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APPENDIX:

Deborah

Often in a discussion of women's roles in the church, Judges 4 is referenced regarding Deborah the prophetess, the only recorded female judge of Israel. Because of her position within Israel as a political leader and prophetess, Deborah is used by some in their attempts to justify women as spiritual leaders in the church, filling the roles of both pastors and elders. Below is an outline with brief comments about this issue. This is not meant to be an in-depth study, only information for your consideration.

Deborah -- Judges 4

A. Deborah was a wife, prophetess and judge -- vss. 4-5



"Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, 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."

She was a wife, prophetess and judge. First, it is important to note that none of these three positions were that of a spiritual leader. As a wife, biblically Deborah was to be the helpmate of her husband and subject to him (Gen. 2:18; 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:22-24). As a prophetess, she was a messenger of God, but never was a prophetess in the Bible a spiritual leader (See article titled, "Women: Keep Silent in the Church.") Deborah was also a judge. This was a political position and not a spiritual one. Please note as well that a woman being a judge in Israel was not the norm, but an exception. Therefore, to try and justify that women can be spiritual leaders in the church based upon Judges 4, especially in light of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, is a misrepresentation and misuse of the Scriptures.

Why did God make Deborah a judge in Israel? The Scriptures do not specifically state why, though they seem to indicate an answer. The evidence as to why Deborah was a judge of Israel may be seen in the fact that the men of Israel were not willing to do the task. This is demonstrated by the fact that not even Barak, the head of Israel's military, was willing to lead his men into battle

against their oppressors without Deborah at his side. And because of his cowardice, the victory of the battle was given to another woman which was a mark of humiliation to Barak (Jud. 4:9; cf. 5:24-27). It also was a humiliation for Israel because women influencing the nation was considered a sign of weakness (cf. Isa. 3:12). Thus God used a woman to embarrass Barak and Israel, giving her the victory instead of a man. As a note, this is probably the main reason why often women assume the positions which men are called of God to do -- because the men are unwilling to do them.

- B. Barak, the commander of the army, was sent by God to go to war -- vs. 6-7

"Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, 'Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, "Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. 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.'"

Please note that God sent Barak and not Deborah to war. Please note as well that Deborah did not try to usurp Barak's role and authority. She wanted Barak to lead the men into battle as she desired to do things according to what God commanded, having a man be Israel's military leader.

- C. Barak was afraid to go without Deborah -- vs. 8

"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.'"

Barak did not have the courage to do what God had commanded him even though God had promised the victory. This shows the dismal state of Israel and the men of Israel at that time.

- D. Barak lost his honor to a woman because of his lack of faith -- vs. 9

"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 Kedesh.'"

Deborah went along with Barak only because he would not have otherwise gone. He, the commander of the army of Israel, was a coward; and if he as the army's commander lacked faith and courage, then one might assume that his soldiers were no braver than he.

- E. God gave the honor of the victory to Jael (a woman) -- vs. 21

"But Jael, 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." (cf. 5:24-27)

It was a dishonor for Barak not to trust God, so to his shame the victory was given to a woman. Why did this bring shame on him? First Peter 3:7 tells husbands:

"You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." (emphasis added)

Scripture is clear that women are created differently than men. They are weaker and created to be a helpmate: "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Gen. 2:18; emphasis added). God did not create women to lead men, but to help those who lead.

Does this mean that women do not have the ability to lead? No. There are women who are excellent leaders. Even though this is true, this does not mean that they are to be in positions of leadership which God has forbidden them from holding, such as being a spiritual leader in the church. And though women are not to be in positions of leadership in the church, this does not make them less than men. They simply have a different role to fulfill, one that is also of great importance. As in the Trinity, all three members are equal, though the Son and the Holy Spirit are in subjection to the Father.

Galatians 3:28-29 says:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." (emphasis added)

In Christ, all are equal, though the roles and levels of responsibility are different. Therefore, what is important is that believers are obedient to God's Word and fulfill the roles to which He has called them.