

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 7 — “Reluctant Men & Faithful Women” — June 22, 2025

Introduction: The ‘Girlboss’ in Popular Culture

Many of the lies of our current cultural moment are focused on blurring the distinctions between men and women. Men are berated for exhibiting traditionally masculine virtues while women who display them are presented as heroic and empowered. The truth is that God has designed men and women to be strong in both distinct and complimentary ways.

Main Point: God can use faithful _____ and _____ to accomplish His purposes, yet He does this with respect for His good design for them as male and female.

Judges 4:1-23

With the descriptions of Ehud and Shamgar, there are subtle hints that the downward spiral of the judges has begun. That becomes clear as the narrative progresses, describing the deliverance of Israel through two faithful women, Deborah and Jael, due to the reluctance or cowardice of the man Barak.

Exposition:

1. Israel again abandoned the Lord and so He permitted them to be oppressed by enemies from the North. (4:1-3)

Judges 4:1-3—¹ And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died. ² And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. ³ Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years.

Israel’s Oppressors: _____ (King of Canaan at Hazor) & _____ (Commander of the Army)

- The center of Jabin’s power was _____, a fortified city north of the Sea of Galilee. The source of their military power was the use of ‘chariots of iron’ which were a significant military advantage in open combat.

2. In response to Israel’s oppression, God raised up deliverers for them.

(1) Deborah (‘ _____ ’)

Judges 4:4—Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

- * Given the locations mentioned, she was likely from the tribe of _____ and was probably judging Israel in this region when Shamgar (5:6) was judging to the South.
- * Three of her vocations are mentioned:
 - (1) _____— She spoke to Israel on behalf of YHWH to instruct and encourage.
 - (2) _____— Her husband was Lappidoth (‘flames’/‘burning’)
 - (3) _____— She administered justice, made pronouncements, and gave decisions in certain matters.

Key Point: That she had this position of authority speaks _____ of Deborah as a woman of wisdom and faith but _____ of the men of Israel.

(2) Barak (‘ _____ ’)

Judges 4:6a—She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali...

- * He was from the tribe of _____ and was likely the one judging Israel in that region. He appears to have been a judge in the more traditional sense of being a military leader or warlord.
- * While he eventually demonstrates competence at organizing alliances and leading troops, he had failed to do so up to this point.

Key Point: Barak’s willingness to allow Israel to _____ at the hands of her oppressors is indicative of his own fear and lack of faith in the Lord’s promises.

(3) Jael (‘ _____ ’)

- * She is described as the wife of Heber the Kenite but was possibly an Israelite herself. The Kenites were a nomadic tribe that had associations with Israel going back to Moses. Jael’s husband seems to have abandoned Israel and allied himself with Jabin the Canaanite.

3. According to His Word through Deborah to Barak, the Lord brought about the defeat of Israel's enemies. (4:4-23)

Deborah & Barak

The text draws a contrast between Deborah's trust in the Word of the Lord and Barak's _____.

Through Deborah's encouragement and exhortations, Barak obeyed the Lord and achieved _____.

Jael & Sisera

The events in Jael's tent are fraught with _____ because of the customs of the ANE.

Jael was used by the Lord to complete the _____ of Israel's enemies.

Key Point: Because everything transpired according to His Word, it is the Lord who is shown to be Israel's true _____.

Assessing Deborah

- Deborah stands out as an example of a _____ judge who rightly proclaims the Word of the Lord and administers judgment among his people.

Assessing Barak

- Although Barak is hailed in Scripture as a hero of the faith (Heb. 12:32), his reluctance to _____ the Word of the Lord demonstrates the evident decline in the quality of the judges.

Applying the Text

For Women:

1. Deborah serves as an example of _____ availability to God and of faithfulness in the public sphere.
2. Deborah serves as a godly example of how woman can _____ to the men in their lives who are hesitant to obey the Lord or who struggle with being indecisive.
3. Jael serves as an example of _____ availability to God and of faithfulness in the domestic sphere.

For Men:

1. The example of Barak serves as a warning about the tendency towards _____ and _____.
2. His example also shows the _____ of having good women in your life who will speak the truth to you in love.
3. The examples of Sisera and Heber demonstrate that men can be _____ or _____ threats to the well-being of women.

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Israel’s Oppressors: Jabin (King of Canaan at Hazor) & Sisera (Commander of the Army)

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(1) Deborah (‘Bee’)

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 - (2) Wife— Her husband was Lappidoth (‘flames’/‘burning’)
 - (3) Judge— She administered justice, made pronouncements, and gave decisions in certain matters.

Key Point: That she had this position of authority speaks well of Deborah as a woman of wisdom and faith but poorly of the men of Israel.

(2) Barak (‘Lightning’)

Judges 4:6a—She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali...

- * He was from the tribe of Naphtali and was likely the one judging Israel in that region. He appears to have been a judge in the more traditional sense of being a military leader or warlord.
- * While he eventually demonstrates competence at organizing alliances and leading troops, he had failed to do so up to this point.

Key Point: Barak’s willingness to allow Israel to suffer at the hands of her oppressors is indicative of his own fear and lack of faith in the Lord’s promises.

(3) Jael (‘Wild Goat’)

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