



Joshua was dead, but the Israelites continued to serve God all the days of the elders who lived after Joshua (Joshua 24:31). When those elders died, the Israelites stopped worshiping the true God. They had not driven out all the people of Canaan as they were supposed to do.

In time Israel began to worship the false gods of the Canaanites: Baal (*BAY-uhl*) and Ashtaroah (*ASH-tahr-awth*) (Judges 2:13). These were idols, made by the hands of men. God's anger was stirred. He brought evil upon the Israelites. He let their enemies come against them.

Yet, whenever the Israelites called on God for help, God was merciful. He would prepare men to deliver them from their enemies. Those men were called *judges*.

Once when Israel had served the Moabites (*MO-uh-bites*) for eighteen years because they had sinned, God sent a man named Ehud (*EE-huhd*) to deliver them. Israel had peace and rest from their enemies for eighty years, while Ehud lived (Judges 3:12-30).

When the Israelites went back to the worship of false gods, the Lord gave them into the hands of Jabin (*JAY-bin*), the king of the Canaanites. Jabin had a powerful army. The captain of the army was Sisera (*SIS-uh-ruh*). He had nine hundred iron chariots at his command. He "mightily oppressed" the Israelites for twenty years.

That time, when the Israelites called on God for help, God did not choose a man to judge Israel—He chose a woman! This woman loved God. She was

Church of God Sunday School

DEBORAH AND BARAK: THE CRY FOR DELIVERANCE

Judges 4:1 — 5:31

called a prophetess because what she said came true. Her name was Deborah. She judged Israel's problems under a palm tree in Mount Ephraim (*EE-free-uhm*).

Deborah sent for a man named Barak (*BAIR-uhk*) to be the general to lead the Israelite army against the Canaanites. Deborah told Barak that God had said he was to take an army of ten thousand men to Mount Tabor. God would lure Sisera and his army of chariots down to the Kishon (*KI-shon*) River and deliver them into Barak's hands.

But Barak said to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." Deborah said she would go with Barak, but she told him he would not get any glory or honor for winning the battle or for capturing Sisera. God was going to deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. "And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh [*KEE-desh*]."

When Sisera was told that Barak and his army had gone to Mount Tabor, Sisera decided to take all of his army to the Kishon River, which was below the mountain.

No doubt, looking down from Mount Tabor, Deborah and Barak could see the army of Sisera at the river below. Deborah said to Barak, "Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee?"

God had drawn Sisera to the river. He had kept His Word. Barak and his army of ten thousand men went down to meet Sisera's mighty army with nine hundred iron chariots.

The Bible does not say exactly what happened, but Josephus, a famous Bible historian, wrote in one of his works (*The Antiquities of the Jews*; Book V, Chapter V) that when Barak saw the enemy, he was ready to turn around and go back! Deborah told Barak he should stay and fight the enemy. God would help them. So Barak and his men went to do battle with Sisera—with the Lord's help. The Bible says the Lord "discomfited [or confused] Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host." But how did He do it?

Josephus wrote that God sent a terrible storm, with

much rain and hail. Sisera and his men could not see to fight and use their weapons. The cold rain and hail kept hitting the Canaanites in their faces. They became so confused and blinded that some were killed by their own horses and chariots, because they could not see to control them. The rain kept pouring, and the river flooded. This helped to slow the enemy even more. The chariots and horses became bogged down in the mud, and the fast-moving water carried the chariots away.

Were the Israelites hindered by the storm? No. The wind that drove the rain came from behind them. They could see to fight, while the Canaanites could not! Therefore, the Israelites killed many of the Canaanites.

When Sisera saw that the battle was going against them, he left his chariot and ran to the tent of Jael (*JAY-uhl*), wife of Heber (*HEE-buhr*), because there was peace between Jabin and Heber.

Jael invited Sisera to come in. She told him not to be afraid. She gave him a blanket to cover himself. Sisera said he was thirsty, and Jael gave him some milk to drink. Sisera told Jael to guard the door of the tent while he slept. If anyone came asking if a man was in her tent, Sisera told her to say no.

Jael was not as true a friend to Sisera as he thought she was. She knew he was a wicked man and that he was one of God's enemies.

So, while Sisera was sleeping, Jael—very carefully and very quietly—went up to him, to see if he really was sound asleep. Yes, he really was sound asleep. Jael had a hammer in her hand and one of the iron nails that held the tent in place. What do you think she did next? With the hammer she quickly drove the nail through Sisera's head and into the ground—killing him!

Meanwhile, Barak had been chasing Sisera. As he came toward Heber's tent, Jael ran to meet him. She said, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." Barak went into the tent. There was Sisera, dead. God delivered Sisera into the hands of a woman, as Deborah had said He would.

The Israelites, with God's help, won a great victory over King Jabin and the Canaanites. Sisera and his army were defeated! After the battle was over, Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for what He had done.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."*

*—Psalm 50:15*  
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