

## GOD'S WOMAN

By C. R. Nichol

DEBORAH. Jaban, the king of the Canaanites, lived at Hazor, not far from the waters of Merom. He was an implacable enemy of the Israelites. Sisera was the commander-in-chief of Jaban's army. By the command of Jaban his army had marched into the plain of Esdraelon. With nine-hundred chariots of iron, and a well-trained army he was determined to conquer Israel. The challenge of Sisera must have struck terror to the hearts of the Israelites.

Deborah, "a mother in Israel", living between Ramah and Bethel, was at the time Judge in Israel; and she was also a prophetess (Judges 4: 4 - 14; 5:7). She served not only in religious affairs, but in civil matters also. She was a prophetess and communicated God's will to the people.

At the time Jaban's army came to do battle with Israel, it appears the Israelites were discouraged. Though they may have felt keenly the insults hurled at them by the army of Jaban, they were unwilling to do battle against the invaders. Knowing this, Deborah sent for Barak and told him that it was God's will that he assemble an army and engage Jaban's army in battle. Barak made answer to Deborah: "If thou wilt go with me, then will I go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go." Deborah, the prophetess, said: "I will surely go with thee" (Judges 4).

The two armies met in the plain of Esdraelon, and for a time the battle was fierce, but not for long; for Sisera's army was cut to pieces; Israel was gloriously victorious as Deborah had declared it would be, having said to Barak: "This is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thy hands." Following the victory Barak joined Deborah in singing a song she composed. Israel enjoyed forty years of peace following this victory. How long Deborah continued to judge Israel we do not know; nor do we find additional prophecies uttered by her. So far as the record shows Deborah was the only woman elevated to the dual place of prophetess and judge.

Was there ever a more inviting opportunity offered a woman that was open for Deborah to "usurp authority" over man? Barak, whose duty it was to lead to victory the Israelites, was characterized by indecision; he was wanting in courage, and chilled by fear. His mental attitude was such that he needed some one to lead him. Deborah saw, and understood well the conditions; but instead of thrusting herself to the fore, and thereby usurping authority over man, she taught Barak his duty, and insisted that he perform it, assuring him that God would be with him. By teaching him, and encouraging him, she became his "helper". She played her part, respecting the will of Jehovah. She showed no disposition to "usurp authority" over man. Because she respected God's arrangement touching the realm of woman's activities, she was God's woman!

Though Deborah judged Israel, and the people recognized her as judge, she did not usurp authority over man. She went with Barak when he fared forth to do battle with the army of Jaban; yet she was careful to recognize, and stay well within the realm of woman's sphere as determined by Jehovah - to be in subjection to man. True it is, she taught Barak, and insisted that he discharge

his duty. She urged him, saying: "Hath not Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded, saying: "Go . . . and I will deliver him into thy hand" (Judges 6). She did not put herself in the foreground to lead the army; she did not say: "Jehovah will deliver Sisera into OUR hands." Her words were: "Jehovah will deliver Sisera into THY hand."

When you read the narrative of Barak's cowardice I think you will correctly decide that he was more than anxious for Deborah to head the military action against Jaban's army; that he was willing for her to take complete control, that he would have been glad to have taken a subordinate position under her. Deborah positively refused to become the head of the expedition; but she did show herself an indispensable "helper".

When the victory was won, she took unto herself none of the honor. In a song which she composed she said:

*"Awake, awake, utter a song,  
Arise, Barak, and lead away thy captives."*

I am persuaded that if some of our modern women, women who consider themselves liberators of their sex, had been in the place of Deborah, they would have shown a high hand, and pushed Barak aside as excess baggage; that they would have take complete control of the hosts of Israel and sought the glory of the victory over Sisera.

Can there be found a man so dense that he cannot see in the course of Deborah emphasis given to the fact that teaching and helping a man in any work assigned to him by Jehovah, is not usurping authority over man; nor do women in such a work fail to show themselves to be in subjection to man.

Woman who love the Lord strive to know His will, that they may stay within the limitations of woman's approved activities, and acceptably serve Him.