

## **Deliver Us From the Evil Within: Deborah**

### **Judges 4**

#### **Week of Nov 1**

*As you enter into prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.*

*Be Still.*

Lord, open my heart and mind to hear and understand Your Word. I invite your Spirit to speak to me as I meditate on your Word.

This week we continue to go through the cyclical stories we find in the book of Judges. The pattern is perhaps getting familiar to you now! The Israelites forget God and end up walking away from Him and into idolatry. That idolatry leads them to a dark place, they cry out to God, and He delivers them. This pattern happens repeatedly in the book of Judges. If you're a sinner like me, it happens repeatedly in your life as well! Before we read the scripture today, begin by thinking of an area of your life where you find you often make the same mistake, repeatedly. Maybe you have a pet sin that rears its ugly head regularly. Now as we turn to the Scripture, keep that in mind.

Today's story is about Deborah, the judge that was called to deliver the Israelites from King Jabin, one of the Canaanite kings. Deborah calls Barak to do the work of leading the charge. She commanded Barak to take 10,000 men and lead the way to Mount Tabor. Then, Jabin's army would be led into his hands. We begin reading in Judges 4:1.

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading<sup>[a]</sup> Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'" "

<sup>8</sup> Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

<sup>9</sup> "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. <sup>10</sup> There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

<sup>11</sup> Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law,<sup>12</sup> and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

<sup>12</sup> When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, <sup>13</sup> Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

<sup>20</sup> "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'"

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. <sup>24</sup> And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

### **Pause and Pray.**

Jesus, I am here because I want to experience You. As I meditate on this passage, draw to mind those things that You would have me become more aware of. Center my heart and mind on Yourself. Use your Word to draw my heart to You. Amen.

### **REFLECT.**

Like myself, the Israelites often chose their own way. I take a moment now to reflect on the ways that I am currently choosing my own way. Maybe there is a sin area where I am struggling. Or maybe I am seeking to do God's work in my own power? I consider this now. PAUSE.

In the passage we read today, God used Deborah, Barak and Jael to deliver the Israelites. Is there someone in my life right now that I think God may be pointing me toward so I can grow in this area of struggle? God, if there is, I ask that You reveal that to me now. PAUSE.

One of the fascinating parts of this story of deliverance is the unlikely people God used to accomplish His purposes. Deborah is a rarity in that she is a female judge. The woman that puts an end to Sisera is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible! Jael is the wife of a clan leader, and little else is known of her except for this brave act. Is there someone in my life that maybe I haven't considered to guide me in my growth? Someone whose example I can learn from? I pause to consider this now. PAUSE.

Barak's insistence that Deborah come along with him to the field has sometimes been considered cowardice by Barak. However, the Scriptures do not reflect that anywhere else that Barak is mentioned. He is always seen as a hero. Perhaps Barak recognized Deborah's prophetic voice and his need for it on the field. In the Septuagint, there is actually a reference to Deborah 'seeing the angel armies.' Barak was willing to see his own need and ask for the help he needed from Deborah.

As I reflect on the various ways I have changed and grown over the years, I can't recollect a single time when that transformation came without the help of someone. Is there someone that I need to turn to now for some help in my growth? PAUSE.

**PAUSE, PRAY AND ASK.**

God, as I consider the ways that I still choose my own path instead of yours, I confess these to You. Forgive me for the ways I have been distracted from You and Your path, and instead, turn me back towards You. Make me obedient God—that I only need a gentle nudge to get moving in the right direction again. PAUSE.

God, I am thankful for the way that use people, even the unlikely candidates, to accomplish Your will. I can rest assured that You can use me. You used Ehud the left-handed Benjamite, you used Deborah the female judge, you used a woman at home in her own tent, minding her own business to free a nation. When we are willing, You are willing to use us. Maybe there is a way that You intend to use me today or this week, Lord. Speak to my heart about this now. PAUSE.

God, just as the Israelites needed to repent and needed to be delivered, I pray for a person or group that I am aware of that need your deliverance. I ask You to work in their situation now. PAUSE.

**YIELD.**

I return now to the text:

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading<sup>[a]</sup> Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.'"

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### **CLOSE IN PRAYER.**

Today we close with an excerpt from the song of Deborah. This song is found in Judges, chapter 5, and appears to pre-date Judges 4. It was a well-known song of the Israelites, and it tells the story found in Judges 4. As we pray this today, we are both reflecting on God's faithfulness and thanking a God who is faithful to deliver His children when they cry out to Him.

"When the princes in Israel take the lead,  
when the people willingly offer themselves—  
praise the LORD!

<sup>3</sup> "Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers!  
I, even I, will sing to<sup>the</sup> the LORD;  
I will praise the LORD, the God of Israel, in song.

<sup>4</sup> "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.

<sup>5</sup> The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai,  
before the LORD, the God of Israel.

<sup>6</sup> "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,  
in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned;  
travelers took to winding paths.

<sup>7</sup> Villagers in Israel would not fight;  
they held back until I, Deborah, arose,  
until I arose, a mother in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> God chose new leaders  
when war came to the city gates,  
but not a shield or spear was seen  
among forty thousand in Israel.

<sup>9</sup> My heart is with Israel's princes,  
with the willing volunteers among the people.  
Praise the LORD!

“So may all your enemies perish, LORD!  
But may all who love you be like the sun  
when it rises in its strength.” Amen.