



February 23, 2014
Judges 4
“Killing our Sisera”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

The cycle of sin (see diagram at the end of this study guide) is a recurring pattern for Israel, and every time they slipped into sin and idolatry, the Lord was gracious and raised up a military hero or deliverer, called a judge. The enemy the Israelites faced this time were the Canaanites. Their king was Jabin, and the general of his army was Sisera. They had 900 iron chariots, which were the latest in military vehicles. The Bible tells us in [Judges 4:3](#), that they had *“cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.”*

In this study, we’ll look at Deborah, a remarkable woman the Lord used to deliver Israel. There’s no doubt she is one of the most prominent, influential women in the Bible.

Deborah

1. Judge
 - a. She had the distinct honor of being the only female judge of Israel.
 - b. In fact, though it’s true that a lot of women have had a great deal of influence in Israel’s history, she was the only woman to ever lead Israel until Golda Meir, who became the Prime Ministry in 1969.
 - c. Some Bible scholars and teachers have said that her selection by God is really less about her, and more about the apparent lack of strong male leadership.
 - d. Pastor Gary said he doesn’t think Deborah was God’s “default” selection, who was moved to the front of the line, simply because no man was qualified to lead, but that she was God’s unique choice for a unique time.

2. Wife

- a. Although the Hebrew Bible doesn't say she was married, our Bible says in [Judges 4:4](#), that she was *"the wife of Lappidoth."*
- b. The Hebrew translation says, "She was a fiery woman."

3. Prophetess

- a. She was enabled by the Holy Spirit to discern the will and ways of God, and to declare it to others.
- b. [Judges 4:5](#) says, *"She held court under the Palm of Deborah,"* which means she had a designated place at which she held regular "office hours," so that through her, people could come and get advice and counsel from God.
 - i. It's believed that the Palm of Deborah is probably a reference, not to herself, but to Deborah, Rebekah's nurse.¹
 - ii. [Genesis 35:8](#) - *"Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So it was named Allon Bacuth."*²

4. Song Writer

- a. [Judges 5](#) is a song written by Deborah that records the Israelites victory over the Canaanites.

5. Warrior

- a. She accompanied the army of Israel into war, but we don't know whether she was engaged in combat per se.

6. Deborah and Barak

- a. Barak was leader of the Israeli army.
- b. [Judges 4:6-8](#) - *"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 the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.' Barak said to her, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.'"*
- c. Barak's response can be interpreted in one of two ways, either he had such a deep respect for her and the hand of God upon her life that he refused to go unless she went as God's representative or he was a wimp!
- d. Deborah's response seems to indicate that Barak was a wimp.

¹ Rebekah was Isaac's wife.

² Allon Bacuth means "oak of weeping."

- e. It's worth noting, that even though he was reluctant to go into battle because he was afraid to lead the Israeli army, he did go, and the fact remains that he received an honorable mention in the "Hall of Faith."
 - i. **Hebrews 11:32** - *"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets..."*
7. Deborah and Jael
- a. **Judges 4:9a** - *" 'Very well,' Deborah said, 'I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman.' "*
 - b. **Judges 5:24-27** - *"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women. He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell; there they lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell - dead."*

Application For Today

8. Many aspects of the journey the Israelites made, from slavery in Egypt to life in the Promised Land, are reflected in the Christian life.
- a. Slavery in Egypt
 - i. Represents our bondage to sin.
 - b. Pharaoh (Satan)
 - i. Represents the one who wants to keep us in bondage.
 - c. Moses (Old Testament Law)
 - i. Represents the one who leads us to the Promised Land.
 - d. Joshua (New Testament Grace)
 - i. Represents the one who takes us into the Promised Land.
 - ii. His name means, "The Lord is Salvation."
 - e. Pass through the Jordan River
 - i. Represents baptism.
 - f. Enter the Promised Land
 - i. Represents not so much heaven as it does the Christian life with its challenges, because there are battles to be fought and ungodly influences all around us that try to lure us away from God.
9. **1 Corinthians 10:1-13** - *"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they*

drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.' We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did – and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did – and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

- a. Paul said that these events were to serve as an example to us.
 - b. The Canaanites, in all their idolatry and sexual sin and immorality, are a picture of our own flesh, which always strives with our spirit and always tries to rule over us.
10. Every Believer needs to examine their life to find out what that one area is that seeks to be fed and comforted, instead of killed!
- a. This sin issue is our "Sisera," which doesn't seem to die; it escapes and tries to find lodging in our tent, so to speak.
 - b. We can either give it shelter or we can drive a tent peg through its temple!
 - c. **Colossians 3:5** – *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."*
11. **Romans 13:14** – *"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."* (NKJV)

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Judges 4** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Do you think Deborah was God's first choice for a unique time in Israel's history, like Pastor Gary, or do you think she was the default choice because there were no male leaders who were qualified or willing to lead Israel? (See #1C-1D above)

4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times they've followed the leading of the Lord in a specific time and place similar to Deborah.
5. What is the Lord calling you to do that makes you feel as though you aren't qualified or the "right person" for the assignment?
6. Read and discuss [Judges 4:6-8](#).
 - a. Do you agree with Pastor Gary and other Bible scholars and teachers, who believe Barak "was a wimp," because of his reaction to Deborah's command that he lead the army into battle? (See #6 above)
7. Read and discuss [Judges 5:24-27](#), and Jael and her encounter with Sisera, the general of King Jabin's Canaanite army.
8. Provide an overview of Pastor Gary's outline of people, etc., that represent various aspects of the Christian life. (See #8 above)
9. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 10:1-13](#).
10. Read and discuss [Colossians 3:5](#) and [Romans 13:14](#) (NKJV).
 - a. How has the Lord helped you "kill your Sisera"?
 - b. What are some of the "Sierras" in your life that you need to allow the Lord to help you "kill"?
 - c. How has your willingness to feed and provide lodging, so to speak, impacted your relationship with the Lord and your witness?
11. Close your time by having someone ready to read [Colossians 3:5](#) and [Romans 13:14](#), and pray the Scriptures so that each person would have help of the Holy Spirit to put their "Sisera(s)" to death, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).