

Deborah & Barak

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[0:00] If you'd open up your Bibles, gang, to Judges 4 and 5, it's on page 239 of your Pew Bible. And if you're looking, we're going to cover quite a bit of biblical real estate this morning.

So buckle in. Confession. I totally waffled Friday night.

But maybe not the kind of waffling you think. Jenny's, we had some family in. We were at a restaurant. I was given three options. French fries.

No. Sweet potato fries. No. Waffle fries. Slam dunk.

I waffled Friday night. Totally, totally waffled. Oh, and they were so good. But there is a different kind of waffling we all know about and we've all experienced, isn't there?

[1:01] It's a spiritual compromise. We drag our feet. God commands us clearly to do something. Flee sexual immorality.

And we waffle. Love one another just as I have loved you. And we waffle. Go make disciples of all nations.

And we waffle. Have no other gods before me. And we waffle. Prone to waffle.

Lord, we know it. When we waffle, what we're essentially doing is we're forgetting our great God and we are taking on the gods of our culture.

We are getting swept into the canonizing currents of contemporary culture. It's not far after you forget that you become like the world.

[2:04] We're an iffy bunch. We're a waffling bunch. And we think that we can both love Christ with all we got and love the world too.

It's not both. It's one or the other. The book of Judges is a sad account. A sad account of the canonization of the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel was supposed to go into the promised land and dispossess the nations. And what happens is that instead of dispossessing them, they become like them.

They take on the gods of the nations. They start worshipping Baal and the Ashereth. Judges is a downward spiral. Cycle after cycle. Judge after judge.

Into a waffling worldliness. Judges 4 and 5 is a very sophisticated passage. In fact, if you look at it side by side, you will see in your Bible that you have two different kinds of literature.

[3:11] It's like two different kinds of commentary on the same event.

Does anybody who would know Jim Nance is? He's a play-by-play commentator.

He's often paired with Tony Romo. Call her commentator, NFL football. Anybody know who Joe Buck is? Play-by-play guy. He's paired with Troy Aikman, color guy.

What we have in Judges 4 is a play-by-play narrative, probably from Samuel. And what we have in chapter 5 is color commentary.

It's poetry. It's a song of Deborah. But they're both addressing the same sequence of events. And so here's what I'm going to do this morning. We're going to walk through the five scenes in this.

And we're going to look at both the play-by-play and the color commentary. They're both talking about the same thing. And they're both making the same point. So let's start with scene number 1, Judges chapter 4.

[4:15] And let's look at the play-by-play. I'm just going to make our way through one scene at a time. And we're met in verse 1 with something very familiar. It's a familiar cycle.

We see this cycle introduced in chapter 2.

And then we see in chapter 3 twice with Othniel and Ehud. The people do evil in God's sight. Ehud dies. The external restraints are taken off.

And Israel does what she wants to do. We'll find out what that is in a second. In verse 2, the Lord sells Israel into the hand of an oppressor.

His name is Jabin, king of Canaan. And God did this because in God's jealous anger, he will hand over his disobedient people so that they learn and remember him.

[5:13] Baby, come back. Jabin has hired likely a mercenary, the commander of his army, a guy named Sisera, and they are known for having 900 iron-plated chariots.

It's like the Abrams tank of the day. And if that was in a flat plain, the battle would belong to the iron-plated chariots.

In verse 2, we also learn that God is raised up, and for 20 years, Jabin, Sisera, oppress Israel. This is God handing them over.

And then in verse 4, 3, chapter 4, verse 3, it's, again, this familiar cycle, God's people cry out. That's the play-by-play.

Let's look at the color commentary. Chapter 5, verses 6 through 8, in verses 6 and 7, we get some color on what this oppression actually was.

[6:18] Did you notice? In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, he's one of the minor judges just referenced, in the days of Jael, we'll learn about her in a second, the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways.

What is that all about? It's kind of like this. You can go down to Chicago, either by 94 or 41. Those are the highways. But if you're concerned of being oppressed by somebody, you're going to take the byways.

You're going to cruise through the neighborhood streets and find your way down to Chicago. That's what was happening there. People were so afraid of the oppressive nature of Jabin and Sisera that they were doing everything.

If they had to travel, they would go byways, not highways. It's a picture of fear. Further oppression you see in verse 7. The villagers ceased in Israel.

That's not talking about their demise or death. What it is saying is that they were sheltering in place. They weren't laboring. They weren't going to family gatherings.

[7:22] They were staying in their homes because of the oppression of the day. But it's in verse 8 that Deborah, in this song of praise and victory, she tells us why all this is going on.

When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. When Israel chose new gods over their god Yahweh, when they forgot Yahweh and they went to the foreign gods of Baal, when they chose these new gods, war was in the gate.

The consequence for their disobedience. Oppression. And so what we see in the play-by-play, in the color commentary here, in this familiar cycle, is Israel sinning, God handing them over, Israel crying out.

I want you to see the word again in chapter 4, verse 1. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in God's sight.

Again, they forgot God. Again, they worshipped the idols of the nations. Again, we'll see that again and again and again.

[8:51] It's a downward spiral throughout the whole book. When you forget your God, you will worship something else. That's the way you've been hardwired.

It's the way of all people on the planet. That's the way God has designed us. We are worshippers by nature. And if we're not worshipping the one true God, the living Christ, we will worship something else.

For us, one of the leading gods of American culture is the cult of me.

It's self-worship. It's self-actualization. Self-realization. It's me-ism.

Brother, sister, friend, are you stuck in some kind of sin cycle again and again and again of me-worship?

[9:52] Hang in there. We've got good news coming. The next scene is where we meet Deborah and Barak. We know the cycle. Israel sins. God hands them over.

The people cry out and then God raises up a deliverer. In Judges 4 and 5, it's a little unusual because we're first given a prophet and then the deliverer.

We'll see that again in chapter 6 next week with Gideon. An unnamed prophet is raised up and then Gideon, the deliverer, is raised up. But here's something we need to know about Deborah.

Let's look at the play-by-play in verses 4 through 10. Deborah's a prophetess. She's a wife, but she's a prophetess. And what that means is she is speaking the very words of God to God's people. She speaks as God's mouthpiece to God's people, speaking God's word. It's a mercy of God that he would raise up a prophet.

[10:54] You've got to think of Deborah as God using this woman and calling his people back to himself. Baby, come back! It might be a little confusing that Deborah is judging.

You see that in verse 4. Israel at the time that she sat under, verse 5, under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim and the people of Israel came for her for judgment.

You know what the real question is? Where is the priesthood of Israel? Levites, where are you? Do you know where you find them in the book of Judges?

17, 18, and 19. They're MIA. And not just MIA, they have been Canaanized. They are in it for themselves.

They're not in it for Yahweh. And so with this vacuum of leadership, God in His mercy raises up Deborah to speak to His people. And the people come to her for judgment.

[12:01] And it's not just any other judgment because they've been crying out for a deliverer. God, rescue us. And so they go to her to say, who's our deliverer? And look what she does in verses 6 and 7.

She sent and summoned Barak. Barak. And now we meet what we'll see is a waffling deliverer. She sent and summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kadesh Neftali.

It's right off of the southwestern tip of the Sea of Galilee. All this story takes place in northern Israel. And she says to him, has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you?

And then pay attention to what she says and how she says it. So she has summoned Barak to herself. And now she's going to speak to him on behalf of God.

She says, go gather your men at Mount Tabor, which is 10 miles west of Kadesh Neftali. Taking 10,000 from people of Neftali, the people of Zebulun.

[13:06] And I will draw out Sisero, the general of Javin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon, which is with his chariots and his troops, and I will give you him into your hand.

That I is not Deborah. The I of verse 7 is God. It's God saying through Deborah to Barak, Barak, I want you to get your guys and I want you to go to Mount Tabor and I want you to be ready there.

And by the way, Barak, I am going to draw out Sisera for you. And then I will hand him over to you. This is God speaking. You know what this amounts to? God's word speaking a promise.

This is what's going to happen. So let me ask you, at this point, what are you expecting? What do you expect Barak to do? If he was a good deliverer, he'd be like this, you got it!

I'm on my way! But what does he do? Look at verse 8. Look at the first word of what Barak says.

[14:24] If, if, he's speaking to Deborah, if you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go!

Do you know what he's doing? Waffling. He's putting conditions on his obedience to God's command. This is not exemplary.

This, this is not a model of godliness. The model of godliness is Deborah. Barak is not being a model of godliness here.

Deborah mercifully says, surely I will go. But then she adds a consequence. It's God who adds the consequence. She says in verse 9, I will surely go with you, nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.

Mark that, because that is prophetic. Barak goes, gets the 10,000 troops.

[15:40] He and Deborah and the 10,000 go to Mount Tabor. So he's obeyed. He is, after all, in the Hebrews 11 hall of faith. So let's now look at the color commentary of what's going on here.

Let's look at Deborah's psalm of praise. Well, what's interesting here is this, first and foremost. Well, first, not foremost.

In 5-2, she rejoices. It says, that the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly. Bless the Lord. Look at verse 9. My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people.

Bless the Lord. What she's saying is here, hey, there's been such a great response to Barak's call to go to Mount Tabor. Woo-hoo, bless the Lord! But it's a mixed blessing because not only Zebulun and Naphtali go, I mean, if you look at verse 18, Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the death.

Naphtali too on the heights of the field. But there were a number of tribes that didn't go. The invitation went out to many of the tribes of Israel.

[16:57] 14, Ephraim went. Benjamin went. Machir, Manasseh, marched out. Zebulun went. Issachar, 15, went.

But then we get to Reuben. Among the clans of Reuben, there was great searching of heart. The paralysis of analysis. You see it again in verse 15.

Among the clans of Reuben, there were great searchings of heart. Do you know what that means? They didn't go. They waffled. Gilead, the tribe of Gad, stayed beyond the Jordan.

And Dan, why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still on the coast of the sea, staying by his landings. Waffling.

Disobedience. There's a call out to go. Let's unite in defeating Sisera, Zebulun, and Naphtaligo. Some other tribes go, but not these tribes.

[18:09] It's disobedience. But there's something remarkable. We're going to see in a little bit that Sisera gets word about Barak's move to Mount Tabor, and he rallies his troops to go.

But somebody else is on the move. Look at chapter 5, verses 4 and 5. This is more color commentary of who is showing up to the battlefield.

Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped, water, mark that, the mountains quaked before the Lord, even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel.

You know what it's a picture of? God marching forth from Sinai, moving up south. He walks all the way up, and he's going to meet the battlefield outside of Mount Tabor in the valley of Kishon.

God's on the move. This play-by-play in color commentary introducing Deborah and Barak is also introducing the hero of the story.

[19:24] God himself is going to fight the fight. God himself is going to win a victory despite the waffling of his people.

Who's the hero? We're going to find out. You know what? We are prone to waffle, aren't we? We're prone to put conditions on our obedience to God. When you know what? Wouldn't it be wonderful and refreshing if God gave us a clear command and we responded in Psalm 119, 60 fashion, I hasten and do not delay to obey your commandments.

Let's move on to the third scene. the battle ensues. Play-by-play, 11-13, Sisera gets word that Barak is moving to Mount Tabor, that there's a fight, a brewing.

How do you get that word? Well, look at verse 11 now. Heber, the Kenite, had separated from the Kenites and the descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zanim, which is near Kadesh.

[20:44] So that's close to where Barak's from. And this guy named Heber, he's going to come back later in the story, he's in league with Jabin and Sisera.

He gets word that Barak's leading and he reports it to Sisera. Verses 12 and 13, Sisera, he rallies his forces, all 900 chariots of iron, and they go from his headquarters of Heresheth, Hegoyim, to the river Kishon.

So we got a fight, a brewing. In verse 14, Barak and his 10,000 are at Mount Haber and Deborah says to Barak, notice it's Deborah, not Barak.

This is Deborah calling these troops to action. It should be Barak. She says, Up!
For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you? What, why did she say that?

[22:01] Does not the Lord go out before you, 10,000? You know what, if you're one of the 10,000, you're thinking, we are to meet Sisera in the Kishon plain and he's got 900 iron-plated Abram tank-like kind of machines of killing.

You want us to meet him there? Can't you even just put us in the woods? Deborah says, Do you not know?

Does not the Lord go out before you? Barak takes it and goes. And then in verse 15, something remarkable happens.

And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword.

And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Heresheth Helgoyim. And all the army of Sisera fell that day by the edge of the sword. Not a man was left.

[23:19] God routes them. The Hebrew word actually means throws them into confusion. So let's get some color commentary. Color commentary is in chapter 5 verses 19 through 22.

The kings came. They fought. Then fought the kings of Canaan at Tanakh by the waters of Megiddo. They got no spoils of silver. Canaan didn't win a thing. From heaven the stars fought. From the courses they fought against. Wait. Heaven's throwing down stars? Is this kind of like Genesis is it 19 where God sends sulfur and fire from heaven on Sodom?

Is this the kind of thing going on here? Whatever it is it's supernatural using natural means. This is a God event. Look at verse 21.

The torrent Kishon swept them away and the ancient torrent the torrent Kishon. Wait. Hold time out. If you know the Kishon it's like a stream. It's not a torrent. What's going on?

[24:26] Do you remember God's march from Sinai? 5-4 the earth trembled the heavens dropped yes the clouds dropped water.

Do you know who's behind the torrent? Do you know who raised the water levels? Do you know who swept away the army of Sisera?

Who mired the chariots plated with irons? Horses rearing up horses galloping away? It's God who's doing this. It's God who has won this victory.

It's God who's not left anyone alive except Sisera who's on foot now. The color commentary and the play-by-play point to this being a victory of God.

Do you not know the Lord goes before you? There's been a greater victory won. The Lord Jesus has gone before us.

[25:37] He did something on the cross and with the empty tomb that leaves us speechless. He's won a victory. Victory over sin victory over death victory over the devil victory over the world.

He's won. We move from scene three to scene four.

And who is on the run? Sisera. In verses 17 through 22 we've got the play-by-play. Sisera runs to the encampment of Heber the Kenite because he knows in verse 17 Heber has a peace alliance with his boss Jabin.

King of Canaan. So he's thinking hey this is a safe place. Yes I'll find refuge. So he runs there and guess who comes out to meet him? A lady. The wife of Heber.

Her name is Jael. And you're thinking oh she's you know she's gonna give him protection because she's the wife of Heber. and she does some magnificent mothering.

[26:56] Jael comes out to meet him in verses 18 through 20 and begins to mother him come on in turn inside come on come on into my dead. You don't need to be afraid you're safe you'll be fine.

And then she kind of tucks him in. She puts a rug over him she conceals him. you're fine you're safe. Oh you're thirsty oh here's some milk drink up you're safe here let me tuck you back under that rug.

Everything is just gonna be fine. Oh you want me to stand outside and make sure nobody comes in to find you? Of course I'll do that. I'll stand out here and make sure that you are safe and you just go to sleep now.

Just close your eyes. And then in verse 21 this mothering jail who's supposed to be in league with Jadon she takes a tent peg takes a hammer and nails Cicero's head to the ground instantly killing him.

That's not a mothering thing to do. 22 Barak shows up she goes out to meet him hey look at their sister with his head nailed to the ground oh I did it with my hands and you know what that would have triggered prophecy Cicero handed over to the hand of a woman at that moment Barak would have known felt some humiliation situation there's been a number of men humiliated here by jail not just Barak Cicero the warrior killed by a woman and not just Cicero Heber her husband she's defied him because she's loyal to Yahweh it's remarkable total surprise there's some contrasts here there's some color commentary in verses 23 and 24 I'll just point to one there's a couple it's jail's mothering of

[29:22] Cicero leading to his death and that what you have in verses 28 through 30 is Cicero's actual mother where's my boy you know what he should have plundered those Israelites by now and his troops should have gotten one or two wombs each rape where's my boy she's looking through the lattice and your last look at jail is between her feet verse 27 between her feet he sank he fell he lay still between her feet he sank he fell where he sank there he fell dead quite a contrast the play by play and the color despite Israel's waffling God is faithful he's destroyed the army now he has nailed sister his head to the ground through jail and now we move on to the last scene scene five deliverance and rest in verse 23 and 24 chapter four the play by play so on that day

God subdued Jabban the king of Canaan before the people of Israel and the hand of the people of Israel pressed harder and harder against Jabban the king of Canaan until they destroyed Jabban king of Canaan God subdues Jabban and he is eventually destroyed and so by the end of the story here chapter four all of God's enemies are subdued they've all perished those he's raised up against Israel he is now destroyed speaks of God's sovereign reign over all the nations the color commentary is in verse 31 the explanation so may all your enemies oh Lord perish but your friends literally those who love you be like the sun as he rises in his might do you know what the irony of this is is that as we move through the book of Judges those who are supposed to love the Lord Israel becomes more and more the enemy of the

Lord friend becomes foe that's the tragedy but God is faithful through it all and in verse 31 the cycle ends and the Lord gave rest to the land for 40 years these are two different commentaries we have play by play in color and they are describing the same event and they're making the same point so what's the point what's the point of all this the Israel waffles God is faithful the point is God's the hero God is the hero of Judges 4 and 5 it's Deborah's godly but she's not really the hero Barak waffles and he's obedient but he's not the hero jail used murderous deceptive ways but she's not the hero you know who the hero is the Lord and the hero of Judges 4 and 5 back in the day is our hero today same

God greater revelation more clearly seen and he's won a greater victory these Deborah Barak jailed they're all imperfect and God used them to accomplish a temporary salvation 40 years the hero is God he's the one that Israel has sinned against he's the one that has raised up Jabin and Sisera to teach his people a lesson he is the one that's raised up Deborah in his mercy to speak to his people he is the one that has raised up the waffler Barak who still is obedient he raises up he marches from Sinai to fight the fight and totally routs Sisera's army destroys Sisera and destroys Jabin all of his enemies perish the hero is

God do you remember Deborah's urging in 415 does not the Lord go before you our hero is Jesus does not the Lord Jesus Christ church go before you has he not gone before you has he not won the greatest of all victories his death and his resurrection accomplishes a permanent salvation he is the perfect savior and has accomplished a permanent salvation not 40 years forever years he's defeated our enemies sin and God's wrath no longer are over your head brother sister been defeated at the cross sin's power of you has been cancelled because of what Christ has done you are now in him the world has no claim on you anymore you've been called out of the world you're in

the world but not of the world you don't fear death because

[35:13] Jesus is your living hope the death and resurrection of Jesus is the decisive ultimate victory won has not the Lord Jesus Christ gone before you and now we walk in a manner worthy of him we live this out for him we don't waffle we don't waffle unto worldliness we walk in worship of him so what does this mean for us well this is a warning against waffling unto worldliness we have here a sober warning of what happens when we forget

God when we sin again bad things happen when God ceases to be the controlling center of your life the treasured center of your life something else will be and God is jealous for your heart and he will work to regain your heart heart when we lose sight of God church it's not it doesn't take a lot of imagination to realize where we will go the new gods of American culture it's the cult of me the cult of self worship can I try to illustrate this in a way that might offend some people in my lifetime I have seen the proliferation of therapy of counseling of the psychologizing of life and it begs the question where's this coming from don't get me wrong I believe there is a place for wise biblical counsel therapy helping people work through difficult things don't get me wrong in that but what happens if a culture forgets their God and tries to counsel people and help people with therapy that is God less there's a canaanizing current at our feet we must be discerning I hope you see it I hope you see the number of

Americans who are in therapy and are miserable it's not doing anything in fact it might be making things worse what happens if godless therapy is a godless trap circulating current people get sucked into church here's what I want to do this morning I don't want you to put a stake in the ground against secular counseling that's not what I'm asking I'm just using that as an illustration here's what I am asking if you have never disavowed the world today's the day and here's what I mean by the world sinful spiritually dead humanity in organized rebellion against god the very people you've been called out of in order to be brought into the church the people of god have you disavowed them that no no this is not my people anymore

I don't think like them I don't value like them I don't operate like them anymore because I belong to the family of god now I've been I've been I've been redeemed I've been set free I've been called as god's new people the church now you know if you're a Christian that the moment you were saved you were delivered out of the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son have you put a stake in the ground and said I'm done the world has no claim on me now whatsoever in light of what my king has done have have you taken the step have you gone that far have you communicated that to your god I would urge you to do that and you're going to find in you some space in your soul where the world used to claim you it doesn't claim you anymore we're not part of we've been called out of it we're in it but not of it there's a warning here against worldliness but there's also a wooing here to worship the one who has won the victory you know what

[40:56] Deborah does she witnesses the victory and you know what she does she worships that's what chapter five is it's a worship song it's a praising of Yahweh the Lord for his great acts of deliverance it's a new song and when God delivers us again and again and again whether it's the greatest of all deliverances or it's a deliverance from sexual immorality or it's a deliverance from hateful of other brothers it's a deliverance of not seeking to be part of the great commission it's deliverance from worshipping other gods if he's done that for you you've got a new song to sing you've been delivered you know what worship does to waffling it exposes it and it it eradicates it when you treasure

Jesus above all else you will obey him because you delight in him and now you will be hasty and do not delay to obey his commandments we are in the olympics I can't wait to see the hundred meter dashes let me close with this on your marks you see these fine tuned athletes men and women they they get into the blocks get set they put their butts up in the air and they are waiting for the gun and when that gun fires bam they're off do you obey like that do you obey like that god you said I'll do it or you are barack waffler brothers and sisters we don't obey to earn god's favor we obey because we've been recipients of god's grace and it pleases him the book of judges is a sad account of Israel becoming like her nations they waffle brothers and sisters the lord Jesus has gone before us he's won a victory we operate in his might in his strength let's not waffle let's obey and sing praises

of his deliverance all along the way will you pray with me god in heaven thank you so much for your word god would you rescue us from us would you rescue us from a culture that is worshipping individualism self autonomy self direction self definition self worship god jesus you are so much better you are so much better than the cult of me would you grow our treasuring of you in your name we pray amen