

## Judges Chapter 4

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V: 1-3 The cycle of disobedience and bondage starts over again.

- The nation has just experienced 80 years of rest under Ehud only to fall right back into idolatry and rebellion against God as soon as he died.
- There is a distinction between “reformation” and “revival”.
  1. Reformation is an outward change in behavior.
  2. Revival is an inward change of heart that brings genuine repentance, which will lead to a change in behavior.

The nation was like what Jesus described:

**Matthew 12:43-45** <sup>43</sup>“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. <sup>44</sup>Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. <sup>45</sup>Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

- At the turn of the century a famous preacher by the name of Billy Sunday who was on the scene preaching with an intensity that some say has yet to be matched.
- He had been a professional baseball player and a real party animal: he had felt the effect of sin in his life and is quoted as saying:

*“I am against sin. I will kick it as long as I’ve got a foot. I’ll fight it as long as I’ve got a fist. I’ll butt it as long as I’ve got a head. I’ll bite it as long as I’ve got a tooth. And when I’m old and fist-less and footless, and toothless, I’ll gum on it till I go home to glory and it goes to perdition.”* Billy Sunday

**Proverbs 8:13** “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...”

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Jabin the king of Hazor:

- Jabin: “He understands” or “Intelligent”.
- Sisera: “Battle array”
- Hazor: (map) The children of Israel had already taken and burned Hazor in the days of Joshua, but they didn’t wipe out the people as God had commanded and now it has not only been re-occupied by the Canaanites, but they have become strong and have turned things around and put the children of Israel to tribute and subjugation.
- Sisera commanded 900 iron chariots, these were equivalent to tanks in those days, they were formidable weapons against infantry.

- They “mightily oppressed” the children of Israel for 20 years.
- This is the longest time of oppression thus far, and the most intense – the first time that “mightily” oppressed is mentioned.
- As before the children cried out to the Lord.

V: 4-5 Deborah = “Bee”. A prophetess, the wife of “Lapidoth” (Lightnings).

- Deborah judged Israel; meaning the nation came to her for judgment.
- This statement is just as telling as the previous statement about the nation doing evil in the sight of God.
- In a male dominated culture this is just another symptom of their spiritually weakened state.
- Why was this task left to a woman; not that she wasn’t capable, were there no men to rise to the challenge?

**1 Timothy 2:12** “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

- Men are called to be the spiritual leaders and apparently none are willing to stand up and fulfill their duty or calling.

**Isaiah 3:12** “As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them...”

V: 6-7 Case in point: Deborah challenges Barak – haven’t you been told? Gather the men of war and go to Mt. Tabor where I’ll draw Sisera and his army, whom I will deliver into your hand?

V: 8-9 Only if you’ll go with me... sounds pretty weak. There is more to this than “fear” – it is a lack of faith, it is not trusting the Lord.

- Being a prophetess, Deborah speaks for God – perhaps Barak’s relationship with God is so weak that he needs Deborah there as a symbol of God’s presence.

**Deuteronomy 20:1** “When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

- Deborah chides Barak; then the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.

V: 10-14 Barak gathers the men of Zebulun and Naphtali, 10,000 men in all.

- Heber the Kenite betrays the children of Israel and informs Sisera that the children of Israel are on the move. They were Bedouin herdsman, of which there are still many in Israel today.
- God said He would draw Sisera and his chariots to Tabor for the battle, so this is part of God's plan.
- Mount Tabor is on the Northern side of the valley of Jezreel, also known as the valley of Megiddo, or Armageddon – the site of future slaughters.

V: 15-17 The Lord defeated Sisera and his army:

- In the next chapter we get to the “Song of Deborah” and we're given a little more detail about how God discomfited them: They were near the river Kishon and God sent a flood into the area and bogged down the chariots of Sisera – who were then sitting ducks as the children of Israel came pouring down out of mount Tabor.
- Deborah, Barak, and the 10,000 men all had a role to play, but it was the Lord that defeated Sisera, because the battle always belongs to the Lord.
- Sisera, Jabin's general flees on foot – a humiliating defeat.

**Psalm 20:7** “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”

- While fleeing Israel's army, he comes to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite – the same guy that betrayed Israel earlier by informing Sisera of Israel's movements.

V: 18-21 Interesting that in these important events God is again entrusting or using a woman – in this case to drive the point home.

- “Jael”; I thought her name would translate to “Peggy” or something like that, but her name means “Mountain Goat” / “Climber” – as in political climber.
- Note that Sisera asks for water, which would refresh him from the fatigue of battle; but she brings him a nice glass of room temperature milk.

**Testimony:** Grace / Eileen: Magical sleepy time drink – warm milk, a little sugar, and vanilla – and good night kiddies.

- Jael lulls Sisera into a false sense of security, inviting him into her tent, a warm blanket, a nice warm glass of milk, “ohhh, take your rest, it's ok...”
- She then drives a tent stake through his head and pins him to the ground.

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Summary from last week's study: How was the nation delivered?

1. Othniel (The strength of God) delivered Israel being filled with the spirit of God.
2. Ehud (The power of God) delivered Israel with a sharp two edged sword – the Word of God.
3. Shamgar delivered Israel with no explanation except that his name means "Sword".
4. Here Deborah through Jael delivers Israel with warm milk and a hammer:

**1 Peter 2:2** "As newborn babes, desire the sincere / pure milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

**Jeremiah 23:29** "Is not my word like as a fire? Saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces."

- It always comes back to the Word of God!

V: 21 Last words: "*So he died*" – really? "So he got really mad..."

- The prophesy spoken by Deborah that the honor of killing Sisera would go to a woman thus came true – he was killed by Jael even thou Barak had been pursuing him.

V: 22-24 Sisera was the military force that kept king Jabin in power, when he was defeated Jabin's kingdom fell soon thereafter.

- God used the Kenite family to get things going and He used them to finish things off.
- Perhaps it started out banking on Sisera to win and hoping to keep his favor, then seeing the battle going against him – joined the winning team.
- This story ends with the destruction of the oppressor...

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## *Judges Chapter 5*

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V: 1 The song of Deborah: Song of praise, a testimony to God's glory.

V: 2 "*Praise ye the Lord*" – or in Hebrew: "**Hallelujah**"

V: 3-5 Praising God for sending His help: the earth trembled, God brought the rain, you couldn't see the mountains.

- This bogged down the chariots and made them easy prey for the infantry of Israel.

V: 6-7        2<sup>nd</sup> mention of Shamgar / Sword – the only two mentions.

- Describing how bad things were: Highways being un-occupied, inhabitants of villages ceasing meant that people were afraid to travel, or to stay out in the open – they were preyed upon by robbers and by those that oppressed them, meaning the Canaanites.
- That is until Deborah rose up as a “mother” or leader, a judge in Israel.

V: 8        “They chose new gods...” besides the true and the living God, this led to war at their gates and no weapons, they were defenseless because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was their defense.

- When you abandon your only defense then you are defenseless.
- This may explain why God had them using ox goads, slings, and jaw bones.

V: 9        Deborah’s heart was toward, she appreciated those governors, those leaders who were willing to help.

V: 10-13     Speaking of the leaders – who ride on white donkeys.

- Once again they have dominion over the Canaanites.

V: 14-16     Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir / Manasseh, Zebulun, and Issachar are all commended for their participation; Barak is even graciously commended for being part of it.

- Reuben supported them in spirit and in thought, but not in action, they stayed with their sheep. She asks “why didn’t you help us?”
- A sad commentary on the tribe of Reuben, sitting on their hands.

V: 17        Deborah is calling them out, naming names:

- Gilead didn’t help, where was Dan? Asher stayed on the beach of the Medeterranian collecting sea shells.

V: 18        Zebulun and Naphtali were the ones who risked their necks

V: 19        Speaking of the Canaanite confederation that came against Israel.

V: 20 Acknowledging God's role in this battle, that He fought from Heaven against Sisera.

**Psalm 24:8** "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

V: 21 Kishon River: (map) A river which flows from Mt. Gilboa NW through the Valley of Jezreel, to enter the Mediterranean Sea just N of Mt. Carmel.

- It is fed by numerous tributaries in the hills of N Samaria and lower Galilee.
- Only the last 6 miles of the river run continuously being fed by the runoff from the Carmel range.
- The remainder only flows during the rainy season of the year, often flooding onto the surrounding plain.
- It was in this plain, just below Mt. Tabor that Sisera was caught in the rain and the flood which bogged down his chariots and led to his defeat.

V: 22 The horses couldn't run in the deep mire, they couldn't pull the chariots – the mighty ones were no longer prancing.

V: 23 We don't know where Meroz was, just that they were cursed for not helping out.

- There are sins of commission, and there are sins of omission.

**James 4:17** "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

James also tells us:

**James 1:22** "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Jesus admonishes us about the same thing:

**Matthew 7:26-27** <sup>26</sup>And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: <sup>27</sup>And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

V: 24-27 Whatever her motives, blessing to Jael.

V: 28-30 Deborah thinking from a mother's perspective: Thinking of the mother of Sisera, waiting for her son who will not return home.

- Imagining victories, the spoils, fancy robes, needlework on both sides.
- A sad, even pathetic picture of hope where there is none.

V: 31 Poetic language: Let all thy enemies perish!

- May those that love you be like the sun in it's power.

- And the land had rest forty years.
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- Sisera in many ways represented our sin nature: at once, seemingly invincible fleeing from judgment, wants in our tent, hide me, cover me up, don't tell anyone about me, serve me.
- Conquered by the pure milk of the word, and by the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.
- But once our sin nature is nailed to the cross that removes the power of Satan in this case represented by Jabin out of our lives, he is defeated.
- That can only happen through Jesus, taking our sin upon Himself and being nailed to the cross.
- Ultimately Jael was praised because she abandoned the losing side and joined the winning team – just as we are called to do.