



Deborah and Jael

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

May 10, 2022

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In Judges we see the account of the dark ages of the people of Israel. Israel forsook the Lord and God was very angry with them.

Judges 2:11 – 13:

Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD's anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Judges covers the period after the death of Joshua to the ascension of Saul to the throne. After Joshua and Judah there was a period of 350 years in which there was no king in Israel. During this period God raised up judges to counsel and deliver his people.

There is a phrase running throughout the book of Judges: *"Everyone did as they saw fit."* (Judges 17:6). Judges is a book of man's constant failure and God's constant mercy.

Where did the trouble begin for the people of Israel? It was due directly to their disobedience to God.

Judges 2:7-10

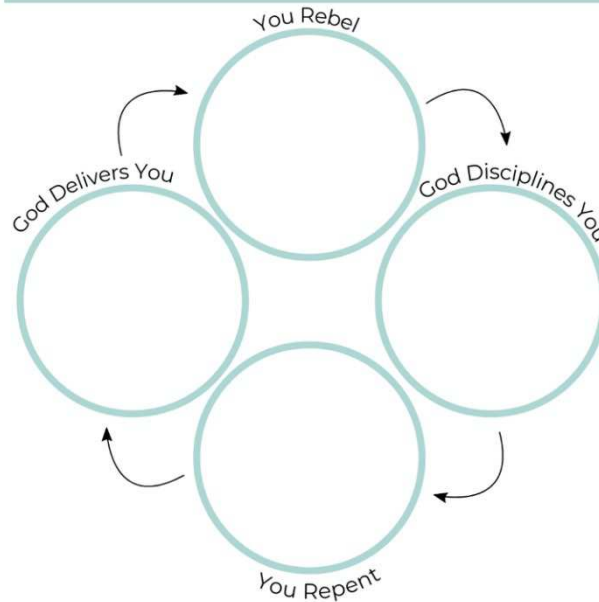
The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel.

The cycle of rebellion



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Your Cycle of Rebellion



Romans 6:16 – 18:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Sisera was the commander of the army of Hazor and they had oppressed the people of Israel for 20 years. Into this situation God places Deborah as the next Judge to deliver them.

DEBORAH'S BACKGROUND:

The name Deborah means "a bee." The bee ranks among the highest in intelligence of the animal kingdom. So Deborah stands out as among the wisest of all the Old Testament women.

We have no genealogy of Deborah. We only know she was "the wife of Lapidoth" (Judges 4:4). Their home was between Bethel and Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. The palm tree under which Deborah ruled and probably lived was a landmark, as palms were rare in Palestine. It became known as "The Palm of Deborah." In her poetry (chapter 5) she refers to herself as "a mother in Israel" (verse 7), but we don't know if she had any natural children.

DEBORAH'S CHARACTER:

God raised up Deborah, a prophetess, to be the Judge at this crucial time while the people were under Sisera's oppression. Why a woman, and why Deborah?

She had the gift of prophecy, which means the ability to discern the mind and purpose of God and declare it to others. This was a woman with authority, power, great intelligence, wisdom and insight. And all her talents were dedicated to God's service.

Have you ever wondered why God gave you your present personality? Have you ever wished you could change it?

We all are designed to fit into the right spot in the body of Christ

Romans 12:4 – 6a:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

God made Deborah special for a special moment in time. God is not inefficient. He does not give you talents to lie dormant.

The whole book of Judges is like a seesaw—back and forth. Why did God keep coming to their rescue? He was God, and therefore knew that they would go back to their idols again. Why did he keep delivering them?

God's ways are not our ways. Isaiah 55:9: "*For as the heavens are higher than earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" God purposed that these were his people, and this was his plan.

THE BATTLE WITH SISERA:**Judges 4:1 – 8:**

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help.

Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

Put yourself in Barak's shoes. What do you think he was feeling?

Deborah says, "Take 10,000 men and go find Sisera, and God will deliver him to you." It wasn't reasonable; it didn't make good battle sense. It seemed suicidal. But that was Deborah's fearless charge.

Barak's reply is interesting: "I'll go if you go, but I won't go if you don't go." Do you think Barak was figuring this was his way out of this insane mission? Do you think Barak figured Deborah would never agree to go herself?

Judges 4: 9 – 15:

"Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaananim near Kedesh.

When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not

the LORD gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. At Barak's advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

We read in verse 15 that *"the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot."* We see how God intervened against all odds and used the elements to defeat Sisera.

The lesson here is clear and simple: when the Lord goes before you, you don't have to do the fighting. The battle is won when you arrive. Just show up and claim the victory in his name.

What battles do you find yourself in these days? A battle with self, or some nagging sin; a battle with a relationship; a battle with your emotions, depression, discouragement? Are you fighting it all by yourself? You're bound to lose. The cards are stacked against you. Your enemy has iron chariots and lots of them.

But if the Lord goes before you, victory is assured. Let's apply this practically.

- Is there someone you just can't love? He can love that person without any trouble, and his love can flow through you.
- Is there something God has been telling you to do, but you're afraid to try? When God sets a job before you, he provides the power, the method, the ability, the time, the resources. It may come from an unexpected source, as it did in the battle with Sisera. But if he goes out before you, he will meet the enemy first, they will be defeated, and you will just claim the victory,

1 Thessalonians 5:24: *"Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will do it."* (NASB)

If we refuse to get in the fray, we'll never know the sweetness of his victory.

JAEL - SISERA'S DEATH:

Judges 4:16 – 24:

Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

"I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'"

But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.



DEBORAH'S SONG:

Judges 5: 1-9

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

“When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—
praise the LORD! “Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the LORD; I will praise the LORD, the God of Israel, in song. “When you, LORD, went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel. “In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel. God chose new leaders when war came to the city gates, but not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. My heart is with Israel’s princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD! . . .

18-27 The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the terraced fields. “Kings came, they fought, the kings of Canaan fought. At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no plunder of silver. From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong! Then thundered the horses’ hooves—galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds. . . “Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman’s hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.

31 “So may all your enemies perish, LORD! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.” Then the land had peace forty years.

Chapter 5 is considered one of the finest specimens of ancient Hebrew poetry. This was Deborah's song of praise, and she gives all credit and honor to the Lord. Notice she refers to the earth quaking, and to the rain which God sent to defeat their enemy. Verse 21 notes the floods of the river Kishon, which swept away the enemy.

In this great song Deborah recalls all that God has done for her and for the people of Israel.

CONCLUSION:

I wonder, if Deborah were on the scene today, would she be accepted in our midst? She was a bold, courageous, strong lady, called by God for a very special purpose. Let Deborah be an encouragement to you. Think of her when you feel overwhelmed, or dismayed. She was a real person, like us, but she faced her duties and her responsibilities with unwavering faith and trust in her God.

Realize that God didn’t save you so you could live comfortably until you one day go to heaven. He saved you to lead others to love and follow Christ.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).