

Victory Over Sisera

Lesson Scope: [Judges Chapters 3 to 5](#)

References in brackets refer to Judges 3 to 5 unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

God's intention for this era was to govern Israel as a theocracy. God Himself was king over His people. Their obedience to Him assured their material prosperity, national security, and spiritual vitality.

This lesson scope covers the first three of the seven cycles of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation. Although many of the verses relate to the sin and servitude, most of the actual time was spent in enjoying rest, the result of salvation.

Note the nations that brought Israel into bondage in these three cycles: Mesopotamia was more distant. This included the area where Shinar and Babel were located and where the later Assyrian and Babylonian empires were centered.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot, so they were distant relatives. Canaan, of course, is a broad term. Hazor had been destroyed by Joshua (Joshua 11:10-14) and allotted to Naphtali (Joshua 19:32-39). Jabin may have been a royal title rather than a given name (see Joshua 11:1). Men and nations may seek to exalt themselves against God and His people. God's purposes, however, will always be accomplished, and His adversaries will be cast down.

God used ten thousand men from just two tribes to defeat the enemy. Soldiers from other tribes should have been there (5:16-17), but God honoured the ones who actually did go to help. He always does, even when the truth should have more supporters.

In the conflict that is raging, God will be victorious. When men and women dedicate their limited resources to Him, God will accomplish the victory.

Lesson Aim: To present principles for spiritual victory.

Theme Verse: [Psalm 34:7](#). The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Lesson Text

Uniting the People

[Judges 4:1-9](#)

¹ (KJV) And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. ² And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host *was* Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. ³ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. ⁴ And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. ⁵ And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. ⁶ And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? ⁷ And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. ⁸ And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go. ⁹ And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

Subduing the Enemy

[Judges 4:13-17](#)

¹³ (KJV) And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. ¹⁴ And Deborah said unto 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? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. ¹⁵ And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and

fled away on his feet. ¹⁶ But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left. ¹⁷ Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

Judges 4:21-23

²¹ (KJV) Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. ²² And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples. ²³ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

Rejoicing in Victory

Judges 5:1-3

¹ (KJV) Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, ² Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. ³ Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

Judges 5:7

⁷ (KJV) The *inhabitants* of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

Judges 5:18

¹⁸ (KJV) Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeopardised their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

Judges 5:31

³¹ (KJV) So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

Questions for Study

Uniting the People

1. Why did the children of Israel deserve to be “mightily oppressed”?

2. What progression evidently took place during Israel's twenty-year chastisement?

3. How should we react to crushing circumstances?

Subduing the Enemy

4. What was God looking for in the children of Israel before He gave clear directions?

5. How can the impulse toward flight be turned into the courage to fight?

Rejoicing in Victory

6. What was the cost of victory to the children of Zebulun and Naphtali?

7. How can God's people rejoice over a victory when the future is still uncertain?

8. What victories might God still be holding before us?

Analysing the Passage

Deborah was both a prophetess and a judge (4:4). The Old Testament refers to three other godly prophetesses: Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22), and Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3). We know of one false prophetess: Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14). Deborah had discernment in issues the Israelites faced (4:5).

Mount Tabor (4:6-7) stood at the northeast corner of the large plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel). The Kishon River flows through this plain. Here Sisera's chariots would have had maximum advantage; yet God called the battle to focus right there. This plain has been the scene of many significant battles.

The discomfiting of Sisera's army (4:15) apparently involved a flash flood of the Kishon (5:20-21). "When the Kishon was at its height, it would be, partly on account of its quicksands, as impassable as the ocean itself to a retreating army" (Easton Bible Dictionary).

The Kenites (4:17) were the people of Moses' father-in-law (1:16) and of the Rechabites (1 Chronicles 2:55).

Peace between Jabin and the house of Heber (4:17) was not necessarily equivalent to a formal league. It is not clear that Jael violated the constraints of a covenant.

A "mother in Israel" (5:7) was apparently a title of respect. See 2 Samuel 20:19.

Principles and Applications

Uniting the People

1. Disobeying the Lord brings spiritual defeat and bondage (4:1-3). “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Proverbs 16:7). But Israel found the opposite to be also true. When they fell away from the Lord, they had many enemies fighting against them. “Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27) because we do not want to let the powers of evil get a foothold in our lives.

2. The path to spiritual victory begins with recognizing the need and crying out to the Lord for help (4:3). Helplessness has a way of clarifying the issues. Trouble has a way of sorting out the gods. Somehow the Israelites knew where to turn in trouble! God still puts people “on the spot” to get them “off the spot.” Let us learn from small troubles so we do not need to face bigger ones.

Subduing the Enemy

3. God gives clear direction for those who are willing to follow (4:6-7). God’s direction is clear, but not always easy. God values our willingness to follow Him more than He values our intelligent perception of His directions. Sometimes as we move ahead, we find that God was directing us without our being aware of it.

4. God uses the united resources of His people to defeat the enemy (4:6-9). Deborah seemed to find fault with Barak for leaning too hard on her support, but Barak is to be commended for wanting to work along with others—not just Deborah, but also the ten thousand unnamed men in his army. Each of us has a unique part to fill in helping each other to defeat Satan’s wiles, even when we simply encourage each other in after fellowship discussions.

5. The Lord promises His people victory even against formidable enemies (4:7). The enemy army that looked so formidable to Israel was as nothing from the Lord’s point of view. All our problems are solvable for the Lord. He is the one to talk to about them.

6. Prompt, thorough obedience to God’s directions is the key to spiritual victory (4:14). “Up; for this is the day,” Barak had been told, and Barak got up and went. “Take with thee ten thousand men,” he had been told, and he took ten thousand men. Exact obedience is the start, though God

expects us to do even more by throwing our own enthusiasm and resources into the struggle.

7. God may use miraculous and seemingly unusual means to help His people to victory (4:15, 17). Who would have thought that the river itself would turn into an enemy to Israel's enemies? Who would have guessed that Israel's final triumph would come in a household at peace with the enemy, at the hand of a woman? Encouragement may come to us from people we hardly think appear like faithful Christians, or even from outright unbelievers. But if God uses it, we should not despise it (Philippians 1:18).

Rejoicing in Victory

8. Spiritual victory comes at the price of abandoning ourselves to the Lord's cause (5:2, 18). Dying on the battlefield has been called giving "the last full measure of devotion," which is of course what we give the Lord. We give money, give time, give energy, but most of all we give ourselves.

9. Victory produces joy and praise (5:2-3). The joy is mutual; the Lord enjoyed Deborah and Barak's song as much as they enjoyed singing it, and He dedicated a chapter of the Bible to it. Even while we are going through dark times, God gives us enough victory to praise Him about.

10. A deep burden for the welfare of God's people causes individuals to rise to the battle (5:7). "I Deborah arose" does not have the self-effacing tone we often hear in our settings, but maybe more of us should look in the mirror and say, "I . . . Will arise." As individuals, we must rise to whatever large or small challenge God has assigned us and do our part to meet the needs of the brotherhood.

11. Victory over the enemy brings rest to God's people (5:31). Congregations find rest after revival victories. Individuals find rest after personal victories. God holds out the opportunity to win more victories. May our state of victory last longer than Israel's forty years.

Important Teachings

1. Disobeying the Lord brings spiritual defeat and bondage (4:1-3).
2. The path to spiritual victory begins with recognizing the need and crying out to the Lord for help (4:3).
3. God gives clear direction for those who are willing to follow (4:6-7).

4. God uses the united resources of His people to defeat the enemy (4:6-9).
5. The Lord promises His people victory even against formidable enemies (4:7).
6. Prompt, thorough obedience to God's directions is the key to spiritual victory (4:14).
7. God may use miraculous and seemingly unusual means to help His people to victory (4:15, 17).
8. Spiritual victory comes at the price of abandoning ourselves to the Lord's cause (5:2, 18).
9. Victory produces joy and praise (5:2-3).
10. A deep burden for the welfare of God's people causes individuals to rise to the battle (5:7).
11. Victory over the enemy brings rest to God's people (5:31).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did the children of Israel deserve to be "mightily oppressed"? They did evil, and that is no small offense in God's eyes.
2. What progression evidently took place during Israel's twenty-year chastisement?
The Israelites developed a deeper sense of conviction and cried to the Lord with an ever-greater sense of need.
3. How should we react to crushing circumstances?
We should search our hearts to learn whatever the Lord may be telling us, however, we should not automatically assume that we are being punished because of sin.
4. What was God looking for in the children of Israel before He gave clear directions?
He was looking for evidence that they would willingly follow His directions.
5. How can the impulse toward flight be turned into the courage to fight?
Barak had the Lord, he had the support of Deborah, he had ten thousand men, and he was told what his strategy should be. No doubt we can draw parallels to our own lives.
6. What was the cost of victory to the children of Zebulun and Naphtali?

They risked their lives. (One might add that their families risked seeing them not return.)

7. How can God's people rejoice over a victory when the future is still uncertain?

“Each victory will help you / Some other to win.” If we do not rest satisfied with one victory but build victory on victory, that makes the future more certain, and that is worth rejoicing about.

8. What victories might God be still holding before us?

[There may be many individual answers.] God might be leading us toward more outreach ventures. He might be leading individuals toward conquering bad habits, building relationships, recovering from having gone astray.

Summarizing the Lesson

This lesson ends in triumph. Should there have been a way to extend the triumph indefinitely? Yes and no. There is no moment when we can do things so perfectly as to assure that there will be no failure in the future but each of us is given one moment at a time to keep steering in the right direction. Each of us may claim victory, moment after moment.

Research Guide

Look up Esdraelon Plain of to get a brief description of the land where Barak confronted Sisera. Other famous events are also connected to this small region.