

Deborah the Judge

Deborah, prophetess and judge of Israel, summons Barak to lead God's people against the Canaanite oppressor Sisera, prophesying that the honor of victory will go to a woman.

Judges 4:1-24 • Judges 5:1-31

CHARACTERS: Deborah, Barak, Jael, Sisera

THEMES: Godly Leadership, Prophetic Authority, Courage in Crisis, Divine Sovereignty

IN AN ERA when Israel had no king and 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes,' God raised up judges to deliver His people. Among these judges, Deborah stands uniquely as both prophetess and civil leader, described as 'a mother in Israel.' She held court under a palm tree in the hill country of Ephraim, where the children of Israel came to her for judgment.

For twenty years, Jabin king of Canaan had cruelly oppressed Israel, and his military commander Sisera possessed nine hundred chariots of iron. Deborah summoned Barak of Naphtali and delivered the Lord's command: take ten thousand men to Mount Tabor, where God would draw out Sisera and deliver him into Barak's hand. Barak would go only if Deborah accompanied him. Deborah agreed but prophesied that the honor of victory would go to a woman.

The battle at the river Kishon showcased divine intervention. When Barak descended from Tabor, the Lord discomfited Sisera's army, and the river swept away the Canaanite forces. Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael, who offered him hospitality but then, while he slept, drove a tent peg through his temple, fulfilling Deborah's prophecy.

Deborah's song of victory in Judges 5 celebrates God's triumph over His enemies. Her faithful leadership brought forty years of peace to Israel.

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