

Deborah, Barak, & Jael — Victory Through a Woman?

God raises up weak, foolish, and base people to show that it's not the vessel, but God in the vessel that has the victory. God raised up judges for His people to show them that only through His help could they be saved. As long as the judge lived, there was rest in the land. But after Ehud died, the cycle began again. Without God's deliverer, the people were helpless against their foes because of their wickedness. How would God act this time to return His people to Himself? When God said move, did His followers obey?

Stop and Pray – Lord, show me how I can help fight Your battles.

1. What woman do you admire? Why?
2. What motivates you to trust God and obey His leading? Be as honest with yourself as possible.

Read Judges, chapters 4 and 5, and mark this text found on pages 5-8. We will look at these chapters together because details in chapter 5 fill in the gaps found in chapter 4. We will study Shamgar together with all the other minor judges in a later study.

3. After 80 years of peace under Ehud, why does God allow Jabin to oppress Israel? In other words, what caused “war in the gates”?
4. What did this oppression under Jabin look like (Judges 4:3; 5:6-8)?
5. So far we have dealt with a dark, twice wicked enemy and an unlikely enemy. Now we see a powerful enemy with nine hundred iron chariots. What situation or enemy in your life seems insurmountable?

6. What do we learn about Deborah from these chapters?
What was said? What did it mean?
7. a. Through Deborah, God told Barak what to do. Write down the steps he would have had to take to obey.
- b. What about the timing of the battle? How were they to know when to fight?
8. After Barak received his instructions through Deborah, he requested her to accompany him on the journey. This request had both positive and negative aspects.
Positive: In Hebrews 11:32-34, Barak's name is listed in the Bible's "Faith Hall of Fame."
How do his actions throughout this story demonstrate his faith?
- Negative: How can we know from Scripture that the Lord did not consider Barak's request completely positive?
9. Let's notice how the battle was won.
- a. Paint the battle scene in your own words (Judges 4:12-16; 5:4-5, 8, 20-22).
- b. Note who is mentioned and who is not mentioned in the actual fighting scenes. What point is the author trying to make (Judges 4:7, 14-16, 24; 5:4-5, 20-22)?

- c. After studying this story, what have you learned that would encourage you to face your “nine hundred iron chariots”?
10. Deborah’s prophecy was fulfilled when Jael killed Sisera. Let’s look at Jael to discover why she was called “most blessed of women.”
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|---|--|
| a. <u>Description or action of Jael</u> | <u>What it tells you about her character</u> |
|---|--|
- b. In what ways do you wish you were more like Jael?
11. In chapter 5, the Song of Deborah communicates God’s expectations for His people in any battle against His enemies.
- a. Which people in Israel are repeatedly praised (Judges 5:2, 9-15, 18, 24-27)? Why specifically are they praised?
- b. Who in Israel is scolded or cursed (Judges 5:16, 17, 23)? Why specifically is each given that rebuke?
12. The Lord expects His people to participate in the advancement of His kingdom. Non-involvement for any reason is unacceptable in God’s eyes. Those who do not participate are guilty of apathy and indirect support of the enemies of God (by implication—Satan). *“He who is not with Me is against Me” (Luke 11:23).*
- a. In what ways can you fight alongside God for the advancement of His kingdom?
- b. What specifically has God asked you to do that you have chosen to ignore or be indifferent to because of self-centered motives?

- c. What will you do this week to follow God's leading?

Note: It is interesting to note the quality of the deliverer and the support of the people in each successive cycle, and track whether they are improving or declining. Othniel accomplished everything through God's power. Ehud used deception to accomplish God's goal. Barak was hesitant, therefore God used a woman to get the job done. The people fully supported Othniel in battle, but only fought alongside Ehud after the king was dead. With Barak only some of the people joined in the battle while others did not seem to care about the oppression. Continue to look for this trend as we progress through Judges.

13. What truths about our God did you learn from this story? Pray that God will reveal Himself to you through this story in all the ways He desires. List your thoughts.

Heart Check: Do you really trust God? Do you trust Him when you are faced with insurmountable (in your eyes) odds? Will you fight along with Him in battles that seem impossible to win? Why or why not?

Final Thoughts: The point is not "Can God do it?" but that God said, "Do it!" We know that we have a sovereign, almighty God, but until we entrust ourselves into His hands, we will not know experientially His power. God wants us to really know Him. Sometimes the only way to deeply know Him is to throw ourselves helplessly into His arms by stepping out in faith on His Word, even when we have no idea exactly how He is going to work.

God wants to show us that He is able to handle our "nine hundred iron chariots". He wants us to fight for His causes in the face of a world ruled by Satan. Watching Him work alongside us in these battles, in whatever unexpected and creative ways that He chooses, will increase our faith and delight in Him, and will enable us to have peace during future challenges.

Pray - God help me to entrust myself into Your hands. Help me to believe You can handle anything that comes my way. Help me to hear Your word and move, even when there is no clear understanding of how things will work out. Help me to bravely trust that You will teach me good things about Yourself in the process.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 11 —Deborah and Barak — Judges 4:1-5:31

Examine your text.

Mark your text. Put a box around all time words (e.g. then, now, when). Put a circle around all conditional words (e.g. thus, but, so, therefore). Underline all references, including pronouns (e.g. he, they, your, me):

- Israel in blue
- Deborah in pink
- an enemy/Sisera in black
- God in red
- Jael in purple
- Barak in green
- locations in brown

Judges 4:1-5:31 — Deborah and Barak

1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. 2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3 The sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years. 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 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. 6 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. 7 '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.'" 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." 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. 10 Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him. 11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh. 12 Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you." So Barak went down

from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 The LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left. 17 Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid." And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there anyone here?' that you shall say, 'No.'" 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. 22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple. 23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. 24 The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Chapter 5

1 Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying, 2 "That the leaders led in Israel, That the people volunteered, Bless the LORD! 3 "Hear, O kings; give ear, O rulers! I—to the LORD, I will sing, I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel. 4 "LORD, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, The earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, Even the clouds dripped water. 5 "The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD, This Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel. 6 "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, And travelers went by roundabout ways. 7 "The peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Until I arose, a mother in Israel. 8 "New gods were chosen; Then war was in the gates. Not a shield or a spear was seen Among forty thousand in Israel. 9 "My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel, The volunteers among the people; Bless the LORD! 10 "You who ride on

white donkeys, You who sit on rich carpets, And you who travel on the road—sing! 11 "At the sound of those who divide flocks among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous deeds of the LORD, The righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates. 12 "Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and take away your captives, O son of Abinoam. 13 "Then survivors came down to the nobles; The people of the LORD came down to me as warriors. 14 "From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek came down, Following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; From Machir commanders came down, And from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office. 15 "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed at his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben There were great resolves of heart. 16 "Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben There were great searchings of heart. 17 "Gilead remained across the Jordan; And why did Dan stay in ships? Asher sat at the seashore, And remained by its landings. 18 "Zebulun was a people who despised their lives even to death, And Naphtali also, on the high places of the field. 19 "The kings came and fought; Then fought the kings of Canaan At Taanach near the waters of Megiddo; They took no plunder in silver. 20 "The stars fought from heaven, From their courses they fought against Sisera. 21 "The torrent of Kishon swept them away, The ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. O my soul, march on with strength. 22 "Then the horses' hoofs beat From the dashing, the dashing of his valiant steeds. 23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD, 'Utterly curse its inhabitants; Because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the warriors.' 24 "Most blessed of women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Most blessed is she of women in the tent. 25 "He asked for water and she gave him milk; In a magnificent bowl she brought him curds. 26 "She reached out her hand for the tent peg, And her right hand for the workmen's hammer. Then she struck Sisera, she smashed his head; And she shattered and pierced his temple. 27 "Between her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay; Between her feet he bowed, he fell; Where he bowed, there he fell dead. 28 "Out of the window she looked and lamented, The mother of Sisera through the lattice, 'Why does his chariot delay in coming? Why do the hoofbeats of his chariots tarry?' 29 "Her wise princesses would answer her, Indeed she repeats her words to herself, 30 'Are they not finding, are they not dividing the spoil? A maiden, two maidens for every warrior; To Sisera a spoil of dyed work, A spoil of dyed work embroidered, Dyed work of double embroidery on the neck of the spoiler?'

31 "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might." And the land was undisturbed for forty years.

(Judges 4:1-5:31, NASB95)