

LESSON 2. DEBORAH AND BARAK

Judges 4

MEMORY VERSE: “Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves” (Judges 5:2).

After Joshua and the elders who ruled Israel with him died, the people began following and worshiping the idol gods of the nations around them. They were defeated by their enemies and suffered harsh treatment under them. Each time, they repented and cried out to God to help them. God first sent Othniel as a judge to lead them; following him was Ehud; then Shamgar was the deliverer (Judges 43:31). Read the story of how Ehud killed Eglon, the king of Moab in Judges 3:16-26. After the death of each judge, Israel again would commit spiritual adultery, bowing to the false gods of the people of Canaan. The people would obey for a period of time, then forget and forsake God. God would punish them by allowing the nations around them to enslave and treat them harshly. Israel would again cry out to God and promise to be obedient. But each new generation soon forgot that promise and turned to idolatry.

During the time of Ehud and Shamgar, Israel had peace for 80 years. Shamgar must have been a very strong man, as he killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad [stick to prod oxen] (Judges 3:31). But, after he and Ehud died, Israel forgot their God. “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead” (Judges 4:1).

THE WOMAN JUDGE

Two women are the heroines of Lesson Two. Deborah was Israel’s fourth judge. She was also a prophetess of God. She lived between Ramah and Bethel, and held her “court” there as the Israelites came to her for help.

The Israelites had forsaken the God of heaven to worship idols once more. God let them be taken captive by Jabin, king of Canaan. The Canaanites had treated Israel cruelly for 20 years. Jabin’s army was big and strong; with 900 chariots of iron, and a valiant captain by the name of Sisera. God told Deborah to send for Barak. She relayed God’s word that he was to take 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon and go to mount Tabor. God promised to have Sisera bring the Canaanite army and chariots there. He would deliver them into the hands of the Israelites.



Barak would not go unless Deborah went with him. His faith in God was not strong enough for him to lead the men alone. Deborah went with him, but she told Barak the honor for this victory would go to a woman and not to him. Barak gathered the 10,000 men from the two tribes and brought them to Kedesh. He and Deborah then led them up to mount Tabor as God had said. Sisera had been told by a man named Heber, who lived near Kedesh, that the Israelite army was going to mount Tabor. Sisera took Jabin’s mighty army and 900 chariots to go crush the Israelite rebellion.

JAEL THE SECOND HEROINE

With the iron chariots and seasoned soldiers, it should have been an easy victory for Sisera. However, God was on the side of the Israelites. With only their swords and God's help, the Israelites destroyed the iron chariots and killed every man in Sisera's army. Sisera saw that he was losing the battle and fled from the battlefield on foot. As he hid from the Israelite army, he came to the tent of Heber and his wife Jael.

You remember that two women were the heroines of Lesson 2. The first was Deborah. The second woman was Jael. As Sisera approached Jael's tent, she met him and invited him to come and rest in her tent where he would be safe. She treated him kindly and gave him milk to drink. Sisera asked her to stand in the door to tell any of his enemy who came to the tent that no man was there. Sisera was so tired from the day of fighting that he fell asleep.

While he slept, Jael took a tent peg and a hammer and drove the peg through Sisera's temple. It went all the way through his head and into the ground. Barak came to the area looking for Sisera. Jael took him to her tent and showed him the dead captain. Jabin the king was also destroyed by the Israelites. Thus, as Deborah who spoke for God, had said, "the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judges 4:9). Jael's name will live forever in God's Word for the deed she did that day.

After the battle was over Deborah and Barak sang praises to God for giving Israel the victory. Chapter 5 of Judges describes in poetic form how God helped them defeat their bitter enemy.

WE CAN DEPEND ON GOD

God kept His word to Deborah and Barak. He helped Barak and his army overcome a far superior army and free the Israelites from the domination of Jabin and the Canaanites. He delivered the enemy captain into the hands of a woman, who was not even in the battle.

At times we all have doubts when things seem to be going against us. This is especially true for youth who are just beginning to live for Christ. Barak had doubts. But Deborah had faith in God and the victory was won. The great apostle Paul wrote, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Paul is saying that we can depend on God - if we are obedient to Him. That doesn't mean we will never have trouble or sickness. Neither does it mean there will never be anything bad happen to us. It does mean that we can depend on God to give us strength in times of need. But we must have the courage to trust God. God has always has been true to His Word, and He still is today!!

This lesson should also remind us that we can do great things for the Lord even if we are not someone who is "important." Jael was just a simple woman living in a tent. As a youth, you can have a great influence on your peers. Think about some of youth in the Bible who accomplished great feats, such as Joseph, who had been a slave, David, a shepherd boy who killed Goliath and many others. They had faith in God, not in their own strength or ability. We, too, need to have faith in God. He has promised us the eternal victory if we do.

ANSWER THE QUESTION

1. The first judge of Israel was _____.
2. How long did Moab rule over Israel? (Judges 3:14) _____
3. What was the name of the judge who followed Ehud? _____
4. Who said Sisera would be delivered into the hand of a woman? _____
5. Why were the Israelites serving Jabin, king of Canaan? _____
_____ (Judges 4:1).
6. Why did Barak not get the honor for the victory over the Canaanites? _____
_____ (Judges 4:8, 9).

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

1. "And the children of Israel did _____ again in the _____ of the Lord" (Judges 3:12).
2. "And the Lord discomfited _____, and all his _____, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before _____" (Judges 4:15).
3. "Then Jael Heber's wife took a _____ of the tent, and an _____ in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his _____, and fastened it into the ground" (Judges 4:21).
4. "I can do ___ things through _____ which _____ me (Philippians 4:13).
5. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of _____, and of _____, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae; of _____ also, and Samuel, and of the prophets" (Hebrews 11:32).
6. "And _____, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she _____ Israel at that time" (Judges 4:4).

TRUE OR FALSE

- _____ 1. Jael gave Sisera water to drink.
- _____ 2. Israel was sold [given] by the Lord into the hand of Jabin the king of Canaan because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.
- _____ 3. Deborah was a prophetess of God.
- _____ 4. Israel won the battle with Sisera's army because God was on their side.
- _____ 5. Heber, Jael's husband, told Sisera about Barak and his army going to mount Tabor.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

1. Why is faith in God important? (See Hebrews 11:6) _____

2. What are some things you can do to show your faith in the Lord? _____

3. What is there that God cannot do? (Matthew 19:26) _____