

Deborah and Barak

Judges 4-5

I. Introduction

- A. A story full of doubles
- B. Structure can give us a clue to the main points intended to be made. Chiasm of ch. 4:
 - 1. The sons of Israel (oppressed), 1–3
 - a. Deborah, the prophetess, 4–9
 - (i) Barak and Sisera ‘call out’ (*za‘aq*), 10–12/13
 - **Yahweh the Warrior, 14a**
 - (ii) Barak and Sisera ‘go down’ (*yarad*), 14b/15–16
 - b. Jael, wife of Heber, 17–22
 - 2. Jabin, king of Canaan (subdued), 23–24¹

II. The Need for Rescue: Israel’s Apostasy and the Lord’s Judgment (4:1-3)

- A. The previous deliverances did not mean Israel’s heart changed.
- B. Not only did they “again” do evil; They seem to have grown more stubborn in it (see 3:8, 3:14 cp. with 4:3 – We need a quick repentance reflex).
- C. God gives them over to the Canaanites' oppression.

III. Deborah, the Prophetess (4:4-10)

- A. What is the role of a prophet? (4-5)
- B. The Commissioning of Barak (6-7)
- C. Barak’s hesitation and request (8-9. Cp. Ex. 3:7-11, 33:15-16)

IV. The Battle Belongs to the LORD (4:10-16)

- A. A (not so) “random” detail (11)
- B. Sisera gathers for battle (12 -13)
- C. The center of the passage is v. 14. The Lord is a warrior (cp. Rev. 19:11)
- D. How the victory comes (v. 15, cp. 5:19-22 and Exodus 14:24-25, 28)

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*Judges: Such a Great Salvation*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 71.

V. Jael, Skull Crusher (4:11, 17-22)

A. Jael nails it (cp. Judges 5:24-27)

B. Gruesome, but this is what needs to happen for the good of God's people, and it is right for God to bring it about.

1. *First, oppression is really evil and will be met with God's judgment (see Judges 5:28-31).* As Davis comments, "Perhaps many of us in the west cannot rejoice when God smashes oppressors because we have never been so oppressed or crushed by tyranny on a significant scale (for which we should thank God). That's why we frequently fail to appreciate texts like this; we can't really understand them from our study chairs, from our padded pews, or from our recliners beside our cozy fireplaces"²
2. *Second, it is good that his head is crushed because points to the way ultimate deliverance from sin and Satan will occur.*
 - a. At two points in Judges, the victory comes via a head being crushed (see also Abimelech's ignominious death).
 - b. This all plays into the larger storyline (Genesis 3:15 → Jesus).

VI. Jabin, King of Canaan, Subdued (4:23-24)

VII. Song of Victory (5:1-31)

A. Why sing?

B. Davis notes that the major sections center around contrast

1. First, in 2-11, the powerful God and humiliated people.
2. Second section, 11d-23, the courageous and the cautious Israelites.
3. Third section, 24-30, two women.
4. Verse 31 is a prayer and a reminder of the blessings and curses.

"As Yahweh has caused Sisera and the Canaanites to perish, so may he cause *all* his enemies to perish. That is the prayer. That is what is involved when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' for there is no relief for Christ's people until their enemies are destroyed. This is the clear witness of 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. To pray for God's kingdom to come means that, in part, we pray like this:

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your Word.
Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
that in it you are all in all." (Heidelberg Catechism, question 123)³

² Davis, [Judges: Such a Great Salvation](#), 88.

³ Ibid., 88-89.