

Judges chapter 4 and 5

Mulan is a famous story about a female warrior. Her story was taught to the Chinese for many generations. This Chinese war story was made into a film and was well received in the western world. Deborah is a female warrior found in the Bible in the book of Judges. She is much more than a physical warrior in a war as we study today.

Book of Judges describes the period between the death of Joshua and the leadership of a king (about 1400BC to 1051BC). It was a time of cycles of sin and God's deliverance on the Israelites. Chapters 3 to 16 cover the 7 apostasies (cycles that have involved 7 judges). Deborah was one of the Judge. Chapters 17 to 21 cover the era where Israelites were in confusion and moral deterioration, and later raised a war against the non-Jews.

Deborah was a judge that is described in Judges chapter 4 and 5:

1) A judge

At that time period, a judge was chosen by God to serve the people mainly as a ruler on deciding civil affairs. A judge was respected by the people. Deborah has great wisdom to answer and solve issues as well as trusted by people. As shown in Judges 4:8 "Barak said to her, if you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." that she has influence and was trusted by the Israelites. She was a good ruler as a judge where she ruled during the crisis and 40 years afterward (Judges 5:31).

2) A wife and mother

Judges 4:4 mentioned she is wife of Lappidoth. Judges 5:7 mentioned she was "a mother in Israel". She was able to balance her family life with her called on full time duty as judge and war leader. A wife in the OT time is much more difficult than in today's society. No mention of her children in the Bible, and thus some Christians interpret Judges 5:7 as symbolizing her care for the Israelites.

3) A prophetess

She was a prophetess because she represented God to deliver messages to the people. God chose prophetess like her because she followed God's heart. Take

Judges 4:6 as an example. She was direct and has confidence in God: “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you....” Judges 4:14 is another good example, “Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?...”

4) A warrior

Deborah was a warrior that was chosen by God to deliver His people. she followed God’s direction. She was brave and have confidence. She went with Barak to the front line. Judges 4:12 described the highly equipped enemy army of “nine hundred chariots fitted with iron” versus the limited weapons the Israelites had. Deborah was confidence because she has faith in God.

5) A poet

Deborah with Barak made a psalm for this event. She was educated and talented with gift like poetry/song writing. She was humble because she gave the glory to God for the success of this whole battle. Judges 5 is her song with Barak on praises to God. It contains phases such as “sing to the Lord”, “praise the Lord”, “recite the victories of the Lord” etc. It ended with “... But may all who love you be like the sun where it rises in its strength.”.

Deborah was not just a war warrior. She lived in a fully multi-tasking life with great success. A female does not need to be confined in a simple role as demonstrated on various females in the Old Testament and New Testament.

The book of Judges is about disobedience that results in judgment. The Israelites’ behaviors show us what not to do. The Israelites continued to disobey and suffered without learning from previous mistakes. But God has mercy, judges were called to restore them and Deborah was one of them. We learned how God used Deborah where she displaced multiple great qualities that we can learn from. When one truly follows God, God gives wisdom and spiritual gifts to him/her for the purpose of His kingdom.