

Judges 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

Analysis

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This passage relates to Deborah and Barak's victory over Sisera, demonstrating God's sovereign choice and empowerment of deliverers. The judges themselves display varying degrees of faith and character flaws, yet God works through these imperfect human instruments to accomplish His purposes. This illustrates the biblical pattern that God's power is made perfect in human weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Theologically, these early judges establish the pattern of divine deliverance through unlikely means. God chooses the weak, marginalized, and flawed to demonstrate that victory comes from His power, not human strength. This anticipates Paul's teaching that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

The military victories recorded here serve spiritual purposes—they deliver Israel from physical oppression but more importantly provide opportunity for spiritual renewal. Each deliverance creates space for Israel to return to covenant faithfulness. However, the repeated cycles show these deliverances provided only temporary relief, pointing to the need for the ultimate Deliverer who would provide permanent victory over sin and spiritual oppression through His death and resurrection.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to Deborah and Barak's victory over Sisera. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of

apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about Deborah and Barak's victory over Sisera reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּשְׁלַח ח	וַתִּקְרָא	לְבָרַךְ ק	וּמִבְנֵי י	אֲבִינוֹ עַם
And she sent	and called	Barak	and of the children	of Abinoam
H7971	H7121	H1301	H1121	H42
מִקֵּדֶשׁ נַפְתָּלִי	נִפְתָּלִי י	וַתֹּאמֶר	אֵלַי יו	הֵלֵא א
out of Kedeshnaphtali	of Naphtali	and said	H413	H3808
H6943	H5321	H559		commanded
				H6680
יְהוָה ה	אֱלֹהֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל	לִךְ	וּמִשְׁכָּתָּה
unto him Hath not the LORD	God	of Israel	H1980	and draw
H3068	H430	H3478		H4900
				toward mount
				H2022
תָּבוֹר וּ	וְלָקַחְתָּ	עִמָּךְ	עִשָּׂר כֶּת	אֶלְפִים
Tabor	and take	H5973	with thee ten	thousand
H8396	H3947		H6235	H505
				men
				H376
וּמִבְנֵי י	נִפְתָּלִי י	וּמִבְנֵי י	זִבְלוֹן:	
and of the children	of Naphtali	and of the children	of Zebulun	
H1121	H5321	H1121	H2074	

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:32 (Parallel theme): 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:

Acts 13:47 (References Lord): For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Judges 8:18 (Parallel theme): Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.

Joshua 19:37 (Parallel theme): And Kedesh, and Edrei, and En-hazor,

Psalms 7:6 (References Lord): Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

Psalms 89:12 (Parallel theme): The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

Jeremiah 46:18 (References Lord): As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.

Joshua 1:9 (References God): Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua 19:32 (Parallel theme): The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

Joshua 21:32 (Parallel theme): And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammoth-dor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.