

## GOD CHOSE PROPHETESSES

***Judges 4:4*** And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

***Judges 4:5*** And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Today's message is to encourage and edify sisters in their walk and ministries. Here was a woman called Deborah in the days of the Judges. All the Judges were men, except Deborah. Her name meant a "bee" and, indeed, she was busy as a bee for the Lord. Her husband's name was Lapidoth, but she was the star of the story. We know many called Deborah in our days, but I haven't come across a Lapidoth. She may have dwelt under a humble and obscure palm tree in mount Ephraim, but "the children of Israel came up to her for judgement" (Judges 4:5). She had many things going against her: she was a woman and she dwelt in an obscure place that was neither Ramah, where Samuel dwelt later nor Bethel the house of God, but God chose her to be a prophetess. In other words, the word of God was with her and all Israel came to her to know what the will of the Lord was and what course of action to take. This is tremendous power. I am sure many men were not happy about this. Before Israel demanded a King of God, the Lord chose whom he will judge Israel. Not only that, but Deborah also gained her fame during a famous battle which she initiated as the Lord moved her spirit.

***Jdg 4:6*** And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

***Jdg 4:7*** And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

Now it was one thing for Deborah to be a prophetess, but another for her to be a military strategist, and soon general of the armies of Israel because Barak was too afraid to go without her. Such was her authority and commanding presence as a prophetess. "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh" (Judges 4:8,9). The prophecy of Deborah was fulfilled two-fold: Deborah was the real strategist and the one who inspired the armies of Israel and Jael, another woman, killed Jabin the King of Canaan, and not Barak.

**2Ki 22:14** *So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.*

Here is another prophetess whom called chose to play a mighty role in Israel in the days of King Josiah. According to Jewish tradition, Huldah sat outside the eastern gates where people came to hear her prophesize. When King Josiah heard the word of God was found in the house of God, he was seized with fear. There seems to have been no doubt as to where the King could know the will of God regarding this terrible omission – go to Huldah! Isn't it amazing when the King, the High Priest and the scribes unanimously agree to consult a woman who sat outside the Temple gates to know the fate of all of Israel? This is tremendous power and God chose a woman through whom he would exercise such power. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:27-29). Praise Jesus!

Imagine the honor bestowed upon the household of Huldah that day when the King's servants came to her to ask about the fate of Israel! Her husband, Shallum, was a keeper of the wardrobe which means he worked in the palace looking after the royal wardrobe. This was a lowly job compared to the position and authority God assigned to his wife. Imagine the conversation Shallum had with his wife when she came home that night. "What did you tell the King, dear?" And Huldah responded "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched (2 Kings 22:16, 17). God seems to have reversed the roles in that household – it was Shallum who must have thanked the Lord for the security he felt in knowing that he had a wife who was powerful enough to rebuke Israel for having lost the word of God. Now Israel did not need to speculate about God's response – Huldah revealed what God was about to do. Israel needed only to repent.

Finally, let us consider one more example of God choosing women as prophetesses from the New Testament. "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did

prophecy” (Acts 21:8,9). We know much about Philip the evangelist. He was one of the seven deacons ordained to feed the poor widows in Jerusalem, but he ended up evangelizing in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch, among others. Now we find him in Caesarea which is also called Caesarea Maritima because it is a coastal town in the northwest of Israel. Philip must have rejoiced at how the Lord was doing something similar for his daughters. He, too, was a nobody in the beginning, but became a mighty evangelist. Now God was doing the same for his daughters. May the Lord remember what we have done for his name!

Apparently, Caesarea Maritima was strategic for the Gospel. It was the town where the Apostle Paul always seemed to go through on his missionary journeys between Jerusalem, Antioch and the western world. It was here the Lord positioned not one, but four prophetesses. Such was the importance the Lord Jesus placed on the Great Commission that he ensured there was a generous supply of prophecy through four prophetesses. Hallelujah! We know the Apostle Paul highly esteemed the gift of prophecy so much so that he encouraged church members to covet this gift for the edification of the church.

*1Cor 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

*1Cor 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

*1Cor 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

Now consider that when the Lord gave this greatest of all gifts in Caesarea, he decided to give it to four women in one household. In conclusion, we mostly associate prophets with men in the Bible. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are among four well-known prophets. However, we have seen in this message today that God has also selected women to be prophetesses. Deborah’s gift of prophecy brought her victory in battle for Israel; Huldah’s gift revealed the judgement of God on Israel while the four daughters of Philip would encourage, comfort and direct missionaries in regard to the Great Commission. God placed all these women strategically. They played powerful roles in God’s plan of salvation for his people. They did not have the best offices and houses to work from, but God gave them gifts that no men could ignore. Sisters, be encouraged! God is still sovereign, and no one can ignore his will.

*Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?*

*Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*