

Week #:	173	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Jael & Sisera
Scriptures:	Judges 4:11-24; II Corinthians 3:5-6; Matthew 23; Matthew 8:3; Mark 3:1-6; I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:13-15				
Songs:	My Life Is In You, Lord (2:57)				
	Honey In the Rock – Brooke Ligertwood (4:41)				
	PRAYER:	I Speak Jesus – Here Be Lions (5:11)			
Video:	Judges Song – What's in the Bible #4 (Time- 31:31-33:25)				

Jael & Sisera:

The first four judges in our study have been:

#1 – Othniel

He was Caleb's nephew. Israel lived in peace after him for 40 years

#2 – Ehud

He was known for the physical feature of being left-handed. Israel lived in peace after him for 80 years.

#3 – Shamgar

He was known for killing 600 Philistines with a farm tool, an oxgoad.

#4 – Deborah

She was a female prophetess, whom God used to free the people from Jabin [Yavin], King of Hazor, and his commander Sisera. This week we continue her story.

Yael plays an important role in the story of Israel's wars with the Canaanites, described in the Book of Judges. In the narrative about the military heroine Deborah, Deborah first sends Barak to fight the Canaanites, and when he protests that he will not go unless she goes too, she agrees to accompany him but prophesies that the victory will not be a glory for him because Sisera will fall "by the hand of a woman." When the battle goes disastrously for Sisera, rather than die with his men on the battlefield, he flees to Yael's tent, hoping to find refuge. Instead, Yael kills him. Yael thus fulfills Deborah's prophecy, but she confounds many other expectations.

Judges 4:11-24

¹¹ Now Hever [Heber] the Keini [Kenite] had cut himself off from the rest of Kayin [Kenites], the descendants of Hovav [Hobab] Moshe's father-in-law; he had pitched his tent near the oak at Tza'ananim [Zaanaim], which is close to Kedesh. ¹² Sisra was informed that Barak the son of Avino'am [Abinoam] had gone up to Mount Tavor [Tabor/Taba]. ¹³ So Sisra rallied his chariots, all 900 iron chariots, and all the troops he had with him, from Haroshet-HaGoyim to the Kishon River.

¹⁴ D'vorah [Deborah] said to Barak: "Get going! This is the day when *ADONAI* will hand Sisra over to you! *ADONAI* has gone out ahead of you!" So Barak went down from Mount Tavor [Tabor/Taba] with 10,000 men following him; ¹⁵ and *ADONAI* threw Sisra, all his chariots and his entire army into a panic before Barak's sword; so that Sisra got down from his chariot and fled on foot. ¹⁶ But Barak pursued the chariots and the army all the way to Haroshet-HaGoyim. Sisra's entire army was put to the sword; not one man was left.

¹⁷ However, Sisra ran on foot to the tent of Ya'el [Jael] the wife of Hever [Heber] the Keini [Kenite], because there was peace between Yavin [Jabin] the king of Hatzor and the family of Hever [Heber] the Keini [Kenite]. ¹⁸ Ya'el [Jael] went out to meet Sisra and said to him, "Come in, my lord; stay here with me; and don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹ He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink — I'm thirsty." She opened a goatskin of milk, gave him some to drink, and covered him up again. ²⁰ He said to her, "Stand at the entrance to the tent; and if anyone asks you if somebody is here, say, 'No.'" ²¹ But when he was deeply asleep, Ya'el [Jael] the wife of Hever [Heber] took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand, crept in to him quietly and drove the tent

peg into his temple, right through to the ground; so that he died without waking up. ²² So here is Barak pursuing Sisra, and Ya'el [Jael] steps out to meet him and says, "Come, I will show you the man you are looking for." He goes into her tent; and there is Sisra, lying dead with the tent peg through his temple.

²³ Thus God on that day defeated Yavin [Jabin] the king of Kena'an [Canaan] in the presence of the people of Isra'el. ²⁴ The hand of the people of Isra'el came down more and more heavily against Yavin [Jabin] the king of Kena'an [Canaan], until they had completely destroyed Yavin [Jabin] the king of Kena'an [Canaan].

Shortly after Deborah and Barak's exchange, Barak's army met Sisera's in the battle in which Sisera would be delivered into the hand of the Israelites. Sisera's army was quickly losing, so in one last ditch effort to save his life Sisera got out of his chariot and fled on foot...

Right to the tent of Jael.

Jael saw Sisera and came out to meet him. "Turn aside, my lord," she said to him. "Do not be afraid."

And Sisera had no reason to be. Jael's people were at peace with his. Why shouldn't he take refuge in the tent of a woman uninvolved in the war? No one would expect it, and no one would find him there.

Jael went on to show Sisera every possible kindness. She covered him with a rug to hide and comfort him. When he asked for water, she gave him milk (possibly to make him sleepier!)

And Sisera drifted off to sleep.

Jael saw her opportunity to act and seized it. The war wasn't won by this one deed, but this was the beginning of the end of the Canaanites' reign over Israel. So, what can we learn from this courageous woman's story?

1. Act on the opportunities God puts in front of you.

Jael's actions did not make sense in the moment. To take a refugee into her tent, show him hospitality and make him feel safe, and then kill him was an act of gruesome treachery.

We don't know if Jael originally intended to kill Sisera. She may have just been trying to delay him so that anyone pursuing him could catch up. When she didn't see anyone chasing after him, maybe that is when the decision was made.

What is important is that when the time came to make the decision, she didn't hesitate. Soon Sisera would be awake again, and she took the opportunity to do what God was asking her to do. She had to ignore all the fear, all the "what-ifs."

When the Holy Spirit prompts us to act, we usually don't have long to think. Situations are ever-changing in this life and opportunities pass by quickly. That is why we need to decide in our hearts that when the time comes, we will say yes to God.

2. Use the tools you've been given.

Jael, under the circumstances, had no better weapon than the tent peg. Since the tent she was staying in was a woman's tent, there were no weapons nearby. Not only that, she likely had extensive experience putting up tents with tent pegs and so she was skilled with this tool.

She used the resources given to her in this situation by God. She didn't waste a moment thinking, "If only I had a sword." She simply took up the tools at hand and did what was being asked of her.

God equips His people for the work He puts in front of them. He gives us certain skills and gifts for a reason, and we should always be on the lookout for ways to use them.

Even when we don't feel skilled or equipped or prepared, He ensures that we are for the sake of His glory. It may not look the way we expect it to, and it can take a lot of trust to act when we don't feel well-equipped.

But our God is sovereign, and we can trust Him to give us competence.

II Corinthians 3:5-6

⁵ It is not that we are competent in ourselves to count anything as having come from us; on the contrary, our competence is from God. ⁶ He has even made us competent to be workers serving a New Covenant, the essence of which is not a written text but the Spirit. For the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

3. Some things are more important than following rules.

Sisera's murder was a major act of treachery on Jael's part. It went against everything she knew about hospitality, something hugely important to her culture at the time.

Still, she said yes to the prodding of God.

We need only to skip ahead in the Bible to the life of Jesus to read more stories of rules broken.

Don't get me wrong—Jesus never broke rules to be rude or needlessly provoke people. He always did it for the sake of challenging relationally abusive behavior and freeing the oppressed.

- He denounced religious rulers for heaping impossible burdens on the people listening to them. (Matthew 23)
- He touched lepers even though the rules of his day said that doing so would make him unclean. (Matthew 8:3)
- He healed on the Sabbath even though no work was supposed to be done. (Mark 3:1-6)

Let's follow His (and Jael's) example and not get so caught up in following religious and cultural rules that we miss the calling of God to challenge the evil and oppression in the world.

4. Our highest motive should be honoring God.

Jael did not kill Sisera out of personal anger or revenge. In fact, the Bible tells us that Jael's people, the Kenites, were at peace with the Canaanites. That means that if anything, Jael should have been an ally to Sisera.

While the Bible doesn't expressly tell us about Jael's motives for killing Sisera, she must have had a motive that was more important to her than an earthly alliance, and that motive must have been honoring God.

Everything we do should be for the sake of honoring and bringing glory to God.

I Corinthians 10:31

³¹ Well, whatever you do, whether it's eating or drinking or anything else, do it all so as to bring glory to God.

Eating and drinking are pretty small, insignificant things. How much more should we glorify God with larger parts of our lives?

5. Jael's story is a metaphor for how we should fight our spiritual battles.

Today our battle isn't against a person; it is against the powers of darkness.

Ephesians 6:12

¹² For we are not struggling against human beings, but against the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers governing this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

The biggest battle we will fight in this life is the battle against sin.

Charles Spurgeon once gave a sermon where he compared Sisera to sin. He asserted that we should not be content to see our sins simply fleeing from us; we should be ready to pursue them and then to drive them into the ground—dead—with a nail, the way Jael did.

The only one who can help us do that is Jesus. We should be constantly ready to run to him, confess our sins, and then bask in the victory of the cross. Colossians paints a beautiful picture of the victory Jesus gave—and continues to give us—over sin.

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ You were dead because of your sins, that is, because of your “foreskin,” your old nature. But God made you alive along with the Messiah by forgiving you all your sins. ¹⁴ He wiped away the bill of charges against us. Because of the regulations, it stood as a testimony against us; but he removed it by nailing it to the execution-stake. ¹⁵ Stripping the rulers and authorities of their power, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by means of the stake.

He is the one who gives life; He is the one who cancels our debts; He is the one who nails our sins to the cross once and for all.