

Judges 4&5

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 September 2022

[0 : 00] Two chapters in the book of Judges will be in Judges chapter 4 and Judges chapter 5. I'm not saying that we're going to read both of them in their entirety. They repeat the same story.

So we'll see the entire chapter of Judges chapter 4 for sure. And then we will at least look at a little bit Judges 5.

So Judges 4 and 5 will be our text this evening. As we just continue to make our way through the Bible. In particular the Old Testament. We have gotten to the book of Judges a couple weeks ago.

So we are at this point in Judges 4 and 5. Let's pray and then we'll get right into the text together. We thank you so much just for allowing us to gather together.

We thank you for your faithfulness to us throughout the week so far. We thank you for the day you've provided. We thank you for the opportunity of fellowship.

[1 : 03] Thank you for some time around the table as we shared a meal with one another. Lord we thank you for the great privilege of opening up your word and studying the word of God with one another.

Lord we do pray for those who are working in the back with the children and the young adults. We pray Lord for the entire WANA program.

We pray God that you would be with the leaders. Lord I know even now there's a little bit of uncertainty. A little bit of chaos. Lord we pray that through all that your word would ring true in each of the young kids lives.

We pray that you would be with the leaders and Lord the workers. God just be glorified. Be with us tonight. Give us an understanding of your word. Lord help us to grasp the Old Testament realities so that we can live it out in the day and time that you have placed us.

And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You know of any book that we have gotten into together and there have been a number of them in the last six years.

[2 : 13] Occasionally I go back and look over where the Lord's allowed us to be and the things that we've been able to look at as a church body. A number of books of the Bible that we've preached through.

A number of them we have walked with one another through. In particular even just beginning in Genesis 1 and making it to this point in the book of Judges. The book of Judges is a hard book to study.

It's a hard book to read because of really doesn't seem to be anything good in it. It seems so dark and dreary.

The only comparison we can offer to that is the book of Job. But at least when we get to the end of the book of Job, all things are restored, right? And we see faithfulness of God and we see kind of things made right.

When we get to the end of the book of Judges, it's worse than it was at the beginning. Things are on a downhill slide very quickly. And it's just a difficult book to read.

[3 : 19] Probably one of the most difficult books, I think, in the Old Testament to read. It's an even harder book to study. Because it seems as if you're just reading the same story over and over again.

Because there is this cycle of events that keeps happening. This spiral. And as some have said, it's not a two-dimensional spiral. So it's not just going around and around.

It's actually three-dimensional because it's degrading also as it's spiraling around. Because each time around, things get worse. And then worse. And then worse. And then worse.

And it really shows us by the time we get to the end of the book that, man, when man has his own way, things are awful. And we're looking at the nation of Israel going, is there any hope?

Is there anyone left? Is there any that are righteous? And we're almost a little bit like Elijah falling down on our knees saying, Lord, I alone am left. There are no others.

[4 : 19] The only respite we can have in that is that we know that the events contained in the book of Ruth happened during the period of Judges. So we can at least see Boaz.

Right? There's this kinsman redeemer. By the way, the same word used for Boaz, being a redeemer, is the same word used for judge in the book of Judges.

Being someone who sets others free. And then we find in the book of 1 Samuel that at least there are some who are seeking and righteous and desiring.

So I say all of this to say that we don't need to get caught in the muck and the mire and the ugliness and really the downward trajectory of the book of Judges that we get depressed.

Because what we see is man's failings. Man stumbles. Man messes up. Man has a problem. And that problem is sin.

[5 : 17] It's not sins. It's not what he does. Because change the name of the characters and the story is still the same. All right? You change the name of the characters. You even change the name of who they give them over to.

But the story is still the same. Sometimes the oppression looks like this. Sometimes the oppression looks like that. But man has a problem. And man's problem is sin. And we see that in the book of Judges.

But more than man's failure is what we see is God's faithfulness. God does not have to be faithful. He does not have to respond when the people cry out to him. But he keeps doing it.

And it astounds me. Because when they cry out, even though man has a problem, God responds to that problem and meets the need.

And we see that each time. We'll see it being played out again at least a number of times as we make our way. But in particular tonight, Judges chapter 4 we'll read in its entirety.

[6 : 17] But we're also going to combine with this Judges 5. I will not read the fifth chapter. It is the song that goes along with the historical account.

Someone has said the fourth chapter tells us the story and the fifth chapter sings about it. Right? The fourth chapter tells it to us in kind of a dialect talking to us about what happened.

The fifth chapter proclaims it in song and praises God for what happened. It's the same account. But there are some differences which we will highlight. But Judges chapter 4 says, Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died.

You remember Ehud, right? The left-handed man, the left-handed Benjamite who went into the king. Who had the sword girded on his right thigh. He said, King, I have a word for you from God. And the king stands up. Ehud takes the sword out.

And thankfully the only kid in here can't really comprehend what we're saying. Buries that thing to the hilt and leaves it there and it walks out, right? What a story. By the way, you should know Ehud is the last judge where it says the Lord moved him.

[7 : 25] The Lord called him. There are two judges. Now, God uses all of them. He raises them up. But two, that he was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to do something, okay? There are some that are called.

We know that the Lord's going to appear to Gideon and he'll call him. But he's never empowered by the Spirit to do what he does. He's commanded by God to do it. Othniel and Ehud, the first two.

Okay, so after Ehud dies, they again did evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. Who reigned in Hazor. And the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Horsheth, Hegoim.

The sons of Israel cried to the Lord, for he had 900 iron chariots. And he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years. Now, Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. And the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. Now she sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kadesh Naphtali, and said to him, Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

[8 : 47] 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 give him into your hand. 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. She said, I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take. For the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.

Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kadesh. Now Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kadesh, and 10,000 men went up with him. Deborah also went up with him.

Now Heber, the Kenite, had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobad, the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak of Zanim, which is near Kadesh.

Then they told Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor. Sisera called together all his chariots, 900 iron chariots, and all the people who were with him from Herosheth, Egoim, to the river Kishon.

[9 : 53] Deborah said to Barak, Arise, for this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Behold, the Lord has gone out before you. So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.

The Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak. And Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Horsheth, Egoim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword.

Not even one was left. Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jeel, the wife of Heber the Kenite. For there was peace between Jabin and the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

Jeel went out to meet Sisera and said to him, Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me, do not be afraid. And he turned aside to her into the tent and she covered him with a rug.

He said to her, Please give me a little water to drink for I am thirsty. So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink. Then she covered him. He said to her, Stand in the doorway of the tent and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you and says, Is there anyone here that you shall say no?

[11 : 03] But Jeel, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple. And it went through into the ground, for he was sound asleep and exhausted.

So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jeel came out to meet him and said to him, Come and I will show you the man whom you are seeking. And he entered with her and behold, Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple.

So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Judges chapter 4. There's a very old archaeological discovery that depicts the painting or that has in it a painting depicting this very account of a woman standing over a man with a tent peg through his head.

What a gruesome picture, but also a historical reality. And it's in that region. It's a mosaic that's actually on the floor of a temple that is supposedly built upon that site.

[12 : 13] This is where that took place. A couple of things historically we need to understand. It wouldn't be that surprising that she could do that because, I'm sorry ladies, it was that lady's job at that time to pitch the tents.

They would have been the ones who actually drove the tent pegs in the ground and fastened the tents when they moved from place to place while their husbands were tending the flocks or doing other things like that, making sure things were together.

So something she was very familiar with, while she might not have been a valiant warrior, she could sure use a hammer and a tent peg. And we see she does so rather successfully here. But again, another one of those stories that we come to and we really don't understand exactly what's going on.

And for the life of me, I've read it so many times this week, you just can't get used to that, right? That mental picture of what's happening. But I want you to see from Judges chapter 4 and chapter 5, because we'll look at it too, forced to make a choice.

The individuals that were forced to make a choice. And we see it coming about because of man's problem. Again, the same story told in a different light. And the same story told with different characters.

[13 : 19] But there is a difference here as we continue to go downward. Now, I don't mean this in any disrespect. And I hope that you don't take it this way. But the longer we see man having the problem of sin, the further we see man getting away from the calling of God.

Right? The longer we see man dealing with his problem, the farther we see him moving away from the order which God had ordained and the ways in which they were to operate.

And it's no disrespect whatsoever to Deborah as far as being a prophetess and also being a judge at that time. It is, as some had said, it's not that Deborah and Jael are the exception to the rule.

They are the exception that proves the rule, right? That the rule was to be that God would raise up men who would be leaders to declare the word of God. They were to be theirs who would serve as prophets.

Now, we see a number of prophetesses throughout Scripture. We even meet them in the New Testament. So, it's not to say that ladies cannot be used in that capacity. And it's not to say that God doesn't use them in that capacity.

[14 : 19] We see them even in the book of Acts. And we see a number of them recorded for us. But here what we see is that the further man is dealing with this problem, the further he moves away from the order that God has established.

And one thing we would notice through the book of Judges is not only is society degrading, but also man's position in society is degrading. Men themselves get worse the longer we go through the book of Judges.

Pay attention to it. The first man that we meet in the book of Judges is Joshua. Joshua is a man who seeks after the Lord and follows the Lord with all of his heart, right?

God commands him. He's there. He is described as a man of God. He was originally the servant of Moses. By the time he ends his life, he is a servant of God. Joshua is the very first man we meet.

The next man we meet is Nothnell. Nothnell is Caleb's son-in-law. And there is righteousness in Nothnell, right? He is a valiant warrior. He is the perfect judge because we never see him doing anything really that makes us kind of quince or look around and go, I don't know about that, right?

[15 : 24] We see no sin in his life. We see no unrighteous deeds. We see no problem. We see that God commands him. The Spirit empowers him. And he goes and delivers. And we see Nothnell. Then we see Ehud.

Now, Ehud lied a little bit, but he was moved by the Spirit, right? He kind of connived his way and he with a little bit of trickery and we move on. And then we keep going a little bit further, a little bit further.

So we see Shamgar, I know, with an ox go. We don't know anything about him. The next one we know anything about is this one we're introduced to here, Barak. We'll see in just a minute. He kind of, when God tells him to do something, I don't know if I want to do that.

And we're just going on this downward spiral. Barak doesn't fully believe God. Gideon tests God. Gideon's son, Jephthah, moves away from God, declares himself to be in the position of God.

That's not Jephthah. That's Abimelech. Abimelech declares himself to be that. And the further we keep going, the further we keep going, Jephthah, the man, makes this vow that if God makes him victorious, the first thing that comes out of his house, he will kill and he will offer as a sacrifice.

[16 : 28] You know the story, the first thing that meets him when he comes out of his house is his teenage daughter. And he offers a human sacrifice. That's the man we're going there. We keep going. Samson, the next man we meet is Samson.

Samson has a problem, right? Samson is not the ideal man. I know he's found in the book of Hebrews. I understand that. But Samson is not the ideal man. By the time we get to the end of the book of Judges, we meet a man with a concubine.

We don't even know her name. She is abused by men. They cut her up in pieces and send her about to land. The further we go through the book of Judges, the lower men get. Because men are surrendering their God-given responsibilities to stand up.

Joshua, declaring to the nation, says, choose you this day whom you will serve. Again, I don't mean this disrespectfully.

But the choice in the Hebrew nation rests upon the responsibility of the head of the house. That was the man. And when they neglected to make that choice, this is what we get.

[17 : 43] Weaker and weaker and weaker men. Doing strong things. Right. I mean, Samson takes the jawbone of a donkey. Samson also, his first wife, burns up in her house.

Set the house on fire. You know, Samson is mighty in strength. He said, but he killed so many thousands of men in his death. Right. But he says it was for his eyes. Not because of his, you know, desire to be lived righteously.

We see this degradation of man. And it goes about because men are failing to take a stand and make the choice to live righteously.

But with each sin problem and each situation and each cycle, God is forcing individuals to make a choice. As I think it was Tony Evans who said, when the men fail to live up to their responsibility, God will always raise up a woman.

Right. He'll always find someone that'll do it. And we see that being played out really clear in Judges 4 and 5. So the first thing we meet in these chapters is the sad reality of the time.

[19 : 02] The nation of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord because Ehud died. Unfortunately, their repentance was short-lived.

Unfortunately, their righteousness did not last long. Unfortunately, their turning about from the sin and the wickedness that enslaved them lasted only as long as the judge who delivered them.

Now that gives hope to us because we have a judge who does not die. But what we see here that as soon as Ehud dies, they sin again. And they go into this downward spiral and they're really just enslaved.

And God gives them over to Jabin, the king of Canaan. He gives them over to that. And Jabin has this commander who is Sisera. And Sisera, it says, has 900 iron chariots.

And he is there and he is just really suppressing them, suppressing them. As a matter of fact, it says that he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years. To show you how severe it is, you have to turn to the fifth chapter where they're singing about it.

[19 : 59] Now I'm not going to ask you to actually go there and read the entire chapter. But the sixth verse of Judges chapter 5, Judges 5, 6 tells us that the oppression was so real that the people were no longer even using the highways.

That the people failed to go along the major trade routes. Because by the way, this battle that takes place at the Kishon River is right at the intersection of a major trade route just a little south of the Sea of Galilee.

A major trade route that was there. But the oppression was so real that people were afraid to go out on the main roads. It says they were going by byways and back roads and they were avoiding this because they didn't want to be seen.

Now we know about Gideon hiding in a wine vat threshing wheat. But we forget about the time of Barak when the people were so oppressed, they wouldn't even go down the public roads because they were afraid someone may see them. We see that the oppression is so real that the people, it says in chapter 5, that new gods were chosen, lowercase g, new gods were chosen.

And there was war within the gates, which means that there was an internal struggle. The people within the nation was fighting and bickering with one another because my God's better than your God and all this other stuff, right?

[21 : 07] This is the nation of Israel we're talking about. This is not the inhabitants of Canaan. We see that the oppression is so bad. The 8th chapter also tells us that you can't find a shield or a spear anywhere.

Why do we find at the end of the third chapter that Shemgar used an ox code? Because there were no weapons. The sad reality of the time is that the people were living in a desperate, wicked condition, being severely oppressed, so much so they wouldn't even go down to major thoroughfares and they didn't have a single weapon to defend themselves.

What a sad condition. What a desperate time. But the reality that we need to understand is that man's sin problem always gets us here.

It tells us in the 5th chapter that there were segments of society that just stopped to exist. Chapter 5, verse 7 says, The peasantry ceased. They ceased in Israel, which means the common people were just no longer there.

Right? It was just a desperate time. And in this desperate time, I mean, hear me out if you will, When things were this bad, no man stood up.

[22 : 24] No man. Deborah is a prophetess, which is fine. We can take that. Because, again, all throughout Scripture, God uses prophetesses to speak his word.

Now, prophetess, let's use this in the right way, okay? To be a prophet or a prophetess does not necessarily mean to foretell.

There are different standards of prophecy. Foretelling is Isaiah. Speaking in Isaiah, well, all of Isaiah, really looking at the coming king.

He is declaring what's going to be some 500 years before his time, right? Isaiah is naming the king that signed a decree that Cyrus would sign a decree that would release God's people.

That is foretelling. Some 100 years before Cyrus was born, Isaiah calls him by name. That's pretty amazing. That's foretelling, okay? That is God empowering and moving someone to tell events that are not yet but soon will be or even in the very distant future will be.

[23 : 37] That is to foretell, okay? Then there is prophecy that is foretelling. Foretelling is taking what God has already said and proclaiming it forth, right?

Jeremiah is a foreteller. A lot of times we see he foretells as well but he also foretells. That is, he declares what God has already said. You know, we are going to be led away captive. We are going to do this.

These things are going to come about. Now, to foretell would be to take what God had declared and to say it again. So I say all this to say that Deborah doesn't stand up and tell anything new.

Deborah is the one that God is using to declare what he has already said. Now, at that point, what has God already said? Genesis to Joshua, right?

Remember that they re-recorded the book of Joshua and they added it to the scroll. The scroll would be the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, which would be Genesis to Deuteronomy. And they added that to, it says at the end of the book of Joshua, they added that to the scroll.

[24 : 31] So what she is doing, now think about this sad set of affairs. God has a tabernacle somewhere within the land, right? God also has a whole group of people, namely the Levites, who were to be the people who would foretell what God had said.

The Levites were dispersed among the nation to teach them the word of God. And yet, in such a sad time as this, Deborah is the one who is not sitting at the tabernacle or the tent of meeting, who is instead sitting under a palm tree that she names after herself, Deborah's palm tree, and is declaring what God has said, because no man stands up.

Now, this is not trying to be disrespectful to Deborah or to ladies at all. I can't remember who, but one Bible commentator points out that Barak's name is a Levitical name, so more than likely he himself was from the tribe of Levi, which should cause a shock.

Because here is a prophetess having to tell someone from the tribe of Levi, which was charged to declare what God had said, she is having to tell him what God has said. Because at this sad time, when people wouldn't even go down the roads, when there were no weapons, no shields, the people were having to go down the back ways, and everybody was hiding.

At this sad time, you want to know where the men were at? The men are where Gideon is, hiding in a wine vat, threshing wheat like nothing's going on. The world gets bad when men hide.

[26 : 01] That's the reality. When men fail to stand up and take biblical, godly responsibility, things go south. And it's, I know that's not politically correct, socially correct, and gets me in trouble a lot of times when I do pre-marriage counseling, gets me in trouble when I do marriage counseling.

But what I have found is the biblical account shows us that every time men fail to stand up, things go south. And it's not the lady's fault.

The responsibility is on the men. What a sad state of affairs. Here's the sad reality of the times. So during this time, God always has a person, and at this time, he has Deborah, and he's using her.

She is not only a prophetess, she's also a judge. So she is judging and declaring what must come about. So we see the sad reality of the time. The second thing is we see the surrendered blessing of the Lord.

It says that during this time of oppression, during this time of struggle, the people cry out. And God responds. Now one thing we understand about the book of Judges, and we've looked at it before, but it bears looking at it every time we open it up.

[27 : 32] The people are not crying out because of their problem. They're crying out because of their pain. Right? If they could have the sin without the pain, they would be okay. But it's when the pain gets uncomfortable and the pain gets too much, that's when they cry out.

They don't want deliverance from themselves. They want deliverance from their situation. They're not seeking to be saved from sin. They're seeking to be saved from circumstances. And to be quite honest, that's something we still see today.

People seeking a release from their circumstances, not a release from their sin. And the way we ask ourselves this question is, if I could have the sin without the pain, would it be okay?

If I could have the rebellion without the circumstances, would I be okay with that? If I could have this without the consequence of that, is that okay? Can I do that? But this is where we see where our heart cry is.

So they cry out. God has his individual and Deborah. He has his lady. And it says, so Deborah summoned Barak. She called him. Deborah summoned Barak and said, hey, God's got a word for you.

[28 : 39] Now pay attention to this. She says, now she sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kadesh Naphtali and said to him, behold the Lord, the God of Israel.

Now she uses the Lord, Yahweh, right? She uses the covenant name of God. Now that's important. She reminds him that the covenant God is the God of Israel, right? So this covenant God, the God that is in a covenantal agreement with us, has a word for you.

Now that pays attention. It says, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, not has suggested, not has thought, this would be a good idea, has commanded. God has a command for you, Barak.

By the way, the God, which we are in a covenant relationship with, has something for you. And he has commanded, go and march to Mount Tabor and take with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

I will draw out to you, sister of the commander of Jabin's army with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon and I will give him into your hand. That's God's command. Very clear, right? Now it's amazing.

[29 : 41] Deborah didn't go around pick and choose. Deborah knew exactly who it was that God was commanding and Deborah called that individual with a very clear word from the Lord, the God of Israel. And this is what interests us because he says, well, I'm not going if you don't go.

Because God gave a command and he put a stipulation upon that command. God's command was, you go, take 10,000 people.

I'll even tell you who to get to 10,000 people from. By the way, when we read the fifth chapter, we see that six groups, six of the Israelite groups actually send troops, right?

And some leaders. We can read that in the fifth chapter. There are three that are mentioned specifically that don't. And some of them consider it and no, we're not going to do it. Dan decides to stay in their ships.

They don't do it. Others decide, Asher decides to stay a little bit behind so they don't do it because at least three. Now there are some that we don't understand why but we know that there are six groups who say, oh, this concerns us.

[30 : 46] Three of them say, ah, you know what, I'd rather not. I have something else to do. But what we know is that God gave a clear command and God said, Barak, you're the man.

This is what I want you to do. Take 10,000 people, go to this specific place. When you get to this specific place, I will bring them out and I will lead you into victory against them. Now this is the covenant God who has been so faithful to his people throughout all their generations who is now giving a clear command and Barak is forced to make a choice.

The choice is, am I going to take God at his word or am I going to put God's word upon conditional obedience?

I will obey if. Now, the classic example of conditional obedience is the man we find following this, Gideon. Well, if this fleece is dry and everywhere else is wet, then I'll do it.

Well, if the fleece is wet and everywhere else is dry, then I'll do it. Or if, and God has to jump through all these proverbial hoops so that he'll do it, this conditional obedience. But here, now I can almost understand a little bit because Gideon's like, was that a figment of my imagination or did I really see an angel of the Lord?

[32 : 01] Did God really appear to me? But here, a prophetess who is known, who is also judging, that God is speaking through, now declares a clear word to Barak and Barak is faced with a choice and he goes, ah, only if you go.

See how weak men are getting? Only if you go. Now, some discount this and say, well, what he was saying is he was testing the spirit that if she really believed that's what God had commanded, then she would surely go.

Well, yeah, but if he really believed that's what God commanded, he would surely go too. the failing happens when he doesn't fully believe what God has declared to him.

So she says, okay, I'll go with you, but this glory of capturing Cicero will be given over to a woman. You won't get it. Now, naturally, we think that woman will be Deborah.

We know as we read the story that it's Jael. It's not Deborah. So we understand here he surrendered his blessing because, see, by not fully obeying the clear command of God, he surrendered the blessing that came with faithfulness to God.

[33 : 23] And the blessing would be the man that God uses to deliver his people, not the spoils because when you read the fifth chapter, you find that even though they won the victory, they did not fall upon the spoils.

One city did come out and take the spoils and it says, and the angels of God pronounced a curse upon that city because that city failed to take part in the battle, but they went out to get the spoils. That's not the blessing.

The blessing's not the spoils. The blessing is to be the individual that God uses to deliver his people and he forfeited and surrendered that blessing because he failed to take God's word literally.

He was not completely confident in what God had declared to him. Now that's surprising, but all too often we today surrender such blessings because we fail to take God's word literally.

We have this conditional obedience. Well, I'll obey God if, I'll obey God if, what if, the only if was that when we opened up our Bibles and if it said something, then we did it.

[34 : 38] Because by the way, doesn't the Bible end with a blessing attached to those who obey it? It's not only there, but also, aren't we told very clearly in the Pauline letters that God has more than we could ever think, dream, or even imagine in store for us that walk in faithfulness to Him?

See, we surrender the blessings of being the people God uses because we fail to be individuals who take Him completely at His word. We put conditions upon it.

And that condition is not the choice we're called to make. The third thing we see in this is not only the sad reality of the times, the surrendered blessing of the Lord, but third and finally, there is the secured victory over the enemy.

Now, I don't think it's coincidental, actually. I think it's very intentional. When we open up the first chapter of the book of Judges, we begin to see the compromise of God's people.

We see Joshua's faithfulness, but then we're reminded that there's a generation who comes up who does not know the work of the Lord or what He had done among them. And the first telling of that compromise was of the tribe of Judah that went in to take their possession of their land.

[36 : 03] After the account of Othniel and Caleb taking possession of the giants and, you know, defeating that area, it says that Judah did not fully occupy their land and we're told of their compromise in this way because they could not drive out the inhabitants because the inhabitants had, stay with me, iron chariots.

Remember that? Joshua 1. The very first people that they could not drive out were people with iron chariots. Now, we fast forward several years, probably, a multitude of generations.

And the first compromise that God's people made is that they could not defeat those whom they should have defeated simply because those people had better technology than them. They had God, but these people have iron chariots.

And so they could not do it. By the way, it's never the chariots, right? It's never the tools that people use. It's the failure of the people who are moving with the Lord, their God.

And just to validate that, God brings us to this place where the one who is oppressing them is Sisera. and lo and behold, Sisera has 900 iron chariots.

[37 : 14] And God's command is, go let him come after you with those chariots. And God declares from the very beginning a secured victory. I want to just show you how amazing this victory is.

Because it is God who put Deborah in place to proclaim this prophecy. It is God who summoned Barak from the particular tribes so that people would follow him.

It is God who declared for him to go to Mount Tabor. And as he went from Mount Tabor, he would be on that perfect trajectory to see the plain below him. It was God who told him to go down to the valley of Kishon where the Kishon riverbed is.

Now the Kishon riverbed this time of the year is a very dry riverbed but a very flat plain. And some say that from looking above it, if you were to look over it, you say this is a perfect place to have a war because this is a very flat field and it's all open and it's got a valley on this side, I mean a hill on this side, a hill on this side, Mount Tabor is right here.

It looks like a great place to fight a battle, right? It's a very level field. So he calls him to go to this particular place. It is God who gave very, very clear details. It is also God who happened to move this one descendant of the Kenites.

[38 : 22] You remember him? All of a sudden we're introduced to Heber the Kenite. All we know is that he decided one day to move his family. Now more than likely he moved his family because Barak is building up an army. So Heber the Kenite who's kind of directly or indirectly related to the nation of Israel because of some blood relatives of Moses' father-in-law.

Now we don't know if this man in particular will be Moses' grandfather-in-law or if it's just another name from Moses' father-in-law because we know his father-in-law's name is Rul who is the Midianite, right? So we know that there's some intermarriage there but it is also God who causes Heber to move.

And as Heber moves he is also the one it seems to imply from the text that Heber himself is the one who tells Sisera, hey there's an army building over there. So God tells Heber to move and also has his wife's jail put up the tents in a very particular place.

Now think about this. Now if we read the fifth chapter it tells us that the stars of heaven fought against them. Barak didn't win the battle because God drew them out.

Here's Sisera with his 900 iron chariots who has already been declared to us. the tribe of Judah could not because they had iron chariots and God I can show you how it can be done really quick.

[39 : 37] He calls them into a valley known as the Kishon River that is dry. And all of a sudden in the fifth chapter it tells us it started raining. It tells us we go down into the fifth chapter verse 19 the kings came and fought they fought against the kings of Canaan at Tanakh near the waters of Megiddo they took no plunder and silver the stars fought from heaven from their courses they fought against Sisera now look at verse 21 the torrent of Kishon swept them away the ancient torrent the torrent of Kishon oh my soul march on with strength.

You know what happened is God called a bunch of chariots to a dry riverbed and then he let it start raining and as soon as it started raining what does the very next verse say in the 20th I mean the fifth chapter the horses started beating their hooves all of a sudden it's starting to rain these iron chariots which are heavy guess what happens in a dry riverbed when it gets wet it turns to mud and muck and all of a sudden these chariots which are so advantageous for battle that are full of men who are trained in charioteer warfare not hand to hand combat all of a sudden the iron chariots get heavy they start sinking in the mud the horses are stuck everybody's going crazy and lo and behold God knows exactly how to deliver his people from the thing that they have no power over see he who declares that a victory is sure knows how to secure it because as we are reminded God is not just in control of his people God is in control of all of the universe so even when it's not the rainy season you fight about on a dry riverbed if you're on the wrong side God says let it rain it's going to rain and these charioteers have to get off their chariots and now they've lost their advantage and it is also God who caused Heber to move his family to the exact place that Sisera would run to because Jabin's friends with them right or so it seems until Sisera goes into a tent drinks a little milk falls asleep under a rug and then there's this lady who's really good with a hammer and a tent peg

God always has His person because friend listen to me even when we fail to take God at His word and faithfully obey Him what God has declared will come about will come about when Barak refused God used jail when He wouldn't use a sword He empowered someone to use a tent peg the victory is secure even when man is weak and what we're reminded of is that our sin problem and that which holds us captive that which rules over us and looks so insurmountable that we think we could never defeat it that which we think we could never get rid of that which we think we have no power of friend listen to me it is not based upon our own faithfulness or ability it is based on

He who rules it all and when He says the battle is won the battle is won and what man failed to do He did what we couldn't do through our own efforts through our own works through our own labor He did on the cross and when He says it's finished it's finished the glory is not ours this song in Judges 5 there's a lot of people that are used but all the praise goes to one praise the Lord God for His victory all the praise is His and we're just forced to make a choice what are we going to trust in are we going to trust in our own abilities are we going to trust in our own efforts are we going to trust in our iron chariots are we going to trust in the God who declares His word to us that we walk in faithful obedience to it Judges 4 and 5 thank you for the to trust in our own so