

Judges 4B

- Last time we were introduced to Deborah and Barak, a partnership forged to defeat Israel enemy
 - Deborah is the judge while Barak is the nations key military leader
 - When the Lord was ready to free Israel from their oppressor, He directed Deborah to call for Barak
 - Deborah told Barak that the Lord was prepared to free Israel by his hand
 - Barak was to travel north and recruit an army of 10,000 Israelites to defeat the Canaanite king
 - Barak contemplated the difficulty of recruiting 10,000 men and defeating a powerful and entrenched enemy, so he hesitated
 - He insisted that Deborah accompany him to ensure his success
 - Deborah agreed but countered that Barak would not see the final victory
 - Instead, the victory will be won by a woman
 - Barak believed the Lord was speaking through Deborah, but he lacked confidence to obey that word
 - His response reflected the state of leadership in the nation at this point in Israel's history
 - Men were doubting, women were picking up the slack and the nation was suffering
 - But this is also a nation in covenant with the covenant-keeping God
 - So the Lord brings Deborah and Barak into the battle
- Barak accompanied by Deborah move from the hill country of Ephraim to Kadesh, a town in the center of Naphtali's territory
 - There, north of Hazor, they plan the attack

[Judg. 4:10](#) Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him.

[Judg. 4:11](#) 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.

[Judg. 4:12](#) Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

[Judg. 4:13](#) 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.

[Judg. 4:14](#) 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.

- Barak assembles the 10,000 men from the two tribes at Kadesh
 - Meanwhile, Samuel introduces us to another family living in the same area
 - Heber the Kenite is living near Kadesh
 - The Kenites were descended from Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses
 - The Kenites were not Jewish
 - They were the family Moses married into while in Midian
 - But they were always supportive of the Jews
 - Remember in chapter 1 we learned that the Kenites followed Joshua and the Jews out of the desert when they entered the Promised Land
 - Most of the Kenites migrated south into Judah
 - But now we learn that at least one family, the family of Heber, separated himself from the rest of his family by moving north
 - He settled near Kadesh by the oak of Zaanannim
 - His name means "ally" reflecting his double agent life
 - While he entered the land with the Jews, he's also made a good living as an ally of the Canaanite king
 - The word kenite means blacksmith, which was the primary trade of the Kenites

- Iron had been introduced into the land years earlier, and Heber seems to have been working to make the iron chariots for the king
- So here we have a man who is not a Jew and he's consorting with the enemy of God's people
 - He has a distant relationship to God's people
 - But he's not taking sides
- Meanwhile, the king's commander, Sisera, learns that Barak has amassed an army at Mt. Tabor, about 25 miles southwest
 - Sisera's response is to move his 900 chariots to the valley of Kishon, at the base of Mt. Carmel
 - About 14 miles further west of Mt. Tabor
 - He's essentially flanking Barak by approaching from the opposite direction
 - This is a very unexpected military move
 - Barak would have expected the commander to attack from the northeast
 - That way Sisera could keep his forces between the enemy and the king's headquarters in Hazor
 - But we remember what the Lord told Barak through Deborah
 - Back in v.7 the Lord said He would draw Sisera and his many troops to the river Kishon
 - The Hebrew word translated draw is the same word for pull
 - Literally, the Lord pulled Sisera away from his natural fighting place and toward the river
- When Barak sees Sisera take up a position in the Kishon river valley, it must have reinforced Barak's faith tremendously
 - There was no military explanation for Sisera's move, but there was a supernatural explanation
 - God was moving pieces on the chessboard just as He promised

- This was Barak's confirmation that God planned to do what He spoke
- Nevertheless, when Sisera makes this move, Barak seems to hesitate
 - I say that because in v.14 we see Deborah commanding Barak to attack
 - We know Deborah was not a military leader, so she was not accustomed to determining the proper moment to attack
 - She was simply responding to the obvious sign God provided
- The Lord said look for Sisera to move to Kishon, so now that he's there, it's clearly time to act
 - But Barak doesn't seem to move without Deborah's insistence
 - She repeats to Barak that the Lord has delivered Sisera into his hands
 - In fact, the Lord has gone out before you, she says, which means the Lord is already at work to defeat the enemy
 - Just get up and join the Lord in that work
- Now we understand why Deborah agreed to do with Barak
 - The Lord is going to win this battle, and all Barak needs to do is come along for the ride
 - There is very little Barak must do and even less he will contribute to the victory
 - At best, he's just there to witness God's work
 - Nevertheless, it requires a woman to drag Barak into battle to save Israel
 - Even when a clear sign is given and fulfilled, Barak didn't recognize the moment to act
 - Spiritual leadership isn't just acting brave in difficult moments
 - It's being prepared spiritually to put that leadership into action whenever necessary
 - Husbands and fathers are called by God to serve as the spiritual leaders in their homes

- But too many men assume this calling means taking dramatic, life-or-death actions to protect the family
- It's the kind of attitude that says, "I would take a bullet for my husband."
- But will you pick up your underwear or do the dishes when she asks?
- A man won't be prepared to take the role of leader as God intended unless they are thinking and preparing for that role everyday
 - We can't expect to live selfish, self-centered lives for years, ignoring God's word and hesitating to follow the Spirit
 - And then assume in a moment of spiritual crisis, we'll step forward and save the day
 - When your teenagers rebel against authority
 - When your marriage gets rocky
 - When your health fails
 - These things put a stress on any family, but if you're not already practiced at leadership, where will you turn?
- Barak and the other men of Israel weren't practices at listening to the Lord and obeying, so when the word came to destroy the king, Barak struggled to rise to the occasion
 - God in mercy sent a woman to save the day, and He's about to send another woman to finish the job
 - But first Barak must lead his men to dispatch the enemy's army

Judg. 4:15 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.

Judg. 4:16 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.

Judg. 4:17 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.

- Just as God foretold, Israel routs the enemy
 - Notice Samuel is careful to emphasize that the Lord won this battle

- Barak was not the cause of the outcome, though the Lord used him and the men he assembled to prosecute the fight
- It was the Lord's might that secured the victory
- Still, we should give credit where credit is due, and Barak deserves credit for entering into battle
 - Yes, Deborah had to encourage him, but then Barak did take his troops into battle against a much better equipped army
 - What would cause a man to take such risk?
 - To dare to attack an army that – on paper – was undefeatable?
 - The answer is faith...Barak has faith that the Lord would keep His word
 - He heard the prophecy of Deborah
 - And when the sign appeared, he had confidence that the Lord was at work
 - In fact, Barak's faith is highlighted briefly in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11:32
 - It was Barak's lack of confidence in leading God's people that caused his hesitation
 - And that's the danger when men fail to accept their God-given role as spiritual leaders
 - It's like a muscle you have to exercise or else it atrophies
 - So that even when the time comes, it may need a kick start to spring into action
 - Thankfully, Barak had a woman to help him move ahead
 - And many husbands and fathers are blessed to have a wife to do the same thing...if only they are listening and willing to act
- We aren't told how Barak was able to defeat the 900 chariots, but we find out in chapter 5 (so I'll save the answer for then)
 - For now, we understand that Barak's army destroys every single soldier in Sisera's army
 - Without an army, the king will be unable to defend his claim over Canaan

- But the victory is incomplete, because Sisera, the commander, escapes
 - Without Sisera's head, Barak can't declare the battle won
 - Sisera's escape leaves open the possibility he could muster a new army and counter attack in the weeks to come
 - If Sisera isn't killed, the regime's overthrow remains in doubt
- Sisera ends up seeking refuge in the home of Heber, east of the battle
 - He assumes that Heber will protect him, since there was peace between Heber and the king
 - Sisera approaches the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber
 - This was a huge error on Sisera's part
 - Sisera counted on Heber being a Canaanite sympathizer, but he didn't realize Heber's wife felt differently

Judg. 4:18 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.

Judg. 4:19 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.

Judg. 4:20 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.'"

Judg. 4:21 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.

Judg. 4:22 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.

- As Sisera approached the tent and sees that it is the tent of Heber's wife, he must have hesitated to enter
 - By custom it was highly inappropriate for him to enter the tent of another man's wife
 - But as he hesitates, Jael encourages him to come in

- In v.18 Jael says “turn aside, my master” which means to come into my tent
- And she tells Sisera not to be frightened by the break in custom
- Sisera must have considered the request and realized it was a crafty plan
 - Who would think to look for him in the tent of Heber’s wife?
 - No one would suspect to find him there
 - So he enters to hide
 - But Jael has an entirely different purpose in mind
- Quickly, he asks for water since he was thirsty from the battle
 - And Jael responds by giving him milk
 - Milk was considered a preferable drink to water, and so it made Sisera feel even more welcomed
 - It also had the effect of making him even more drowsy, which was Jael’s plan
- Finally, Sisera gives Jael orders to guard the entrance to the tent and to lie to any who come looking for him
 - This was a demanding request, since it put Jael’s life at risk
 - If she was caught lying, she would be killed too
 - Then after making this request, Sisera lies down to sleep
 - And Jael covers his body with a rug, as if to hide him from detection
- Sisera was expecting Heber’s family to grant refuge, but he didn’t realize that Heber’s wife, Jael, was no Canaanite ally
 - Instead, she was still loyal to the Jewish people, who brought her family into this land under Moses and Joshua
 - She knows the Canaanites are the enemies of God
 - And she is probably displeased that her husband has chosen to profit from the king’s army

- So when Jael saw the commander of the Canaanite army come into her camp in obvious fear for his life, she knew something was amiss
 - She may not have known the circumstances of his flight
 - But she knew the commander was in need of her help
 - And by her quick thinking, she gained the opportunity she wanted to defeat the enemy
- After Sisera fell sleep, she returned to the tent with a mallet and a wooden tent peg
 - She crept silently up to Sisera
 - And she positioned the tent peg above his temple
 - And then with all her might, she hammered the tent peg through the rug and into his skull
 - In fact, v.21 says she drove the peg with so much force, it went through his head and into the ground
- Sisera never knew was hit him
 - He was so exhausted, he was dead tired
 - He was out before his head hit the pillow
- And consider the imagery
 - Sisera is a mighty warrior, but he's wrapped up in a rug like an infant
 - Sleeping on a tummy of milk
 - And who's calling the shots? A woman
- Once again, this scene paints the men of the land as dependent on the women for support
 - Sisera was too weak to defend himself
 - He needed a woman to make him comfortable, protect him, feed him and lie for him
 - I've known too many husbands that fit that description

- It's always to a man's shame when he can't fulfill his role as leader, and Sisera is just the latest example
- How did Jael expect to get away with this assault? And are we to congratulate her?
 - I assume Jael never had to say anything
 - A man in her tent would naturally be assumed to have wrong intentions
 - She was simply defending herself
- And as far as judging her behavior, remember that the Canaanites and Jews were at war
 - Had Barak found Sisera, he would have killed him just as Barak killed the rest of his army
 - Jael was simply acting as another combatant
 - She was allied with the nation of Israel, so she acted in their defense
 - God had commanded that all the Canaanites be wiped out from the very beginning, so this woman was willing to do God's will
- When Barak arrived looking for Sisera, Jael courageously comes forward to reveal the man to Barak
 - And then the Lord's second prophecy concerning Barak is fulfilled
 - Barak was told he would secure a great military victory
 - But because he was hesitant to claim that victory without Deborah's leadership, he won't get credit for winning
 - Instead, it will go to a woman, Jael
 - This was exactly as the Lord declared, and it was to Barak's shame
 - Even as we remember his part and even see him mentioned in the book of Hebrews, his victory was diminished by his weakness
 - It's not enough that we follow the Lord in the end
 - Yes, following the Lord is always better than not following Him

- But let's not be too quick to congratulate ourselves for eventually falling in line
 - We need to understand that true obedience says, "Send me Lord, I will go."
 - True faith doesn't depend on a sign, even when the Lord is willing to grant us one
 - And true obedience means assuming the role the Lord has appointed for us in our family, our church and in our world
- If you are a father or husband, then assume the spiritual leadership role in your family
 - Don't let your wife drag you into obedience
 - And don't be satisfied that she knows the Bible or that she goes to church or that she volunteers
 - Don't abdicate your responsibility to teach the kids the word of God
 - And if you aren't feeling qualified to do it, then you had better get serious about your own study because time is running out
 - And your kids aren't getting any younger
- If you're a wife or mother, then don't let your husband's spiritual laziness become excuse to slow down in your own walk
 - In the end, each person will give account to the Lord and face judgment for our life of service
 - So you must press on, with or without him
 - But don't let him off the hook either
 - Encourage him, challenge him and model obedience for him
 - And pray for the Lord to bring him along
- Finally, if you are a couple where both husband and wife are walking with the Lord, the husband leading and the wife close at his side, then praise the Lord
 - He will accomplish great things in and through you
 - But be prepared for the enemy to do all he can to tear you down

- And everyone...remember that the Lord wins the victories in our lives

[Judg. 4:23](#) So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel.

[Judg. 4:24](#) 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.

- Notice in v.23, the Lord won the victory
 - Not Deborah, not Barak, nor Jael
 - The Lord made the events come to pass as He determined
 - And it was in keeping with His purposes to chastise the people of God
 - And then to redeem them in due time
- But also notice in v.24 that He accomplished these things through the hands of obedient servants
 - By the hand of the sons of Israel, the Lord brought Jabin to his end
 - Always remember the Lord's sovereignty in all events of our lives
 - But also remember that He accomplishes His purpose by the hand of His obedient servants
 - Obey, and become useful to Him so that you will receive a reward
 - Shrink back, and watch Him accomplish great things through others