

God's judging of Egypt and Israel's freedom from slavery opened the way to Canaan. God promised Abraham and his descendants – Land. Nationhood. A Name. Blessing.

'I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.' (Exodus 6:8)

Israel's inheritance is a picture of the inheritance we receive in Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:26-29). ***Our inheritance is future glory with Christ (Rom 8:17) – sons of God – our inheritance is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading." (1 Peter 1:4) -- kept in heaven for you.***

Before bringing Israel into the land, God outlined the choices that Israel must make.

'See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.' (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)

Israel was caught in a cycle of covenant breaking. 'The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua' (Joshua 2:7) but after his death, a generation arose who did not know God or what he did for Israel. God: *'I said, I will never break my covenant with you. I said ... you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land but you have not obeyed my voice.'* (2:2) **In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.** (21:25)

Israel was in conflict with Aram (3:8) and Moab (3:14). Despite periods of "peace" (3:30) they were oppressed for "twenty years" by a northern king, Jabin of Hazor (4:2).

'The Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor.'

Once again. The sad sound of defeat. Sin driving us to do what displeases God.

The Ancient Near East was transitioning from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

Jabin's commander Sisera had nine hundred iron chariots. (4:2-3).

Jabin pushed into the Valley of Jezreel where Sisera set up headquarters at the foot of Mount Tabor. Israel cried to God for help (4:3) and God raised up Deborah. (4:4-5)

Prophet Wife Judge Singer. Deborah's story is culturally unexpected

Wise -- had a counselling centre / court room under a palm tree. Only prophet of 12.

Woman – who listened to God. Barak trusted in her leadership. She told him:

"The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'" (4:6-7)

Barak - from Kedesh in Naphtali (Jabin's neighbor) - knew the Canaanite reputation. Israel hadn't won a war for 20 years. Barak was called to look higher than Hazor.

Later she calls Barak to have faith in God. Barak sees iron chariots but not the Lord. **'Barak said, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."** (4:8-10)

The battle plan made little sense. God ordered Barak to lead his troops down Mount Tabor to the plains where the chariots had a decisive advantage. The outcome was:

At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot. 4:15
From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong!
Judges 5:19-21

IT is not very flattering to that glory-loving, battle-seeking creature, Man, that his best-arranged schemes for the destruction of his fellows should often be made to fail by the condition of the weather, Empires fall because of a heavy fall of snow. Storms of rain have more than once caused monarchs to cease to reign. A hard frost, a sudden thaw, a "hot spell," a "cold snap," a contrary wind, a long drought, a storm of sand, — all these things have had their part in deciding the destinies of dynasties, the fortunes of races, and the fate of nations. (The Atlantic May Issue 1862)

Echoes of Exodus. Slavery. Chariots. Water. And then a song of victory to the Lord. Deborah listened to God. Barak learned to trust in God's Word and his wisdom.

Judges 4:17-24

*Sisera knew "any pursuer would hardly think to look in a woman's tent for a man... this would be a breach of cultural etiquette." (Cundall) The tent of Heber was the perfect hiding place! Welcomed inside by Jael, Sisera asked for water but she gave him milk and covered him with a blanket. The exhausted commander went to sleep. He thought he was safe but as he slept Jael picked up a tent peg and a hammer and drove the peg through his head into the ground. **Does Sisera's death make you squirm?** God used a faithful woman – Deborah; fearful Barak, the weather, and a peg through the head.*

Two women act as Judge and Executioner. 5:31 and the land has peace for 40 years.

*Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite,
most blessed of tent-dwelling women. At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay.
At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.
"So may all your enemies perish, LORD! But may all who love you be like the sun
when it rises in its strength. Then the land had peace forty years.*

Judges 5:24-27

Jael used treachery and broke tradition ignoring the principle of Bedouin hospitality. Is God in this? Sisera wasn't innocent. He oppressed Israel and was a *rapist*. (5:30)
If we have a problem with Jael's tent we will have a problem with Jesus on a tree. In Jerusalem, God used the treachery of men who twisted the truth and who used a hammer and spikes to put the Son of God to death. Jesus 'was handed over ..by God's set purpose and foreknowledge ..and was put to death by wicked men' (Acts 2:23)
The wisdom of God is the cross of Jesus where the shame of sin and the dread of death was removed. **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:24)**