

The Book of Judges: Deborah

God is able to use the selfish decisions of humans to bring about His glory and save His people.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

Judges 4-5

April 7, 2019/ April 10, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: Judges 4:1-24

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading[a] Israel at that time. ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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.' ⁷ 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." ⁸ Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." ⁹ "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. ¹⁰ There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him. ¹¹ 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 Zaanannim near Kedesh. ¹² When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, ¹³ Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. ²⁰ "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'" ²¹ 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. ²² 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. ²³ On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. ²⁴ And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

FIRST THOUGHTS

One of the things that makes a story or movie or book enjoyable is a good villain.

Today's lesson looks at the life of Deborah, Judge of Israel. Her nemesis was Sisera who leads the army oppressing the Israelites and meets a dreadful end.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

We begin to see the unfolding pattern of the cycle of Judges in the story of Deborah in chapters 4-5. After the death of the judge Ehud, Israel experiences 80 years of peace. But Judges 4:1 reveals that they returned to wickedness and idolatry. God uses the King Jabin and his general Sisera to punish Israel's rebellion. For 20 years the Israelites suffer under this oppression. Sisera's army possessed the profound advantage of having iron chariots. These 2-wheeled vehicles usually were pulled by 2 or 4 horses and had 2 soldiers (1 to drive and 1 to attack with arrows or spears). Because of their size and speed, they could easily run over ground troops and were thus greatly feared. Plus, throughout its ancient history, Israel suffered from a lack of iron resources in their land. So the weapons of the enemies they faced were of a better quality.

As the only female Judge of Israel, Deborah holds a unique place. She is also one of only 2 judges who are identified as judge and prophet (the other being Samuel). So she had both a spiritual and a leadership role in Israel. She held court in the typical middle eastern style of being open-air in an oasis (the "Palm of Deborah"). Her responsibilities including interpreting messages from God, settling disputes among the people, and providing military strategy.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Look for these truths in today's video:

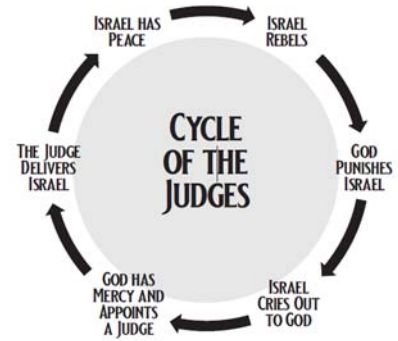
- Truth #1: God equips men and women for leadership in ministry.
- Truth #2: When men fail to lead, people suffer.
- Truth #3: God curses spectators.
- Truth #4: All God requires of us is simple obedience.
- Truth #5: God will one day right every wrong.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DEBORAH'S PROPHECY

> Read Judges 4:1-10

- Where is Israel on this cycle at the beginning of chapter 4? Why have they found themselves conquered again?
- What characteristics of Deborah's do you see in these verses that would make her a good Judge?
- How has the church typically viewed women using their gifts to serve God?
- How is Deborah an unexpected leader for Israel? Why does God seem to delight in using the unexpected?
- What instructions did Deborah give to Barak? Why did he hesitate to follow them and ask for Deborah to go with him?



> Read Judges 4:11-24

- How did God deliver Israel in this passage?
- What does Barak's pursuit of Sisera tell you about his confidence in Deborah's prophecy?
- The passage doesn't tell us anything about Jael's motives in killing Sisera. Whether it was revenge on Sisera or reverence for God, God used her to complete His plans. What do you think about God using impure motives and people in His plans? Why does He include them instead of just using His own followers? How have you seen God use these unexpected people to accomplish His will?

DEBORAH'S PRAISE

> Read Judges 5:1-3

- How do you praise God when He's done something for you? Has singing been a part of that praise?

> Read Judges 5:30-31

- How are we tempted to doubt God's justice? What happens when we doubt God's justice? How does this story help us to believe in God's justice? When you face evil, how does God's character of justice help you?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Select one of these things to do this week:

PRAY: Pray for increased trust this week. Ask God to show you the areas of your life where you aren't trusting Him and surrender those areas. Take a minute or two each day to ask for trust in those areas.

PRAISE: Create a playlist, buy an album, or download some praise songs to listen to throughout the week. Practice praising God throughout the day by listening to or singing along with these songs or worship.

REFLECT: Spend some time reflecting on ways you might be doubting God's character—His faithfulness, truthfulness, and justice. Make a list of His characteristics and underline those you are tempted to doubt. Look for ways in the Bible and in your life that God demonstrates those areas of His character to encourage you.

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- If you didn't do it last week, watch J.D. Greear's teaching on Ehud by logging on to www.rightnowmedia.com. If you don't have a log in, visit www.chetscreek.com/rightnow to request your free access. Search for the Judges series (it's on the Chets Creek Channel on the left hand side) and watch Session 2: Judges 3:7-31.
- Read all of Deborah's song of praise in Judges 5:1-31. What has God done in your life that you can praise Him for this week?

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

7th – 1 Samuel 1-2; Psalm 66; 2 Corinthians 7 | **8th** – 1 Samuel 3-5; Psalm 77; 2 Corinthians 8 | **9th** – 1 Samuel 6-7; Psalm 72; 2 Corinthians 9 | **10th** – 1 Samuel 8-10; 2 Corinthians 10 | **11th** – 1 Samuel 11-12; 1 Chronicles 1; 2 Corinthians 11 | **12th** – 1 Samuel 13; 1 Chronicles 2-3; 2 Corinthians 12 | **13th** – 1 Samuel 14; 1 Chronicles 4; 2 Corinthians 13