

FAR

ABOVE RUBIES



The Worker Bee

On a recent visit to Manchester I was amazed at the amount of bees that appeared to be everywhere – not real bees I hasten to add! They were on display on buildings, transport, jewellery and even clothes. I soon discovered that bees have long been used to symbolise the part that Manchester played in the industrial revolution, and represent the industriousness of the city’s “*worker bees*” (women) who worked in the cotton mills dubbed “*bee-hives.*” As I delved further I discovered that worker bees did most of the work and had many different roles.

In the Bible, names are significant and were designated according to the path or mission that a person would have in life. In Judges 4 we read of Deborah who was chosen by God to lead the children of Israel. In Hebrew the name Deborah means “*which works like a bee.*” When we look at her life as judge, and prophetess, we can see that it was a name well chosen!

At the time Deborah was appointed a judge, the children of Israel were living in Canaan, but had not fully conquered it. Greatly influenced by the Canaanites they forsook the Lord their God and were living in apostasy and idolatry (Judges 2 v 12). When you fall into sin there is always a price to pay. If you don’t conquer sin, it will conquer you. Having been cruelly oppressed for 20 years, in desperation they called upon the Lord who “*raised up judges who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them.*” (Judges 2 v 16)

In Old Testament times judges were designated rulers, like commanders-in-chief, specifically chosen by God to lead the people. As a judge Deborah was a woman of integrity, who faithfully lived according to the word of God and stood up for righteousness, and justice. Prov. 14 v 34 states that “*Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.*” In today’s world, where the word of God is being attacked from every angle, we too need to be men and women of integrity who consistently stand up for the

truth of God's word. We don't get to pick and choose which parts of the Bible to believe – it is all truth from beginning to end!

As well as seeking God's guidance for the nation, Deborah's workload included correcting abuses and redressing grievances. All were treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality. I wonder can the same be said of us. We should never show partiality when dealing with others and always seek God's wisdom and guidance when facing difficult situations.

In Judges 4 v 4 we read that Deborah was also a prophetess and was recognised as a spiritual woman, whose confidence and faith was in God. As she sat under a palm tree the people would come to her for counsel. Deborah could be trusted to bring God's word to the people and minister into their situation. Deborah was totally committed to obeying God and His word even if it meant going into battle with the enemy!

In Judges 4 v 6-7 we read that Deborah summoned Barak and said to him *"The Lord God of Israel commands you....Go gather your men at Mount Tabor.....and I will draw out Sisera...and give him into your hand."* Now Sisera was commander of the Canaanite army who had 900 chariots of iron plus troops. Having been kept as slaves for 20 years the Israelites didn't have any military weaponry but were good hand to hand fighters on the hill country. They were no match for Sisera's army! Although God had promised Israel the victory, Barak didn't have Deborah's measure of faith and would only go into battle if she went with him, to which she agreed.

In Judges 4 v 13-14 we see that Deborah was a doer - a person who got things done. When Sisera called out his 900 chariots and men at the river Kishon, Deborah didn't sit and wait for them to attack, but went to Barak and said *"Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?"* The rest as they say is history. The Israelites won the battle and *"the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak at the edge of the sword."* Deborah could face the enemy in the knowledge that the victory was already won.

Like Deborah, there will be times when we will have battles to fight and trials to overcome. Even when the enemy appears to have the upper hand we must always remember that God is with us, that Satan is a defeated foe and the victory is already won! Also like Deborah we can trust God to deliver us and rejoice in the knowledge that, when Jesus died on the cross, *"He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it."* (Col. 2 v15) Hallelujah!