

Life Lesson 47
Deborah and Barak
Text: Judges 4

Introduction

The chariots were coming!

The rumble of wheels and the beating of horses hooves made the Israelites tremble with fear. Chariots were scary things to them. They were special carts made of iron. When soldiers rode in chariots, they were up above the people on the ground. The iron protected them from arrows and spears thrown from below. They could shoot straight down at the enemy and could run over them with their heavy iron wheels.

Chariots were like tanks for people in Bible times.

Why do you think enemies with tanks were coming after God's people, the Israelites?

The Life Lesson

After Ehud and Shamgar, the second and third judges, died, the people started sinning and worshiping idols again.

How tired the Lord must have been with the endless circle those Hebrews were always following. First they sinned. Then God sent a punishment. Then they repented and cried for forgiveness and deliverance. God set them free, only to have them start the circle over again with their sinning.

The Lord allowed Jabin, king of Canaan, to conquer them. They served the Canaanites for twenty terrible years. Jabin and the head of his army, Sisera, were cruel to the Israelites. They were so powerful that it seemed impossible for the Israelites to ever be free from them.

Not only did Sisera command a large army, but he also had nine hundred iron chariots. How could they ever defeat an army so strong?

Just like they always did, the Israelites repented after they had suffered for awhile. They cried to God for forgiveness and deliverance. God heard them and called a man to judge the people and deliver them from the Canaanites. This time, though, the man didn't want the job.

We don't know why Barak didn't want to obey the Lord. Maybe he wasn't as brave as some of the other judges had been, or perhaps he hadn't learned to trust the Lord as he should have. If we trust God completely, He gives us the confidence to do what He calls us to do.

There was one person in the land, though, who loved and trusted God. Her name was Deborah. She was such a wise lady that she would sit down under a tree and people would come from all over the country to ask her questions and to listen to her tell about God.

She knew what God had said to Barak, because she sent a message to him that said, "Didn't God say, 'Go toward Mt. Tabor with 10,000 soldiers and I will bring Sisera, captain of Jabin's army, with his men, and you will defeat them there?'"

She didn't say it exactly, but what she meant was, "Why aren't you going?"

Barak sent a message back. "If you will go with me to fight them, I will go. If you don't go with me, I won't go."

That was foolish of Barak, wasn't it? What did he expect Deborah to do that he couldn't do himself? Maybe he thought that since Deborah loved God and was more obedient than he was, God would be more likely to give the victory with her along. Yet, God had already promised to give them the victory!

Barak insisted that he wouldn't go without Deborah.

“Okay,” she replied. “I will go with you, but you won’t have the honor of killing Sisera, himself, although you will defeat his army. A woman will kill Sisera.”

Barak probably thought Deborah would be the one to kill Sisera, but God had other plans for that wicked Canaanite leader.

Together they led the Israelites toward the mountain where they would fight.

“Go ahead,” Deborah said to Barak. “Didn’t God say He would give you the victory?”

Barak led the troops into battle, and God did give them a great victory, just as He had promised.

The battle was so fierce that Sisera, the enemy captain, slipped out of his chariot and ran off to hide. While Barak was chasing after the Canaanite army, Sisera ran on foot to the tent of his friend, Heber.

Jael, Heber’s wife, came out to meet him.

“Come in. Don’t be afraid,” Jael told him. “Lie down here and rest.”

“Give me some water. I’m thirsty,” he told her.

She opened a bottle of milk for him and covered him up when he lay down to rest.

“If anyone comes, say I’m not here,” he told Jael.

Heber might have been Sisera’s friend, but evidently Jael wasn’t. We don’t know whether she was angry with him, or perhaps afraid of the Israelites. While Sisera slept, she crept up with a hammer and a big spike. She put the point of the spike against his head and hit it with a hammer! Sisera died instantly. He didn’t die in battle. Just as God told Deborah, he died at the hands of a woman.

The Israelites were once again free and the rulers of their own land. For forty years they had peace until they began the circle all over again by sinning against God.

The Life Lesson

Have you ever been like Barak? Maybe there have been times when you knew God had a special job for you to do, like telling one of your friends about Jesus, or inviting them to church. You knew God wanted you to do the job, but it was so much easier to ask someone who seemed closer to the Lord to do it.

Maybe there have been times there was something that really bothered you, so instead of praying about it yourself, you asked someone else to pray about it. There's nothing at all wrong in asking people to pray with us. We need to realize, though, that God can hear our prayers if we are His children, just as well as the prayers of the pastor or a Sunday School teacher. We don't need another person to do our job or ask our requests. If we are Christians, God has given us the right to come to Him without a "go-between" person.

No matter how difficult things seem, God is always with us, giving us the strength and the power to do exactly what He commands us to do.

Review Questions

What country ruled over Israel after Ehud and Shamgar died?

The Canaanites

Who was king of the Canaanites?

Jabin

Who was the captain of the Canaanite army?

Sisera

Who did God call to be the fourth judge?

Barak

Barak wouldn't go to fight unless what person went with him?

Deborah

Why did Barak want Deborah to go with him?

She was a godly woman and taught the people about God. He was afraid to go without her.

Who killed Sisera?

Jael, the wife of Heber.