

Series: Biblical Heroes and Zeros – week 3

CDOBC – beginning on 10/17/10

Title: “Deborah – *Beware of a Woman with a Hammer*”

November 7, 2010

Judges 4:1-5:31

OBJECTIVE: To help us trust God in crisis and have faith even if we're afraid.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Wycliffe Associates Banquet
- Iannotti family – prayer – help needed
- Men's b-fast this Sat. – 7 a.m.
- Revolve Tour- “Dream On” – if you are planning to attend, please register ASAP. A count is needed to determine if more tickets are needed – and the decision needs to be made this week if additional tickets are needed. Stop by the table in the courtyard to sign-up. Payment is due by Dec. 15 – but you need to sign-up today.
- Prayer gathering

Our hero today is Deborah. She's a Biblical hero because she was faithful, courageous in a time of crisis, and she stood out from the normal expectations of her day. Deborah occupies Judges 4 & 5 – and she was one of the judges in Israel during the time between Joshua's conquest and the establishment of the monarchy.

(Give a brief survey of the period of the judges) – Israel's disobedience – 3:3-6 - intermarriage with Canaanites, worshiping other Gods (Baals).

Chapter 4 is the narrative – the account of what happened. Chapter 5 is a poem – a song written about the events of chapter 4. The poem/song in chapter 5 gives additional information on the narrative – so chapter 5 helps us understand the events of chapter 4 in more detail.

God is waiting for your call. vs. 1-3

We read at the end of chapter 3 that under Ehud's judgeship, Israel had peace for eighty years! This was a remarkable duration of peace. However, as **4:1** tells us – after Ehud died, the nation turned away from God.

Read vs. 2-3

Jabin, a king of Canaan who lived in Hazor – a city approx. 9 miles N. of the Sea of Galilee / Sisera (a Philistine – they had the ‘monopoly’ on iron at this time in history) is the commander of his army – he lives in “Harosheth Haggoyim” / after 20 years they cry out to the LORD for help. We read in Deborah’s song (victory song) in chapter 5:5-6 of the desolation and oppression that Jabin and Sisera had brought upon the Israelites. “In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased...”

Judges 5:6-7a

Israel was forced to hide in the hills and use trails in the woods to get around instead of using the primary roads throughout the northern region of the country!

This was an impossible situation. No hope. Oppressive taxes, fortified cities of the enemy, military cruelty. Twenty years of hopelessness.

Have you ever faced a hopeless situation in your life? Are you in a situation that no matter where you turn to find help or relief you run into a brick wall? No matter where you turn the obstacle is too high to climb over and too large to go around?

How do you get through a hopeless situation? How do you deal with the “impossible” in your life?

Vs. 3b – “...they cried to the LORD for help.”

After twenty years, they cried out to the LORD. They didn’t just call out to Him to help them, but since they used the personal and covenantal name of God (Yahweh), there is a sense of repentance – of confession of their wrong-doing. God is not some divine first responder – a divine genie in a bottle on stand-by ready to race to your aid when the results of your sin lead you in a dark alley and you call out for Him

to help you escape. He may respond to that call for help – but the help described here is not just a cry to escape difficulty – but a cry of repentance for doing evil. God is your solution. “For nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

God does not follow human rules. vs. 4-5

But be warned...when you rely on God for help, He is faithful...but quite often unconventional! Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 1:27-29 that God doesn't operate by the world's standard or the world's values.

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

Read 4:4-5

It was not normal for a woman to rule in Israel. Deborah's prominence and position as a judge not only shows her ability and competence, but it implies a lack of qualified and / or willing men.

Map showing Deborah's location

The reference to a palm tree (v. 5) may be literal – or it may be figurative language that alludes to the stateliness and gracefulness of women (Song of Songs 7:7-8). The palm is associated with prosperity in Psalm 92:12 and leadership in Isaiah 9:14.

Deborah is a judge – settling disputes – vs. 5

Deborah is a wife – vs. 4

Deborah is a mother – (5:7)

Deborah is a prophetess – vs. 4

Her name means “*honey bee*” – and she is living near Bethel – which means “*the House of God*”.

In God’s unique way, He is going to use a little honey bee, sitting under a palm tree, to defeat an experienced general with 900 iron-reinforced chariots and a king with fortified cities!

Do you think that God can’t use you? Do you ever tell yourself that you’re not gifted enough for God to use? If God can make a donkey talk (Num. 22:26-31), don’t you think He can do amazing things through you?

Faith in God should overrule our fear. vs. 6-9

In vs. 6-7, Deborah lays out God’s plan – the strategy for victory over Jabin and Sisera.

Read vs. 6-7

(Show map of Barak’s location, Mt. Tabor’s location, Kishon River location, battle zone)

Read vs. 8-9

Barak is worried, frightened, and hesitant. He is to gather an army of 10,000 (one without any modern weapons or training) and be ready to ambush Sisera and his troops. However, he is unwilling to go alone – so he says he’ll go if she goes (vs. 8)! He should have trusted God’s Word through Deborah the Prophetess. His faith in God’s ability should have overruled his lack of confidence in his own ability.

Faith does not eliminate fear – Paul said He approached the Corinthians in “...weakness and in fear...” (1 Cor. 2:3). But Paul’s faith motivated Him – his fear of rejection – and his perceived weakness in accomplishing the task did not stop him from doing what God was leading him to do.

Deborah agrees to go with Barak, but there is a price for his lack of faith and courage – instead of him receiving the credit for the victory, another woman would receive (vs. 9).

Read vs. 10-13

Once again, we have an impossible situation. Here is Deborah and Barak – and 10,000 soldiers (untrained) – we’re not told of any specific battle plan – through Deborah the prophetess, God has led them to this location –on top of Mt. Tabor. Now, Sisera hears of this uprising, and gets all of his chariots and they surround all the escape routes off of Mt. Tabor. What a hopeless situation! They have the higher ground, but they have no weapons, no training, and no human way to defeat the army below!

Then God goes to work.

Read vs. 14-16

We can trust God in our crisis. vs. 14-16

What does it mean when Deborah says, “Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?” vs.14

5:4-5 “O LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.”

5:20-22 “From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong! Then thundered the horses' hoofs--galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds.”

God went before Barak with a mighty storm. Such a storm that it seems as though the “mountains quaked”! With muddy

conditions, the chariots were useless! In fact, they would be a handicap.

However, Barak and his troops were still out-armed. Their weapons were inferior...except that God was on their side! God was the reason for the victory – “...the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and his army by the sword...” vs. 15

God is aware of future problems. vs. 17-23

Read vs. 17-23

What a great Home Depot commercial this would make! This is not only an incredible victory that God gives...but what in the world is a Kenite doing way up here (vs. 11)!

(Map of Kenite territory, battle zone, and where Sisera fled)

Years before, God was orchestrating this battle. I believe He moved this Kenite family – a relative of Moses – to move way up north for this very purpose. Sisera never had a chance! He never suspects anything. He thinks he’s safe. He’s exhausted. Vs. 17 tells us that there was a friendly relationship between Jabin (Sisera’s king) and the clan of Heber the Kenite. This friendly relationship was not sincere – it was political – it was for Heber’s survival. He’s on the northern border of Jabin’s territory – and he wants to have peace and not be bothered...so he and Jabin establish a political truce...a ‘friendship’. However, blood is thicker than water – or political deals. Heber and the Kenites have deep roots with the nation of Israel – and Sisera doesn’t know it.

Once the battle starts, Barak performs admirably. He leads the troops and is personally involved in the fighting. However, he doesn’t receive the credit for taking out Sisera. The devastating blow to Sisera – and to the kingdom of Jabin

is through the hands of Jael. She uses so much force, that the tent peg not only penetrates Sisera's skull, but it goes through his head and into the ground! He's not going anywhere! She wasn't empowered by God in a special way to do this...in nomadic tribes / society, the women were the ones who would normally set-up the tents. She was familiar with the tent pegs and hammer/mallet – and she simply used her skill to take out a feared and ruthless oppressor. In this culture – to lose a battle was one thing...to be killed in battle was another...but the pinnacle of disgrace was if a military commander was killed by a woman! (See Judges 9:52-54 – Abimelech's death)

Why do men (at times) have difficulty in leading?

See Gen. 3

Why was Barak timid / unwilling to act without Deborah at his side?

Why do you think Barak is mentioned in Heb. 11 and not Deborah or Jael?

John Calvin comments, "In every saint there is always to be found something reprehensible. Nevertheless although faith may be imperfect and incomplete it does not cease to be approved by God" (in loc.). Expositor's Bible Commentary

Application

Serve God with what He has given you.

i.e. Jael

Be confident in God's Word.

Barak hesitated and acted cowardly – even though Deborah, a prophetess, was giving him encouragement and direction from God. There was no reason for Barak to lack confidence...his mission was from God...his victory was insured by the Word of God (4:6-7).

Eliminate chauvinism from your thoughts.

God can – and does use women to accomplish great things for His Kingdom. Don't confuse gender roles with superiority or greater ability on the part of men. Many times we (men) are unwilling to lead or to be decisive – and God calls a woman / women to fill the void. Make sure you view women with the same vision that God sees them. Understand their equal value and giftedness – and treat them with respect and empower them for ministry tasks where appropriate.

Repent from your sin...call out to God!

Close in prayer