

## **Sisera Goes to Jael (Judges 4)**

How many of you have heard the phrase, “I dropped the ball?” We use this phrase to describe a missed opportunity or failing to do something important. Today we are going to look at several characters in Judges chapter 4. One of the good guys in this story is Barak, whose name can also be found in the ‘Hall of Faith’ chapter in Hebrews 11. He’s a man who many believe dropped the ball because instead of getting the credit for taking out a vicious enemy, that credit will go to a woman.

### **Background.**

Judges chapter 4 is the historical account of God delivering Israel from the Canaanites, through Deborah, Barak, and Jael. Judges chapter 5 is a poetic song about that victory, which is key to understanding what God wants us to understand from the story. The setting takes place in the Northern part of Israel. It is a land that is filled with Canaanites, who should have been destroyed a long time ago. One of the reasons why the Israelites did not mess with the Canaanites is found in Judges 1:19. They had a strong military. Judges 4:3 says, “They had 900 chariots of iron and oppressed Israel for 20 years.”

Why did all of this happen? One reason is because God allowed it to happen. After Ehud, the left-handed assassin died; the Israelites once again go back to doing evil in the sight of the Lord (4:1). As a result, God handed them over to the Canaanites. Let’s begin by looking at some of the villains.

### **Sisera: Judges 4:2.**

Sisera was the commander of King Jabin’s army. There is no doubt in my mind that this was an evil man, who used his chariots to terrorize the Northern tribe of Israel. He did this for 20 years, until the Israelites finally cried out to the Lord for help. The living conditions prior to God’s intervention can be found in Judges 5:6-8.

### **II. Deborah: Judges 4:4**

Deborah was a prophetess, which means she was a spokesperson for the Lord. She is more of a judge in the way we think of a judge than any of the other judges. Deborah helped people understand and apply God’s law to their problems. In verse 5, Deborah calls for Barak and gives him God’s instructions.

### **III. Barak: Judges 4:8**

Barak said to Deborah, ‘If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.’ Deborah said, Ok, but if I go with you, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman.’

### **III. Jael: Judges 4:11**

This verse seems like boring information that disrupts the flow of the story, but it's important information. Here we read about a man named Heber who is Jael's husband. Heber sided with the Israelites and he also sided with the enemy, King Jabin.

As Sisera's army is being slaughtered, Sisera runs away until he finds the tent of Jael. Her husband Heber was friends with the enemy, so he thought to himself, 'I'm safe.' She offers him a blanket and some milk. While he was fast asleep verse 21 says, "She picks up a tent peg, along with a hammer and drives the peg into Sisera's temple.

Later, Barak arrives looking for Sisera, Jael says, "follow me and I will show you the man you're looking for." Who gets the honor of destroying public enemy number one? It's not Barak, but Jael, just as Deborah predicted.

#### **Transition:**

Who is the hero of the story? The real hero is always God, but which person deserves the most recognition? Judges chapter 5 contains a Hall of Fame and a Hall of Disgrace. Some of the tribes were guilty of desertion and treason. Other tribes were given recognition sort of like our present-day military forces. Some were given bronze stars, others were given the purple heart, but the one who deserves the medal of honor is Jael. That's what we read in Judges 5:24-27.

#### **Practical lessons for Today**

##### **#1. God uses unlikely people in unlikely ways to accomplish His purposes.**

With God the ordinary can be extraordinary.

##### **II. Jael's story teaches us how to fight in battles.**

Her battle was physical, but our battle is spiritual (Eph 6:12).

##### **III. Give God the Glory for your victories.**

Psalm 20:7, "Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God."

In chapter 5 Deborah writes a song about the victory. The song tells us that God is the one who gets all the glory, not the Israelite army, not Barak, or Jael, or Deborah. All the glory goes to God.

**Close: Did Barak drop the ball?** He made it into the hall of faith chapter in Hebrews 11.