

General Church Education



Deborah and Barak

Judges 4:1-24, 5:28-31

Lesson 20

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Deborah and Barak

Judges 4:1-24, 5:28-31

Teacher Background

Israel again worshiped idols, so the king of Canaan (Jabin) and his army captain, Sisera, suppressed them. After twenty years, Israel cried out to the Lord, and He raised up Deborah, a prophetess, and Barak, a military leader. People would visit Deborah's mountaintop home where she sat under a palm tree and gave judgment. Deborah asked Barak to take 10,000 troops to Mount Tabor. She foresaw that the Lord would send Sisera's army against them there. Barak agreed to go, only if Deborah went with him.

Heber, a Kenite, informed Sisera that Barak was massing his troops. So, Sisera moved his chariots into a flat open valley by the River Kishon because he thought would be a good strategic position. Then Deborah told the children of Israel, "Up! For this is the day which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand." Israel's army drove down from the mountains and devastated Sisera's forces. The Lord swept the chariots away in the flooded river and made their chariot wheels stick in the mud. Exhausted, Sisera ran into the tent of Heber, the informant, for safety. Heber's wife, Jael, warmly welcomed Sisera, but once he was asleep, she killed him with a tent peg. So Israel's victory was complete.

This story pictures the way spiritual enemies oppress us. Evil spirits enter our hearts with their selfishness. If we cry to the Lord for help, He will show us truths we know and can use to resist and fight them. The Lord fights with us and for us to slay the things that cause us unhappiness.

Key Ideas

- The Lord wants us to stand on the side of truth.
- All that is good comes from the Lord.
- The Lord gives different people different strengths and abilities. It is good to work together.

From the Writings

"Sisera means falsity from evil destroying the church." *Apocalypse Explained* 434.13

The Lord flows into people with the good of love and charity, and conjoins that good to the truths that are with them, and thereby joins people and angels to Himself.... In the prophecy of Deborah and Barak, 'They fought from heaven, the stars from their courses fought with Sisera' signifies combat by means of the knowledges of truth and good, which are from the Lord through heaven. See *Apocalypse Explained* 447.4.

In order for people to be regenerated, they must first be reformed. This is done by means of the truths of faith. This first state is called reformation. During childhood and youth most people in the church are introduced into truths, yet few are regenerated. Most learn the truths of faith for the sake of reputation and honor and gain. When the truths of faith have been introduced by means of these loves, a person cannot be regenerated until these loves have been removed. A person is let into states of temptation in order to remove them. During temptations, evil loves are excited by the infernal crew, while affections of truth and good learned from infancy are excited by angels. The resulting conflict is felt as temptation. See *Arcana Coelestia* 5280.

Deborah and Barak

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Vocabulary

oppressed—held great power over them

deploy—go to a position ready to use

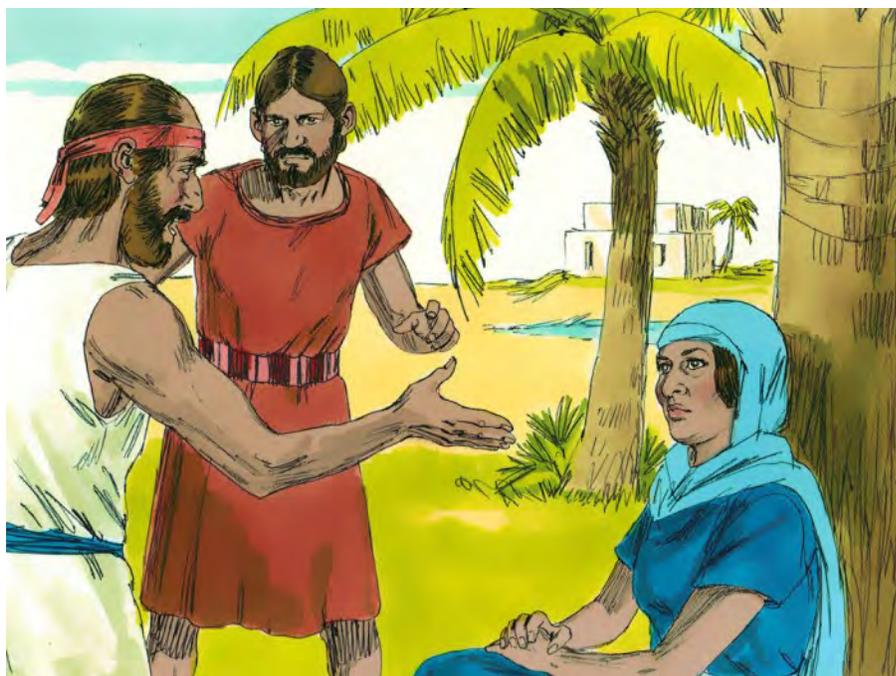
terebinth—related to trees that produce pistachio nuts

subdue—overpower by superior force

The Lord gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments, which teach what is good and what is evil. He warned them that all the good things He had given them would be taken away if they stopped obeying the commandments. Even though they knew this, the children of Israel turned from the Lord and chose evil. So the Lord allowed their enemies to rule over them. In this story a woman called Deborah brought the people messages from the Lord. Her name means “bee”. A man named Barak lead the army of Israel to victory. His name means “lightning”. What might their names say about their characters and strength against Israel’s enemies?

Jabin and Sisera

When Israel turned from the Lord, Jabin, king of Canaan, became a ruler in the north. Jabin and his army captain, Sisera, harshly oppressed the northern tribes. Jabin’s capital city, Hazor, was in the territory of Naphtali, the tribe of a man named Barak. For twenty years Jabin’s iron chariots rattled through the countryside where Barak lived, frightening his people. Sisera and his soldiers took



people’s money and crops, and forced men, women and children to work in king Jabin’s fields.

Israel Cried Out to the Lord

The children of Israel became desperate and cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord sent Deborah, a prophetess, to deliver them. Deborah lived in the southern mountains of Ephraim between Bethel and

Ramah. People came to Deborah because she was a judge. She would sit under a palm tree while making judgments.

Deborah and Barak

The Lord used Deborah the prophetess to bring help to the Israelites in need. He told Deborah to send for Barak and call him to fight against Jabin and Sisera. Deborah told Barak to take ten thousand soldiers from his tribe, Naphtali, and from Zebulun, and go to Mount Tabor.



Barak told Deborah he would only go if she went with him. So Deborah agreed to go, but she told Barak he would not kill Sisera. A woman would kill Sisera. Barak did what Deborah told him and gathered troops to go to Mount Tabor.

Read Judges 4:1-10.

Heber

Heber the Kenite saw Barak and Deborah passing by on their way to Mount Tabor and informed Sisera, the enemy commander, about what he had seen. Heber was a relative of Moses, so he knew the children of Israel. He also knew Sisera, the enemy leader. You will see why this is important later in the story.

When Sisera heard that Barak and Deborah were moving troops up to Mount Tabor, he positioned his troops down in the valley of Esdraelon, by the Kishon River. Many battles in the Word took place in the valley of Esdraelon. It was the best farm land in the whole country. It was also flat, which made it a good place for Jabin to use his 900 iron chariots in battle. Chariots did not work well on mountains. Once both armies were in place, Deborah ordered Barak to attack. Israel's army swept down the mountain towards their enemy, and the battle began. Read Judges 4:11-13.

The Battle

The Lord helped Israel win the battle. Afterwards, Deborah sang a song of victory describing how it happened. She said that even creation had helped them. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.... The torrent of Kishon swept them away." The swollen Kishon River, rushing with spring rain, carried away some of Sisera's chariots. Chariot wheels stuck in the mud, just as Pharaoh's chariots got stuck crossing the Red Sea. Seeing what was happening, Sisera jumped from his chariot and ran up into the hills. Barak killed all of the enemies, but Sisera, the captain of the army, had escaped on foot. What might happen to him?

Read Judges 4:14-24.

With the battle raging, Sisera ran to his friend, Heber. Barak let him go and only followed after he had destroyed Sisera's army. When Sisera arrived at Heber's tent, Jael, Heber's wife, came to meet him. She welcomed Sisera like an honored guest. Sisera believed that Jael was his friend, so he felt safe sheltering in her tent. When he said he wanted water, she brought him milk. She offered him a blanket so he could lie down to rest. He was exhausted from the battle. Trusting Heber to guard him, Sisera fell asleep. As he slept, Jael took a tent peg and a hammer and drove the peg into his temple, so that he died. When Barak caught up, Jael invited him to come and see Sisera's body.

After this, the children of Israel overthrew King Jabin, and the land had peace for forty years. The Lord had again delivered the Israelites from their enemies.

The Song of Deborah

While some of the details of this story are difficult to read, we can remember that it is not just about people who fought battles many years ago. It is also a story about ourselves. Spiritual enemies, such as greed or anger, sometimes oppress us. This story reminds us that if we turn to the Lord for help, He will show us true ideas that we know. Like Barak, these ideas can resist and fight our enemies. The Lord empowers those true ideas with feelings of trust and confidence in Him, like Deborah. And He fights for us, so that the things in us that cause us to be unhappy are killed.

Read Judges 5:28-31.

Discussion Questions

- Deborah's name means "bee". What is special about a bee? What special qualities of bees tell us about Deborah's special qualities?
- Barak's name means "lightning" because of his special power to fight wrong and false ideas. If you could pick a name for yourself that would have a special power, what would you like it to be? How would it help you fight your spiritual battles?
- Barak would not fight the battle without Deborah. Why was that? How did Deborah help him? What confidence did she give him?
- Do you think Deborah watched the battle from Mount Tabor? Or did she go down into battle with Barak?
- The Lord helped the children of Israel with a flooded river. Remember that water corresponds to the Lord's truth. What does this tell us about how He helps us during our struggles?
- Some events in this story take place on the top of mountains. Mountains rise up high, like thoughts that rise up in our minds, drawing us to the Lord. What took place on a mountain? What happened in a valley? Where were the people who were on the Lord's side?
- How can we "go up to the mountains" in our minds? What can we see from a mountain-top that we cannot see from a valley?

Activity Overview | Deborah and Barak

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

For who is God, except the Lord?
And who is a rock, except our God?
It is God who arms me with strength,
And makes my way perfect. Psalm 18:31,32

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Deborah and Barak Word Find
- Judges Trading Card—Deborah
- Picture to color—Jael Hides Sisera in Her Tent (Judges 4)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Choose words from a word bank to answer review questions about the story of Deborah and Barak. Look for this activity online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-deborah-and-barak-review-questions-judges19.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Deborah and Barak Word Find

C A H R Q T G C X T H J A B I N
 A R A U P N A I L Q G A C S D H
 N F Z L T A G N U S Y E H U D Q
 A B O M K P E F Z Y W L P M Y R
 A S R S Q H A M M E R T R A Z V
 N E H W S T F C Z E B U L U N W
 D E B O R A H D P V F Q U Z B J
 D C A R R L F W O N L V X B P Z
 F D R D B I J S X K E N I T E S
 M S A T V R M I L K E L A Y T A
 L R K E C P D S Q B E L O W C K
 W H Q N S G A E F E P H R A I M
 G X Z T A B O R V T E B A R M Y
 H W J F Y O K A M H G N O N Z S
 Q R A M A H B G J E T P A L M G
 C H A R I O T S N L K A P X M L

HAZOR	HAMMER	MILK	JABIN	CHARIOTS
SISERA	BARAK	FLEE	TABOR	ARMY
EPHRAIM	CANAAN	NAIL	SWORD	ZEBULUN
PALM	NAPHTALI	PEG	EHUD	TENT
BETHEL	JAEL	DEBORAH		

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Cards Deborah

Learn about the Judges by making a trading card for each one. Collect the trading cards and use them to review or sequence the stories of the judges. This activity is repeated in future stories.

Do the following on the front of each card:

1. Write the name of the judge in the space at the top of the card.
2. Write the number of years of peace Israel had after this judge conquered Israel's enemy.
3. Draw a picture of the judge.

Fill in the following details given in the story on the back of each card:

1. Write the name of the region(s) or city in Israel being attacked.
2. Write the name of the judge's tribe.
3. Write the name of the enemy attacking Israel.
4. Write the kind of weapon used to fight the enemy.
5. Fill in the "other" box with any details from the story that interest you, e.g. how a judge escaped, the number of years he or she judged Israel, other things he or she did.

When you have completed the card, cut it out. Fold the card in half and tape the edges together.

