

Judges 08-03-07b

Let's resume our study now in the book of Judges, chapter 5. We have seen in verse 21 and 22 that the might of the heavens that is supposedly behind the armies of Jabin, under the command of Sisera, has been brought to naught by the lowly brook Kishon. The phrase there that some translate as a step on the necks of the strong, this is Deborah making an exclamation of praise and thanksgiving. She has a strong soul.

She knows the will of God. She knows the word of God. And this is an opportunity, one of those rare cases where you see God in His delivering grace, in His active intervention in bringing about what seemed to be impossible, this mighty army with all of its chariots, all of its horses, all of its experienced soldiers, brought to naught by the relatively lowly and much underrated armies of Israel.

So she says, March on, my strong soul. And then she continues to point out how the horse's hooves were struck and the steeds just go romping off in every direction, just creating havoc. Now we come to verse 23, which in the New King James says, Curse Meraz, said the angel of the Lord.

Curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Beginning in verse 24, you have the story of J.L. and the famous, if I had a hammer, sequence. But this verse 23 seems oddly placed.

You could imagine going directly from verse 22 to verse 24, you don't even need 23. What is going on in Meraz? Who or what is Meraz, and why is it here? Well, if you read any, virtually any commentary, at least all the ones I checked, it is believed that Meraz was some sort of a town or village in the path of the retreating armies of Sisera, that should have come out and helped the Israelites to despoil, ravage, and otherwise defeat and rout these Canaanite armies, and they didn't. And so the angel of the Lord has showed up and said, a curse upon them, a curse upon them, they didn't come to the help of the Lord, etc.

Here is the problem. There is no place called Meraz anywhere in the land of Israel, certainly not anywhere near the Brook Tishon, anywhere near this valley, there is no such place. There never has been, archeology hasn't turned it up, it's mentioned nowhere else in the Bible.

And why would this insignificant, unknown village rate a visit by the angel of the Lord, who hasn't been heard of since Judges chapter 2 and verse 3, to come down and curse them? How many other towns and villages no doubt sent no people? This to me sticks out like a very sore, very stubbed, and very bloody thumb. It just makes no sense at all. Can you make any sense out of this? Curse Meraz, and this is very powerful in Hebrew, in verse 23 you have, three times in the space of a little over a line, you've got the word curse, three different times.

Curse Meraz, says the angel of the Lord, it says, There is no word for bitterly, this is the word curse repeated. It's like dying thou shalt die. It's emphatic, it means really, really curse them.

Curse them big time. Double curse, double whammy. Boo on Meraz, is what this would appear to say.

But, how do we, every word proceeds out of the mouth of God, all scripture is God breathed and is profitable. If I don't know who or what Meraz is, I can't make any sort of interpretation, much less application of this verse. So we need to figure this out.

Well, I checked every commentary I have, and nobody said anything other than, I can tell you for example, one of my favorite light treatment commentaries, in other words it doesn't go into any depth, and it uses the English text and so on, is the Bible knowledge commentary published from the folks at Dallas Seminary. And they say basically, let me see if I can find it here, that a curse was pronounced on Meraz, perhaps located on the route of Sisera's flight, for failure to aid in the battle, but a blessing was pronounced on jail for her act of slaying Sisera. And that's all it says.

Well, this is sort of experiencing God, join God in His work when God is routing the Canaanites, you should jump in and help Him route the Canaanites, and if you don't you're going to be violently cursed, I guess would be the application. Well, to give you not the lengthy amount of investigation into this, I need to give you just a little bit of Hebrew, just so you know what I'm talking about. If you were to guess, what would you think angel of the Lord is in Hebrew? What's the Hebrew word for angel slash messenger? I'll give you a hint, it's also the name of the last book of the Old Testament.

Malak. Malaki is my messenger, right? Malachi, my messenger. So the angel of the Lord is Malak Yahweh.

Malak Yahweh. Now, you spell Malak in Hebrew, M-A-L-A-K. M-A-L-A-K.

What is the Hebrew word for king? Melek. M-E-L-E-K. Malak.

Melek. Same consonants, different, slightly different vowel pointing. But, of course, in the ancient text, there were no vowel points, and you just had to figure out what was being said from context.

Well, the key turns here on Meroz. Meroz is an odd word. M-E-R-O-Z.

And in Hebrew, the consonantal text, you have M-R-O-Z. You've got sort of a matris lectionis here, or you've got the wow actually serving as a, as a, you know, standing in, instead of a vowel point, you have the actual vowel embedded in the word. Meroz.

So, we say, well, if Neroz is not a place, maybe it's something else. So you start looking to figure out, well, how could this word have come into being? Well, I am going to go back up to a verse that I emphasized on purpose at the beginning of the last lesson. I read to you in the English a couple of times Judges, chapter 5, verse 3. This is near the beginning of the song.

We are now near the end of the song, right? Deborah says in verse 3, Give ear, who? O King. Give ear, kings. Give ear, princes.

So what do you think the word is for king in verse 3? M L K Just like Malak down in in our verse. Now, we have Meroz down there, and we don't know what that is. I'm saying we don't know what that is.

I don't buy the story that it's some obscure village. It just doesn't make any sense. Plus, it doesn't make any sense to me that they would be cursed because they didn't come to God's aid.

Since when does God need any aid for anything? And since when does anybody get cursed for failing to aid the Lord? It's unheard of. There is no place else where anybody gets cursed for not aiding Yahweh. It's really a strange verse.

So I come back up here to verse 3, because Scripture interprets itself. Many times you find answers in the nearby context. And I look up here, and I say, well, you know what? I've got these very same consonants up in verse 3. I also have them in the middle when we were looking at the kings who came down and were attacking with Sisera.

So up here in verse 3 we have Melek. It's in the plural, or the dual. Malakim Malakim She says, Hear, O kings, give ear, O princes.

Now, the word Meroz down there is supposedly the name of a village, M-E-R-O-Z, right? Well, you know that you can turn a verb into a noun by putting maim in the front, and so I'm looking at this R-O-Z construct thinking, well, maybe this has something to it. Maybe that M doesn't belong. Well, in verse 3 she says, Give ear, O princes.

And oddly enough, the word for princes in verse 3 is R-O-Z R-O-Z N-I-M Roznim Roznim So we had Malak and Rose in very close proximity, those two consonant groups up in verse 3. And that's as much as I'm going to belabor the Hebrew with you. There are rules for figuring out how words divide, whether or not it is legitimate to postulate a possible corruption of the text, to what extent. You want to not just go in and make the text say anything you want it to say, but if you can re-divide a text, if you say, well, perhaps this particular letter was misread and there are certain letters that are substituted very commonly by scribal error, R for D, for example, and so on.

In going through all of that, which I'll save for some other time, this is my conclusion. In this verse, verse 23, what is actually what this originally said has nothing to do with a village called Meraz, and it has nothing to do with the angel of the Lord, who has not been mentioned anywhere else in this context, and you would expect the angel of the Lord to say something about the tribe of Reuben, or the tribes in Gilead, or to address himself to Israel, not some obscure apparently Canaanite village, or there's no Israelite town mentioned in any of all of those border lists that we had in Joshua, there was no Meraz in there. So, by slightly amending,

and I think correcting the text, here's what we get.

The first word in verse 23 is curse. The second word is this Meraz. Then we have Amar, which is the word for say, A-M-A-R, and then we have Malak, and then Yahweh.

Curse Meraz says curse angel of the Lord. Seems real straightforward, that's why nobody has really tried to figure out what's the matter with it. What I think this actually says is cursed are the princes and the kings.

Cursed are you, oh princes and kings. The Lord will surely curse, and this is either the princes or, after you have Yahweh, curse, Yahweh, and then you have Yashbeah, which is from Yashav and Hu, and it's a feminine, so it's her inhabitants. Yashav means to dwell in a place.

And so her her dwellers, if you will. And they're saying, well, her dwellers, this must be the feminine referring to this village. It's a really odd, odd, it doesn't lay down and act right in the text.

Something's the matter. And I will tell you honestly, I'm not quite sure what happened to this section. I think, having decided what the first line said, the early scribes trying to copy this text did something to this latter part that I can't quite figure out.

But the gist of it is, Deborah has returned to the original theme, and to the central theme, and now she's at the end. And she's saying, she's going back to those kings and princes. What is the overarching message of this episode? Failure in leadership, right? Once the battle is won, once the crisis is resolved, once the deliverance from God has come, what are the people of God supposed to come away with? Now think about this, I'm asking you a question.

They've been oppressed by Jabin, they've fought the armies of Sisera, God gave them a great victory. What have we learned? This is what the Marine Corps does, you go out, you fight a thing, you come back. Lessons learned.

After action. We're going to write an after action report. What are our lessons learned? There ought to be a lesson learned.

And what is it? Well, everybody knows, don't worship those idols. You know, God's going to be unhappy about that. But what is the specific aspect? There was a failure in leadership.

And when God provided a clear signal as to, here is the path of deliverance, here is the path of reconciliation and restoration and restitution and getting back on track. You've taken a detour into the darkness, here's the path back to the light. You've left God, here is the way of return.

Who is supposed to lead the way? The kings and the princes of Israel. That's why Deborah addressed this song to them. It's lessons learned to the leadership of Israel.

Deborah says, look, I'm not always going to be around to be your mama. I'm the mother of Israel. I'm the mama in Israel.

I don't want to have to be your mama. You men need to step up. You kings and you princes, you need to exercise leadership.

Cursed are the princes. Cursed are the kings. Absolutely cursed.

Cursing you are cursed by Yahweh because when He came as helper against the mighty, you did not come when Yahweh came as a deliverer against the mighty. Remember I said earlier that when we were talking about the stars and it says that the stars fought against Sisera, and I said that it's not against because it's men. Well now we have against the mighty and guess what? There's no men here.

It's in or on or among the mighty. Yahweh the helper, Yahweh not against the mighty that would be al. It's in by or with.

The preposition bait. Second letter of the Hebrew aleph bait. That's what they call it.

They don't call it the alphabet. It's called it because in Greek it's alpha beta so they say well it's the alphabet. Well in Hebrew it's the aleph bait.

Aleph bait. Bait's the second letter. Bait looks like a little house and it's the preposition that means in, by or with.

The kings and the princes are absolutely cursed. Cursed are you oh kings and princes. Yahweh has cursed you certainly because you did not come.

When Yahweh helped among the mighty. That's wrapping up that first section. Now this is really going to make sense as we go forward in verse 24.

And we read this, it's fascinating in the original but it's pretty good in the English. Most blessed among women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Blessed is she among women in tents.

He asked for water, she gave milk, she brought out cream in a lordly bowl, she stretched her hand to the tent peg, her right hand to the workman's hammer, she pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, etc. Now think back because we've been trying to straighten out this whole thing with the stars and the horses and the brook and who is where doing what. What is the imagery in the central part of this poem? What is the thrust of this entire chapter? The failure of leadership.

And God says, you know, I can't even use the leadership. I can't get one of the princes or one of the kings and raise him up to deliver Israel. I've got to use someone like Deborah.

Someone out of the ordinary. Someone who's calling is not to be a leader. She's a mother in Israel not a king or a prince.

And this is a rebuke. It's a slap in the back of the head to Israel. What's the matter with you? Just popping them.

God says, you know, all day long I hold up my hands to a disobedient people who show me the neck. Stiff neck means they show me the neck. They turn around and walk away.

All I see is their neck. And God's just popping them in the back of the head. Come back here.

And he's doing it with Deborah. Now who is getting this object lesson? Who is supposed to learn this lesson about leadership in Israel? The leaders of Israel, right? And what is the central Jabin is the king and he's in Hazor. Sisera is the general and he's got all of these chariots and he's got the mighty army.

The kings of Canaan have made a coalition and they're coming with him. Look at what happens to the Canaanite princes and they've got the rulers of the heavens on their side. They've got the stars coming down and fighting for them.

And God uses the brook to just wash them all away and knock their horses hooves out from underneath. It's just like if you just imagine slapping the horses hooves aside and everything falls over and comes apart. That's the lesson.

And Deborah says look you princes, look you kings in Israel. When the Lord God is on your side the brook is enough. These people that flow down out of the hills are enough to knock out.

Being a king and a prince is no great shakes. Look at what God has done to Jabin. Look at what he's done to Sisera.

Look at what he's done to these mighty chariots. Back then they would have called the chariots the king of battle. Nobody can beat a chariot.

God beats them just fine. There's no value in sitting on the white donkey. There's no value in wearing the judge's robe.

There's no value in being a king and a prince. You're cursed if you're a king and a prince. And you do not come to the aid of the people.

God has come to the aid of the people. God came to their aid because you did not. God has come and done your job for you.

You should have delivered these people. God is not supposed to have to supernaturally intervene anymore. Remember the early days of the church, the early days of the age of Israel.

Any new dispensation, God marks it out with miracles. God provides great amounts of help and supernatural manifestations and miracles and signs of authority because you need help until the leadership generation gets on its feet. Once your apostles, once your pastors, once your elders in Israel get on their feet and fully incorporate the lessons, God steps back.

He says, alright, take it. Just like parents raising their children. When you're young, I do your hygiene, I do your feeding, I do your schedule, I do your transportation, I do everything.

As you get older, I do less and less of that. Feed yourself. Dress yourself.

Clean yourself up. Organize yourself. Get yourself from place to place.

Here's your driver's license. You drive. More and more independence, parents step back so that that person comes to maturity and is fully functional on their own and can hopefully, if you're a good parent, they will reflect all of the good that is in your image.

They will come to be like you in being organized and squared away and responsible and accountable and trustworthy and so forth. This is what God is doing with his people. God says, be like me.

Be holy. Be sanctified. Purge out the evil things.

Be dedicated. Pursue righteousness. Be characterized by righteousness.

Don't stand in the way of sinners. Don't sit in the seat of the scornful. Delight yourself in the truth.

Meditate in it day and night. Be like a tree that is fruitful and brings forth fruit in its season. Just like God is creative and God brings forth great things.

That's what his people are supposed to do. You're never going to do that if God steps in and does everything for you. One of the hardest things is when somebody is weakened in some way and they are supposed to get their strength back.

They've got to do for themselves. Your instinct is, well, let me help you. You're a child.

Let me help you. Well, if you keep helping and helping, how are they ever going to get strong? You have to step back and let them do it for themselves. This is what God is doing with the nation of Israel.

In the land, he's stepping back. I'm not going to rain down hail on your enemies anymore. You pick up your sword and defeat them yourself.

God didn't rain down hail on the enemies of David. God didn't rain down hail on the Philistines when Jonathan was fighting them with his armor bearer. Israel has been matured.

Israel has been given everything they need. Israel is supposed to stand on their own two feet, swing their own sword, win their own battles. God says, I will be with you.

I will drive them out from before you if you operate in faith, but I want you to do it yourself. God could have just sent some kind of aides all through the land of Canaan. Everybody could have flaked out and died.

It would have just been a vacant lot. They could have moved in and built their stuff, taken over the empty villages. God didn't do that.

He wanted them to take it. So, the princes are supposed to step up. Leadership, those tasked with authority and responsibility, are supposed to step up and exercise it.

Take charge. Implement. Make policy.

Implement policy. Hold people accountable. Chastise when necessary.

Rebuke when necessary. What does Paul tell Timothy? You need to step up and preach the word in season, out of season. Rebuke.

Correct. Instruct. That's your job.

You're a pastor. Don't let people intimidate you because you're young. Remember all that? It's all in the pastoral epistles.

Paul says, you've got to step up. Both of those epistles are basically telling Timothy, come on, man. You've got to come out from under the shadow.

You don't have to be the second banana. You're a pastor. You rebuke and exhort with all authority.

Preach the word in season, out of season. Authoritatively. These princes and these kings, and I think it's really tragic because I believe that verse 23 has been corrupted and the central theme of this passage has been robbed of its sting and its power because Deborah says, you kings and princes who are not doing your job, you are cursed because it took a woman to galvanize the people of Israel and lead them to this victory which was easy.

Once people stepped up and came down from the hills, these people came in and they didn't value their own lives. Naphtali and Zebulun came down. They didn't value their life unto death is what it says about Zebulun.

They did not value their lives unto death. Naphtali took the high ground is what it literally says. Naphtali came and took the high ground.

Naphtali for crying out loud. Where's Judah? Do you notice which two tribes are not mentioned in the ten tribes that are referenced here? Gilead references some, not by name. Machir mentions some, and Manasseh not by name.

Two tribes are not even mentioned. Who's the leadership tribe in Israel? Who is going to bear the scepter until Shiloh come? You see Judah mentioned anywhere in here? They are conspicuous by their absence. And who's down there intermingled with Judah? Simeon.

Simeon's not there either. Of course the Levites are supposed to be leading in worship and maintaining the sacrificial ritual teaching system in Israel. But where's Judah? Naphtali and Zebulun for crying out loud are coming down and taking this fight to the enemy, taking the high ground, throwing themselves at the enemy, disregarding life and limb.

Zebulun and Naphtali. The people in Judah ought to just be red-faced and embarrassed. What is the matter with us? Reuben, the firstborn, sitting around his campfire saying, boy, you know, something really ought to be done.

Well, let's have another meeting tomorrow night. We'll talk about it some more. And in the meantime, the victory is won, and they're not a part of it.

And God says, you're cursed, you leaders who fail to lead. God sends deliverance to His people, and you're not a part of it. He has to deliver in spite of you instead of through you.

You're cursed. You're doubly cursed. The word curse is in there three times.

Well, it's all about the princes. It's about those who are high. And He says, look, the implication is you're going to end up just like old King Jabin.

You're going to end up just like those kings of the Canaanites and like this Prince General Sisera. You're going to come to a bad end. Being a prince and being a judge and riding your little white donkey with your fancy robes is going to be a curse instead of a blessing.

You think you're hot stuff? You think you're a big noise in Israel? Well, God says, you're thrice cursed as a king and a prince. And this is such a beautiful piece of poetry here, because this final section about J.L. Notice, great Grand Sisera comes in and expects to be treated like a prince. And so she gives him this greatly decorated, this lordly bowl.

This really fancy bowl full of milk. You know, I have drunk the milk of kings. They're talking about how royal it is.

It's not just water, it's milk. Milk is much harder to come by than water. And yet he gets this lordly treatment.

He says, well, no more than I deserve. I mean, I've had a little bad turn today in the battle, but hey, I'm in here now and I'm being treated like the royalty I am. I get this really fancy bowl.

I get this wonderful warm milk. But who is going to be the victor on this day? Is it the prince? Is it the general? Is it the king? No. It's a foreign woman.

A Kenite woman. He asked for water. She did better.

She gave him milk. She brought out cream in a lordly bowl. This is any kind of dairy product.

It could have been curds or the milk and cream. Whatever it was, it's all the same thing. It's just two different words, meaning it was sort of a luxurious... They used to eat a lot of these goat curds and things.

Have you ever had goat's milk? Have you ever tried goat's milk? Those people were made out of sturdier stuff than I am to drink goat's milk. If I had to live on goat's milk, I think I would

probably not make it. That is the nastiest... I don't know how goats drink it.

Anyway, she gave him some sort of a... I don't know that this was cow milk, goat milk. It was some kind of a dairy product as all this refers to. It's often used for things like curds, sort of a dairy, kind of a cottage cheese kind of a thing.

So she brought him his cottage cheese in a decorated bowl. Like little Miss Tuffet eating her curds and whey. Now she stretched her hand to the tent peg, her right hand to the workman's hammer.

Now, why would this necessarily be the implement of choice? Why didn't she get the kitchen knife? Why didn't she get a big rock? Well, it's not a well-known fact, but even today, in Bedouin communities and in these itinerant traveling Arab sort of community, tribal, vagabond people out in the desert, guess who pitches the tents? It's the women. The women pitch the tents. And in all of that rough country, if you've ever seen the way the ground is out there, they know how to pound a peg or two.

They've got a big old hammer and they've got a big old peg, and she's got a Popeye-type right arm. These guys are moving, they're itinerant, they're wandering, they've got this Bedouin lifestyle, they migrate, they follow the grass for their flocks and things, and they're currently up there spending a few months not too far from Jabin, and they're on friendly terms, no harm, no foul, we're just up here grazing our flocks. You're the king, okay, fine, good enough.

Heber doesn't want any big quarrel. They're just passing through. And who pitched the tent? J.L. pitched the tent.

And she is one... John Henry's got nothing on her. She's got the hammer and a little piece of wood. And she can pound tent pegs all day long.

These were not your little pup tents, your little shelter halves. These are like these big circus tent... This is like a GP medium, if you're familiar with those. This is a big honking tent, and it's got lots of poles, lots of skins, they're heavy, they've got upright poles in the middle.

And the women would go around and pound in these pegs. And she had her own favorite hammer, nice hard wood hammer with a long handle on it, and she's got to supply these tent pegs in case one pulls loose or gets lost, falls off the camel or whatever. And so the guys lay in there, and she says, you know what? The maximum amount of force that I know how to exert on anything is tent pegs.

I can... This is a skill that she has. It's easy, she can do it in her sleep. And it's just one more peg, which is one more peg to drive.

So she stretched her hand to the tent peg, her right hand to the workman's hammer. And the narrative slows down here to savor the scene, to enjoy the moment. It's kind of a slow motion effect.

So you see Cicera laying there, and he's just caught his cheese, he's feeling pretty good, he's got his little decorated bowl sitting beside him. He lays down, and then in slow motion you see Jael reaching out with her right hand and grabbing her great big hammer. It wasn't Maxwell's silver hammer, it was a great big wooden mallet.

And she reaches over with her left hand, she gets this big sharp wooden stake. Then it says, she pounded Cicera, she pierced his head, she split and struck through his temple. There are four different words in Hebrew, and they're all onomopoeitic.

Let me see if I can find them for you here, and read them. All of them have A-M and A in them. There's halma, halma almost sounds like hammer.

She halma'd him, she ma-ha-ha'd him, halma, ma-ha-ha, then she crushed, ma-ha-za, and then she shattered, kal-pa. When you say these all together, halma, ma-ha-ka, ma-ha-za, kal-pa, it's just pound, pound, pound. I just can't convey it like it is in Hebrew.

It's just really a great, slow-motion, steak-through-the-head kind of a moment. This is very ripe with enjoyment here. You get the idea that Deborah is really savoring this moment.

And each of these verbs gets more and more specific. You start with the striking, and then you move to the crushing, and the shattering, and the piercing. They're very violent, destructive words.

The camera does not pan away to the roof of the tent while Sister's head is being pierced. It zooms in. The Bible's camera zooms in on the head.

Why? Is this just sort of a Marine Corps type of wife here that she just says, you know, I'm going to get this guy and get him good? There's a point to this. Sisera represents, because Jabin is not on hand. Jabin is probably a corpulent king.

He's sitting up there in the ashes of Hazor waiting to hear the news. Sisera is the strong prince leading the armies. He's the general.

He's the big cheese. He is the equivalent on the Canaanite side to these judges and princes and kings in Israel. And when the Bible zeroes in, it says, see what happens to this guy when he gets overconfident, when he drinks his curds out of his little decorated bowl and thinks he's being treated in a lordly fashion, and he gets comfortable, and he gets careless, and he gets lax, and he's no longer thinking about his army.

You remember, by way of contrast, when Uriah the Hittite comes back, the whole David and Bathsheba incident, and David says, you know, we've got to get Uriah together with Bathsheba to cover this pregnancy. Uriah comes back from the battlefield. David says, give me a report.

Uriah gives it. He says, okay, well, go visit your wife. Have a good time.

You're back home from the front. I'm sure she'd appreciate a visit there. I'll go ahead and have

some cohabitation there, and maybe you'll have a child in a while.

That's his thinking. And Uriah says, while the armies of Israel are in the field, I'm not taking any form of comfort. I'm going to sleep out on the ground.

And he just makes his bed out on the stones, just like the army, which is what David should have been doing. Sisera has just suffered a defeat. His men are scattered all over the place.

What's his duty and responsibility as the prince general leader of this army? He needs to be reforming and regrouping and gathering his scattered and his wounded and taking them back and doing something. What is he doing? He's hiding in a woman's tent, drinking out of a fancy bowl, having some cottage cheese, and laying down for a nap. And he represents, on the other side, the same kind of prince and king that Israel has had.

This is a condemnation and a rebuke of that kind of superficial, self-centered, self-serving leadership. It's one of the fundamental principles of being an officer, that you look out for your troops. You look out for your men.

They come first. They eat first. Everything related to them comes first.

Sisera is the exact opposite. So Deborah points out, she says, you know what happens to guys like this? They get comfortable and loose-sided their duty, and they lay down for a nap? Tap, tap, tap, tap, pound, pound, smash, smash, pierce, pierce, is what these verbs tell us. And the Bible zooms in.

It says, look at this guy's head leaking on the ground, O prince, O king, because this is you. That's why it's so important to understand verse 23. You are cursed by God.

You are surely, utterly cursed by God, you princes, you kings, who do not come to the aid of God's people when God comes to their aid. You can see your fate reflected in what happens to Sisera here. You'd better wake up and fulfill your responsibility.

Remember what I suggested in the past week or two? All of us, you and I, have areas of authority where we basically are the prince. We are the king. We are the one responsible and accountable to make certain things happen, whether it's in our own life, in our own soul.

Remember, as goes the nation, so goes the individual. A king and a prince in Israel, who's the captain of your ship? Who's the master of your soul? Who decides your priorities and what you're going to do? How you're going to proceed? What order you're going to perform your tasks in? Which ones you're going to do and which ones you're not going to do? Do we get comfortable? Do we get lazy? Do we become apathetic and indifferent? Do we no longer strive aggressively? Do we no longer watch and pray? Do we no longer take up our cross and follow, denying ourselves, making ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service? Getting sloppy, getting apathetic, eating a little cream and laying down for a nap has consequences. That's the point of this poem.

Her right hand pounded Sisera, pierced his head, split, and struck through his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still. At her feet he sank, and he fell where he sank, there he fell, dead.

Do you get the point now of verse 27? This mighty prince has fallen, did I say he had fallen? Yes, he has fallen, and he fell, and now he has fallen, and he fell. How the mighty are fallen! Lucifer, son of the morning, how the mighty are fallen! Lucifer, son of the morning, you have fallen, how many times does it have to say it? It says it like six times. He is at the feet of a woman.

Remember the guy that got hit by the thing, and he says, kill me quick, because a woman dropped a rock on my head? I don't want it to be said forever that I was killed by a woman, and forever after he's known as the man who was hit by a woman on the head and had to have somebody kill him so he wouldn't be known as the man who was killed by a woman, and he essentially was. Well, so is Sisera, and this is a rebuke, it is a chastisement, it is a warning, it is a red flag waving, it is a gong being pounded with a hammer. Wake up! You're going to fall, and you're going to stay fallen, and you're going to lay there, and you're going to be dead.

All of your princely-ness, and your decorated bowl, and your robes, and your tawny donkey, and all the rest of the stuff that you had is going to be worthless when you're sitting there with a big pole through your head. Now, it closes with a real interesting reference. The mother of Sisera looked through the window, cried out through the lattice, Why is this chariot so long in coming? And we get this sort of pathetic view that we kind of feel sorry for Mrs. Sisera.

Actually, if he's Sisera Junior, then she's Mrs. Sisera, because that's Sisera Senior. She's looking through the window, Where's this chariot? Why is it taking so long? The wise lady answers herself, Well, they're finding and dividing that spoil we were talking about, all that silver that was going to be ripped off the dead bodies. There was so much loot, they're still out there picking it all up.

Sisera is getting dyed garments, and garments that are embroidered and dyed, and two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter, and so on. He's out there just getting more and more treasure to bring back to me and to whoever else. And you have this very carefully designed, very artfully drawn contrast.

There is a mother in Israel, and there is a mother in Hatzor. There's a mother in Israel, and there's a mother in that town that Sisera had his headquarters in. Remember something Hirosh? I have to look it back up again.

That's where his mother is. So you've got his mother, the princely mother, the mother waiting for the loot, waiting for the booty and the embroidered garments, and all of the accoutrements and trappings of princely, kingly, general-type victories. And you've got Deborah and Jael, these lowly women in Israel.

Who is ultimately victorious? Who is ultimately the better off? You have the contrast of the two

kinds of princes, the Canaanite princes and the Israelite princes. And one has fallen, and the others are going to fall if they don't do something different. And then you have the lowly, the humble.

God resists the proud, but God gives grace to the humble. And Deborah and Jael are immortalized for all time as victors and as conquerors and as those with a strong soul who appreciate God and His deliverance. That's the message of this chapter.

That's the message of the Song of Deborah. All of us have responsibility. All of us have areas of accountability and authority over ourselves or over others.

And we have to be diligent. We have to be faithful. We have to be dedicated to reflect the glory of God, both in conducting ourselves and in whatever responsibilities we have for the conduct of others.

If we do not, if we're sloppy, if we're indifferent, if we're apathetic and lazy, the curse of God will fall upon us, everything that we touch, everything that we do. Sisera's army was routed long before he got the peg through the head. So, this brings us now to the summation in verse 31.

Thus let all your enemies perish, O Lord, but let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength. Let it be like the sun when it comes out in full strength. And this is Gebur, the same word that's used for the mighty, that God is among, that God is with.

And as a result of this, the land has rest for 40 years. Once again, there was leadership provided. Once again, there was a response even though it's only half the tribes.

And where they did have rest for 80 years, half the tribes came out, now they got rest for 40 years. This brings us now to chapter 6, and we'll pick up with the longest and most detailed account in the entire book of Judges, the story of Gideon, next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the clear way that you communicate to us the truth of your plan and purpose through the pages of your word. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will enlighten us, illuminate our hearts and our path through these things that we have studied. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.