

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Battles Won by God's Intervention – Part 2'
Hebrews 11:1-34
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By Keith Marcy

Last week we looked at 4 occasions when God intervened in history and rescued His people, the Israelites, from oppression.

Why did they find themselves in this awful predicament?

They planted, but others harvested. They took care of their livestock, but others carried off the calves, lambs and kid goats. While they should have been prospering in '*The Promised Land*,' described as a '*land flowing with milk and honey*,' they merely existed. We find the answer in the Scriptures.

Judges 10:6-16 describes what God's chosen people had done.

When people turn away from God who has made them and cared for them, it breaks the heart of God. They have forsaken him to worship something that someone has carved from wood or chipped out of a stone or cast from bronze or another metal. It hurts Him like a spouse leaving the one they have married to go live with another.

God stops caring for adulterous Israel. He exercises His power over creation, and He brings other nations against them to oppress them. This pattern happens over and over in the Old Testament. But when God's people admit their error, confess their sin and turn back to Him, He comes to their aid and drives out the nation He brought to punish them. As we saw last week, God works in miraculous ways to free His people from those who oppressed them. Today we look at another example – Deborah – the only woman God appointed as judge of Israel before Israel had an earthly king. Deborah was married. She had great faith. God blessed her with wisdom. And she was approachable. Her judgement seat – or her office – was under a palm tree in the area of Ephraim, northeast of Jerusalem, near the town of Bethel. People came from all over to receive her wise counsel and with their disagreements. She was also a prophet, receiving instructions from God for men in leadership, like Barak, leader of Israel's puny army. This was a difficult time for Israel. As punishment God had raised up the Canaanites to plunder them, carry some off as captives, and generally cause them to live a fearful existence.

Deborah called Barak with a message from God, *“Now is the time. God has heard our prayers of repentance, and He is going to free us from oppression. Call for Israelites to make up an army of 10,000 soldiers and assemble at Mount Tabor.”* Barak was scared stiff, *“Only if you come with me!”*

Deborah replied, *“I will come.”*

Farmers, shepherds, craftsmen turned up – a motley crew compared with the Canaanite army with 900 iron chariots, horses and heavily armored soldiers. While Barak gave his men a crash course in fighting, Deborah worked her way through the camp encouraging, reminding them of God’s call and being an example of faith. Just to see their female judge on the battlefield was an encouragement. The Scriptures tell us that God – whom the Canaanites did not know – guided them to assemble their 900 chariots in the valley of the Kishon River.

Is God sovereign?

When Barak shouted the order to attack, the average shepherd/soldier must have thought, *“It is all over now. Who are we compared to them?”*

But then a drop of rain hit him on the forehead, several on his arms and soon it was pouring. Soon the air was white with rain. The dry valley floor turned to mud. Horses slid and slipped, iron wheels sunk. Chariots slid into each other. Canaanite soldiers with their heavy armor and iron shields sloshed like drunken men. Then, the banks of the river overflowed, sending a cascade of water, knocking horses down. The Israelites, armed with only a sword or a spear did not have the same problem. They were light. They could maneuver. And that day they annihilated the Canaanite army, except their proud commander Sisera. He fled and ran until he came to the house of old acquaintances, Jael and Heber. Jael invited him in, gave him a drink and a blanket. Sisera was soon asleep. Jael recalled the years of cruelty this man and his army had inflicted on the Israelites. She picked up a tent peg and a large hammer. Without waking him she drove the tent peg through his temple and he died.

Why were the Israelites victorious that day?

Because of the large number of soldiers? NO.

Because their soldiers were so well trained? NO.

Then because their commander Barak was brave and had great faith?
NO.

Was it because of Deborah? Her faith was instrumental in rallying the Israelites. BUT it was **GOD** who sent the torrential flood at the right time after He had moved the Canaanite army into the vulnerable position in the valley. God won the battle. God set the Israelites free. He must receive the glory!!!

When did God give this victory to the Israelites?

Read Judges 10:10-16.

- When they repented from idol worship.
- When they destroyed the idols among them.
- When their worship was channeled only to the living God
- When their lives reflected the holiness of our Creator.

When will God forgive and heal the nations of the world we live in?

We hear about the oppression every day.

When will it end?

When we turn back to God, as nations of the world.

There *is* hope! In the book of Malachi, we find a remnant—a few people who did not turn from true worship to kneel to an idol. Malachi 3:16 says: *“then those who feared the Lord talked to each other and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his Name. “They will be Mine,” says the Lord Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.”*

Malachi 4: 2: *‘But you who revere my name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things says the Lord Almighty’.*

“Keep the faith! Let nothing move you! Always give yourselves to the work of the Lord because you know that your work in the Lord is not in vain!”

I Corinthians 15:58.