the pre-existent Christ. God Himself is cursing Meroz.

Meroz. According to Trent Butler, "We know nothing of Meroz." Later he adds, "But Meroz is central to the repeated theme of blessing on free-will volunteering, battle participation, and personal initiative to defeat the enemy contrasted to cursing on those who do not participate and thus show love for Yahweh. Such a curse in this context reflects a group expected to show loyalty to Yahweh and to one's own people, not a group without obligations whose refusal brought forth frustration that expressed itself in a curse."

We must pause here to look at "curse." It is used three times in this sentence, an emphasis. And, one of those times it is in the Infinitive Absolute form which in itself is an emphasis. Remember, this is being said by the second person of the Trinity which should by itself get our attention. Where does God first use this term? Genesis 3:14 on the "serpent."

Genesis 3:14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all the livestock, And more than any animal of the field; On your belly you

**shall go, And dust you shall eat All the days of
your life;**

In Genesis 3:17, the ground is cursed because of Adam. Noah curses Canaan in Genesis 9:25. Those are just some of the curses using this Hebrew word.

So why do we know nothing about Meroz? Let me suggest that the curse was applied and the town and everyone in it was wiped out of recorded history except this one mention of being cursed. It was triple cursed by God. Even worse than Sodom and Gomorrah.