

• *Victories – something to sing about!*

Deborah and Barak triumphed over the powerful city-state of Hazor, with its ruler Jabin and its military general Sisera. After the victory comes music and song, ‘Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day:...’ ¹. It reminds us of the song of Moses (‘Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song...’ – Exodus 15:1). This is always the way it is when God’s people get a victory; it turns to jubilation and music and singing. The people of God have something to sing about! Singing has to have a stimulus. For some it is wine that gets them going. For the people of God it is the mighty actions of God in our lives, in which He does unexpected things and delivers us from every kind of enemy. Singing is part of the fullness of the Holy Spirit ². If God has done something mighty for us and we are full of spiritual joy, it bursts out of our heart in one way or another. When the prodigal comes home, when the Pharaohs and the Siseras that are against us are defeated, when persecutors outside of us or sinful ways within us are overthrown, there will be music and song.

¹ 5:1
² Ephesians 5:19

1. When God acts, many people get drawn in

1. When God acts, many people get drawn into what God is doing. In this song Deborah rejoices in the way in which many people got involved in the defeat of Jabin and his armies. Many of the ‘princes’ of Israel, the various tribal leaders, had been willing to get involved in this battle with Sisera.

*²The leaders took the lead in Israel.
The people volunteered to go into battle.
Praise be to Yahweh!*

• *The people willingly offer themselves*

The people had willingly offered themselves. This is always a mark of the blessing of God. When God’s people ‘offer themselves freely’ ¹ it is a cause for great rejoicing.

¹ as Psalm 110:2 puts it

• *A call to join in the praise*

Deborah calls upon everyone to praise God for His mighty interventions.

*³Listen, kings.
Pay attention, rulers!
I myself will sing to Yahweh.
I will make music to Yahweh,
the God of Israel’.*

2. When God acts, it is like a repetition of His salvation

2. When God acts, it is like a repetition of His salvation. Deborah rejoices in the way in which God had acted on behalf of His people. It was as if God travelled from Sinai where He had made Israel into a holy nation. It is inspiring when God hears our prayers and meets our needs and steps in to bless His people in a dramatic way. Deborah compares it to what God had done when He first saved Israel.

• *Deborah compares it to what God did when He first saved Israel*

*⁴Yahweh, in the past you came from Seir.
You marched out from the region of Edom,
The earth shook; the skies rained.
The clouds dropped water.
⁵The mountains shook before Yahweh,
the One who comes from Sinai,
They shook before Yahweh, the God of Israel’.*

• From the south – a reminder of God's dramatic rescue from Egypt

• Helped by torrential rain - the weather does what God wants it to do

3. When God acts, situations change dramatically

• Enemy domination had restricted movement and normal life in the villages and farms

• Idolatry - an honest explanation of the cause of suffering

• God allows defeat then sends a rescuer – a recurring pattern in God's dealings

• Leaders and people willingly volunteer

God acted for His people! 'Will not Yahweh go out before you', Deborah said to Barak ¹. Yahweh came dramatically to rescue Israel in their battle with Sisera. The poet sees God as coming from the south, like someone who had travelled from Egypt or Mount Sinai. It was as if God had come from Mount Sinai to rescue His people in their battle. God arrived from Edom (also called Seir) which was to the south of Israel. The appearing of God from the south was a reminder of what God had done in defeating Pharaoh and leading the people to the land of Canaan ². The description recalls Moses' song in Deuteronomy 33 when God was also said to come from Edom ³. Something similar is found in Habakkuk's psalm ⁴.

When God comes the very earth responds to Him. It shakes at His presence and the weather does what God wants it to. In the battle against Sisera, the defeat of the armies of Hazor was evidently helped by torrential rain: 'The skies rained; the clouds dropped water'. ¹

3. **When God acts, situations change dramatically.** Deborah rejoices in the great changes that came in the nation when God sent her as a rescuer for the land.

⁶*'In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the main roads were empty. Travellers kept to the winding pathways'.*

It was difficult for everyone in the days when Israel was dominated by its enemies. Bandits roamed the country; people were afraid to travel. Convoys of people selling their goods no longer felt free to move through the land.

'Village life in Israel ceased...'

Agricultural productiveness was reduced when raiders were endlessly attacking the farms. Then God sent rescuers: Shamgar, Jael, and especially Deborah!

⁷*'Village life in Israel ceased, it ceased until I, Deborah, arose. I arose to be a mother in Israel'.*

Deborah is honest about the cause of the suffering of Israel.

⁸*'At that time they chose to follow new gods. Because of this, enemies fought us at our city gates. No one could find a shield or a spear among the forty thousand men of Israel'.*

It was idolatry that that brought Israel's defeat upon them. Then when the enemy appeared at the gates of the various towns of Israel, the people had no iron equipment with which to fight back.

This is the way it often is with God's dealings with His people. He allows them to be defeated. He lets them be almost totally overrun by their enemies. And then just at the point where you think the people of God are about to be exterminated altogether, God sends a rescuer. It has happened many times in the story of the church. After God's rescue everything is changed, and the life of the church begins to flow with energy once again.

⁹*'My heart is with commanders of Israel. They were willing volunteers among the people. Praise be to Yahweh'.*

Deborah herself had rejoiced to see the leaders and the people together rousing themselves to get involved in rescuing the nation.

¹ 4:14

² see Deuteronomy 33:2
³ see Deuteronomy 33:2
⁴ see Habakkuk 3:3

¹ 5:4

• Everyone should know and everyone must praise God

¹⁰ Tell out the story!
You who ride on white donkeys,
sitting on your saddle blankets,
and you who walk along the road’.

• A new unity and a new certainty leading to dramatic victory

Deborah wants everyone to know about this. ‘Tell out the story!’ ‘You who ride on white donkeys’ must refer to the leaders of the land. ‘You who walk along the road’ refers to the ordinary people. Everyone must praise God for the marvellous victory He has given His people.

This is what it is like when God acts to restore and revive His people. There is a new unity, a new certainty that God is at work, and the church of God is dramatically lifted out of its defeat and weakness.



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