

RUF Bible Study – Judges  
Doug Serven, RUF Campus Minister<sup>1</sup>  
February 6, 2008  
Judges 4-5 – Deborah, From out of nowhere

*And Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand.  
Does not the Lord go out before you?”*

Judges 4:14

*“Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, break out in a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam.  
“Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed.*

Judges 5:12, 24

Our study has led us to another fascinating text. God’s people are in trouble yet again (get used to it in Judges). What will God do for them? Who will he send this time?

How do you interpret the events around you? When you have good or bad things happen to you, do you try to figure out why they transpired that way? To what do you attribute them? How do these events make you feel about yourself?

This passage highlights God’s sovereignty. Sovereignty is a word that means God is control of all things at all times. There is nothing outside his control, and yet people aren’t relegated to being puppets or robots. Man is still responsible. The double truths of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility have perplexed people throughout the ages.

“[Judges] has to do with the knowledge of God – and while it is impossible to avoid his presence in the story however we read it, to look at it in this way is to see him and his people as the centre of it, and therefore to see its true meaning.... These chapters have to do primarily with God and with the people of God. They deal with a time when it was not obvious how, or even whether, he was in charge; and they show how in a time of real uncertainty questions were being asked, tests were being applied and lessons were being taught, whose relevance belongs not only to those days but to our own as well.”<sup>2</sup>

We won’t settle the matter once and for all, but we’ll try to see what we can learn from this text and why it might matter to us. Let’s use the key characters as our outline.

### ***Jabin and Sisera***

We have our familiar first few cycles in 4:1: *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.*

The people marched downward in sin after Ehud died, and the Lord judged them by sending them into the hands of new plunderers. This time it’s the Canaanite king, Jabin. Jabin is most likely a title, like Pharaoh. We’ve heard of a Jabin before in Joshua 11, so this name or title would be remembered. These people are supposed to be dealt with, but there they are enslaving and oppressing God’s people. Commentator Wilcock calls this a “renewed aggression by an old enemy.”<sup>3</sup>

Just like sin – it simply won’t go away. We think we have it taken care of and then it’s there again, claiming new ground. In reality shows today, it’s a popular device to have contestants get “immunity” so they can’t get voted off the show.<sup>4</sup> There is no “immunity” for sin. We battle with it, and if we turn our head or stop the fight, it will encroach on us. We need to be reminded that this whole arena isn’t only about claiming and reclaiming land – it’s about God’s people and their freedoms and struggles with the enemy. We’re here because of Israel’s sin and unfaithfulness – because she’s been whoring after the Baals.

“When Israel is being obedient, she sees that while the land of Canaan is destined for her, the people and the ways of Canaan are working against her, and that therefore she must drive out the one in order to enjoy the other. Conversely, when she is being disobedient, she accepts the people of Canaan and adopts their ways, and is willing to forgo possession of their land... Canaan the country is of course eminently desirable; it is the Lord’s choice for his people. The illusion is that ‘Canaan’ the

---

<sup>1</sup> © Doug Serven, 2008 You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you do not make more than 500 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be explicitly approved by Doug Serven.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By Doug Serven, © Doug Serven, 2007, website: [www.ouruf.org](http://www.ouruf.org).

For this series, I used commentaries on Judges from Block, Wilcock, Redeemer Pres, Davis, Cundall/Morris, Jordan and listened to sermons from Pete Hatton and Brandon Barrett. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

<sup>2</sup> Wilcock, 53

<sup>3</sup> Wilcock, 55

<sup>4</sup> I was watching The Biggest Loser recently and am shocked at how intriguing it is to see people getting weighed for 45 minutes. I did finally, reluctantly turn away.

ethos, its people and its ways is equally desirable. Only by being allowed to get her fingers burnt will Israel come to see clearly that that ‘Canaan’ is in fact the great enemy.”<sup>5</sup>

Jabin has a general named Sisera. While Jabin is reigning in Hazor, Sisera gets out and about as the aggressor against the Israelites. He’s possibly a Canaanite mercenary, but surely a bad dude. He has 900 iron chariots at his disposal, as we are transitioning from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. Jabin and Sisera had been in cruel power for 20 years.

We’ll be moving over to chapter 5 from time to time. Chapter 5 is a commentary poem/song on the events of chapter 4. It’s attributed to Deborah and Barak, and is similar in nature to the songs of Moses and Miriam we read in Exodus 15. (This is the first of our connections to Exodus, of which there are many). Judges 5 is the most debated and redacted chapter in the book (a bevy of papers continue to come from it); people are suspicious of it and its authorship. We won’t be commenting on any of that, but will take it at face value. It’s poetical history. It is a celebration song that tells the same story in a different way. The reader shouldn’t get bogged down in noticing in Judges 5 it says Jael gave Sisera curds (like yoghurt) but in Judges 4 no mention of that is made. No big deal. Milk is like yoghurt and she might have given him both. It’s a song, not a deposition.

The song is more like a speech at the Superbowl celebration parade. The Giants beat the Patriots this (2008) in a monumental upset. At the party, no one expects an exact recounting of how the victory was won – that’s for the analysts. But we’re not surprised to hear, “Eli Manning was amazing. Michael Strahan and the pass rush stopped Tom Brady when no one thought we could. We had a great game plan and we executed it because we believed in ourselves. We’re the Champions!” And everyone goes crazy (in New York, that is). Chapter five is the Superbowl party speech.

With that duly noted, we see in 5:6-8 that things were bad in Israel. The highways were abandoned. No one could travel safely. The region was in high terrorist alert. Village life had effectively ceased – it was every family for itself. New gods were chosen. Ack! This is just the trouble, so we’re not surprised to read it, but it still feels slimy. No one had any weapons. They’d surely been confiscated, so if any army could be raised they’d be fighting with sticks and farming implements.

If we scoot over to the end of the song, we hear the “voice of Sisera’s mother” (I put that in quotes because the author is claiming this is what “she” is thinking and saying). She’s waiting for Sisera and musing about the spoil and plunder he’ll bring with him which includes women. Sex slaves. So we have a literal rape and pillage policy here, which in the ancient world (and still today) is par for the course. The people are afraid and oppressed.

### **Deborah**

In verse 3 we read, “*Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord for help.*” And he answered. The next person we read of is Deborah.

Deborah’s name means “bee” which isn’t any help. We are told in verse 4: “*Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.*” Let’s get it out there up front – this woman prophet is unusual but not impossible. I don’t want to make this a whole chapter about women’s ordination, but Deborah is a central character in that discussion. We see two things. First, Deborah is a woman, and she is a prophet. Second, the text takes pains to show the unusualness of this situation by mentioning her husband and also the Hebrew says literally “a woman prophetess” which is unnecessarily redundant (it could have said “prophetess” or “a woman prophet”). We’ll make more comments on this later.

Deborah is said to be judging Israel, and then we read she sits under a palm tree and the people of Israel come to her for judgment (4:5). Instead of thinking as an ancient Judge Judy handing out verdicts on petty crimes and divorces, you should think of her as hearing Israel’s cries for justice. Will anyone save us? Will God hear us? She then gives divine answers, which we read about in the following verses. Deborah sends for help. “[Deborah] communicates Yahweh’s response to the people’s cry, but she is not the answer.”<sup>6</sup> We start to see Deborah then as a little more of a prophetess than a “judgess.”

She sends for Barak, whose story we’ll look at a little later. She confidently, like a prophet, tells him God’s plan to deliver Israel and just how it’s going to work logistically. Barak responds that he wants her to go with him. She doesn’t balk at this, and says she will go, but he needs to know the glory of this mission will go to a woman. It’s unclear if this is a rebuke of his cowardliness or if it is a prophecy or some combination of those. We need to note that it sure seems right here that Deborah will be that woman.

Regardless, Barak likes this plan and they go to Kedesh. That’s about it for Deborah, except we do see her on the mountain before the battle. She says the most important words of the story in verse 14: *Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?*

Deborah isn’t the main character of the story. Neither is Barak or crazy Jael. It’s God. He is the warrior. He is the one who fights for his people. Deborah, a godly woman of God and a prophet, speaks this word to Barak (and later through this book to Israel), calling him to battle evil that day. She proclaims a truth – God is a Warrior God! It’s tempting to think of her as a female Ehud, but she doesn’t address the troops or lead them into battle. She only talks to Barak. She doesn’t tell Barak to follow her, but declares Yahweh is going before them.

---

<sup>5</sup> Wilcock, 58

<sup>6</sup> Block, 195

Let's get back to the women-in-power issue. This text challenges all positions. It doesn't conform to either the strongly conservative view that women should not rule in church, family or society at all or the strongly liberal view that gender roles are fiction and men and women are interchangeable in leadership.<sup>7</sup>

The conservative view is challenged by the mere fact that Deborah was a judge. No bad things are said of her. She is a leader. "Deborah's career makes it hard to insist that the Bible forbids women to take leadership positions in society."<sup>8</sup> Attempts are made to wipe this away, usually with sentiments like "Things were so bad a woman had to take charge." I think that's demeaning and mean to say. It's unnecessary.

However, the liberal view is challenged by the shape of Deborah's career. Deborah leads differently than a man does. She isn't a warrior and doesn't lead the army. She recruits a man to do that job. She's a team builder in a sense. You also need to note that she never addresses a group of people in this story. She only talks to Barak, and he does the leading and public speaking. So it sure seems like she leads but does so in private. Is the way a woman leads better? No, but it is different.

"It is a mistake to say: a) men should always lead, b) women are always better leaders, or c) women can do anything men can do and men can do anything women can do."<sup>9</sup> "Women are equal in dignity and ability, but gender differences are expressed through some differentiation in role within the church. In the Old Testament, there were three great offices – prophet, priest and king (or judge). Some women were prophets and some were judges/queens. But there were no women priests. In the New Testament, women are free to use their gifts in any role but elder (1 Tim. 2:12). Why? This is God's way to express this 'equal but not equivalent' nature of gender. Gender differences are to be rejoiced in and embraced as a gift, not used to oppress (on the one hand) and not feared and loathed (on the other hand). The Biblical view does not fit in with current views of doctrinaire traditionalists or secularists today."<sup>10</sup> Commentator Block sums it up nicely with this: "She does not displace men in officially established positions of leadership, but her gender does not disqualify her from significant service for God."<sup>11</sup>

Let's stop with Deborah for now. Deborah is a great woman. She's another of our unlikely, paradigm-busting saviors. But she's strange because no other judge is portrayed as wise, talented, brilliant and godly. On the other hand, Deborah is not the warrior of the story. She didn't lead anyone into battle. It's really Team Deborah-Barak. And Jael. And we have to scratch our heads to note that Deborah is not mentioned in Hebrews 11, but Barak is.

### ***Jael***

Let's move on to the other woman in the story – Jael. We first hear of her in verse 17 when she's introduced as the wife of Heber the Kenite. But we heard of him back in verse 11 in a strange, seemingly unconnected verse about Heber breaking away from his people and pitching his tent in another region. That verse sticks out – why is the author putting this irrelevant detail in the story?

We later learn the author is really a master at storytelling. Because we pick back up with Heber and his wife Jael. Because of Heber's move out of town, it appears he has struck up an alliance with Jabin and Sisera. There is "shalom" or peace between them.

We've skipped over for now how Sisera has gotten to Heber's tent, but Jael comes out to meet him. You can picture this muddy, bloody soldier staggering up to the tents, and Jael coming out to meet him.

What is Jael like? I imagine Jael to be like Sigourney Weaver (in *Aliens*) or Angelina Jolie (as Laura Croft in *Tomb Raider*) or Sarah Connor (all strong in *Terminator 2*). But I imagine her like that because of what comes next and think she is bad to the bone. However, she may have been as nice and sweet as Laura Ingalls in *Little House on the Prairie*. Just keep the tent pegs away from her and she's sugar and spice. We don't know how Jael looked or what her life was like.

What does happen next? Well, Jael seduces Sisera. Not in a sexual way, at least not that we can see. Maybe a better word is "manipulates." She uses her "girl powers" for good. I often tell the RUF women to use their girl powers for good. They have them, so use them. Invite boys to church. Invite them to Bible study. Go ahead. It doesn't mean you have to date them or kiss them – just invite them.

Jael got the message. We don't know why she was so mad at Sisera, since she doesn't appear to be an Israelite. But, considering Sisera's rule of oppression, it's possible she had friends and family who had been hurt by him or even raped by him. She wanted him dead.

So she invited him into her tent (which shows how powerful the treaty must have been since men would not have gone into women's tents). The story slows down here. He's tired, so she covers him with a blanket. He's thirsty and asks for water. She gives him a little milk to help him sleep. He's exhausted and wants to rest, so he asks her to guard the tent and if anyone asks if anyone's in there, she should say no. He falls asleep.

---

<sup>7</sup> These thoughts on this issue are gleaned from *Living in a Pluralistic Society*.

<sup>8</sup> *Living in a Pluralistic Society*, 38

<sup>9</sup> *Living in a Pluralistic Society*, 38

<sup>10</sup> *Living in a Pluralistic Society*, 39

<sup>11</sup> Block, 246

Jael goes and gets a tent peg and hammer. Women were the ones who put up the tents, so these were familiar tools for her. Think of the old-school tent pegs, not our flimsy, aluminum ones we use today to put up our pup tents. This peg would have been hefty.

The text then reads: *Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.*

Wham! A tent peg to the temple. In chapter five we get a little more: *She sent her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple. 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.*

At this point all of Israel is cheering. Hooray for Jael! Barak comes up to the tent. He's been looking for Sisera. Jael comes out and tells him she has him. Surely Barak is expecting to see Sisera tied up or held by guards or drugged. So he walks into the tent prepared to kill him. Instead, he sees Sisera dead with a tent peg jutting out of his skull. Yikes. A woman has gotten the glory, just as Deborah had said. Not Deborah though – Jael.

What do we make of Jael? Chapter five says she is most blessed among tent dwelling women. That seems like pretty high praise but it also seems to back it off a little. I've been watching a music duo called Flight of the Conchords. They have a funny song that goes this way: Looking at the room, I can tell that you are the most beautiful girl in the – room. (In the whole wide room) And looking at the street, depending on the street, you are definitely in the top three of the good looking girls on the street (depending on the street).

Jael is the most awesome woman, among tent dwelling ones! But still that's pretty good. You have to wonder what her husband thought. Oh no! That would be an interesting conversation. Jael isn't made queen. She isn't brought into the city. She goes back into obscurity.

Ladies, I don't want you to start forming Daughters of Jael groups. That will scare us all to death. Put the tent pegs down. We'll try to make sense of this soon, but for now let's say God uses people to accomplish his purpose in ways we wouldn't expect. God can even use evil and turn it into good.

### **Barak**

We turn our attention to Barak. Barak is not as uncommon a name for us right now, thanks to Barack Obama. Barak means "lightning" and he is the judge/savior/deliverer in this passage. He fights for his people.

He's described and portrayed as a general. So let's think of him and call him, The General. Bobby Knight retired from coaching this week, so I have him in mind. Knight finishes with 902 wins (the most in Division I men's college basketball), three national championships, gold medals and tremendous accolades. However, he also has quite a reputation thanks to the chair throwing, the numerous players he's threatened and grabbed, and the way he treats the media and administration. He's a mixed bag. Great coach. Conflicted guy.

We'll find out Barak The General is similar. He's listed in Hebrews 11 as a man of faith (and why I think he must be the judge here), but it's not quite the unsullied report of Othniel.

We first read of Barak in verse 6 when Deborah sends for him. Her directiveness points to her building this team and getting Barak to come do his job. She describes what that job will be.

To be honest, it's not very encouraging. It amounts to a suicide mission. The plan is to draw out Sisera by camping out on a mountain. But all Sisera has to do is encircle the mountain with his chariots and wait them out. Barak and his men will starve and be forced to surrender. This doesn't even mention the discrepancy of technology and manpower. This is like flintlock muskets versus tanks.<sup>12</sup>

But hey, this is God we're talking about here, and he does amazing, incredible things. So the narrative should move straight to verse 10: *And Barak called out Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. And 10,000 men went up at his heels, and Deborah went up with him.*

Instead we get an interlude of negotiation. Barak isn't so sure about the plan of God luring out Sisera to the plains. He's not excited about the commissioning speech from Deborah, which is really from God. When Barak resists the call of God, we see another connection with Exodus for this is reminiscent to when Moses resisted God. Barak wants Deborah to go with him.

Some see this as weakness on his part. He's a momma's boy. "He will not enter the fray unless he has this woman beside him holding his hand."<sup>13</sup> He's chicken.

But notice that Deborah isn't shocked by his statement. She doesn't seem surprised by this. Barak doesn't refuse to go, but promises he will go if a condition is met. Deborah agrees to the condition. Barak wants the woman who seems to know what God thinks with him. That's a good thing to have. "The request to be accompanied by the prophet is a plea for the presence of God."<sup>14</sup> Barak wants a wise and godly woman to go with him. I think I'd agree with that.

---

<sup>12</sup> An idea from Brandon Barrett's sermon on this passage

<sup>13</sup> Block, 199

<sup>14</sup> Block, 199

Deborah mentions one other thing – the glory that would normally go to you will go to a woman instead. “The Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” This could be a stinging rebuke or it could be a prophecy like, “When you see a woman get the glory for the victory, you’ll know it was God who did it.”

Team Barak-Deborah get going. Then we have verse 11 stuck in there, but we know why it’s there now.

On to battle. Barak positions his bedraggled soldiers on the mountain. Sisera has got to be glad to see that and he rolls out his 900 chariots.

We hear again Deborah’s words to Barak: *Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?*

The Lord will fight this battle. Barak is sure hoping so, because this is not looking good. What 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. 16 And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.*

Something happened. If we turn to chapter five we might see a little more. *5:4-5 Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the Lord, even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel.*

The Lord sent a storm. Barak’s name means “lightning” so this is cool for him. A huge storm came (like a plague in Exodus). This would have nullified the chariots. They wouldn’t be able to move any more, so they’d be useless. Barak’s men came down and wiped them out. Sisera would have been freaking out. He served a god of weather too, or maybe many of them, but they weren’t working for him. So he took off running, eventually finding “help and hospitality” in Jael’s tent.

Barak didn’t affect the outcome of this battle. His tactics were directed by God. The victory was declared ahead of time and then won by God. God did use Barak in the victory – his men were there and did win the resultant battle.

Barak tracks Sisera to Heber’s encampment and finds that Jael has done the deed. Sisera’s death comes at the hand of a woman. (You can follow along nicely, though irreverently, at [www.bricktestament.com/judges](http://www.bricktestament.com/judges)).

What should we think about Barak? It’s tempting to slam him pretty hard for his seeming reluctance to fight God’s enemies. But here’s what keeps me from being too hard on him – he’s the one from this story mentioned in Hebrews 11:32-33 *And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

Deborah isn’t named here. That doesn’t mean she didn’t display faith, for surely she did. But she doesn’t make it into Hebrews 11. Jael certainly doesn’t, though I wouldn’t put anything past the writer of Hebrews (Rahab, Jephthah and Samson are all in there).

The people in Hebrews 11 aren’t really heroes of the faith like we normally think of them. They were normal people who had normal problems; some of them had big, big problems. But they did show faith or they wouldn’t be there. Barak displayed tremendous courage. He faced a greater foe with greater technology in what should have been a slaughter. Barak showed faith in humility, as he maturely shared the honor with women. He subjugated his pride because of faith. And he showed his faith in obedience to God’s word. He did what the Lord asked of him, through the prophet Deborah. “The New Testament Savior-god is reflected in Barak, who like him is a man under authority and does nothing apart from that authority, cannot act independently from the one who sends him and is victorious through obedience.”<sup>15</sup>

What does this show us about God? It’s tempting to go with a moralistic approach. Be like Deborah. That’s really tempting because she is the godliest person in this story. And yes, you should hear God’s word, lead out when you should, allow God to work through his channels and authorities and believe in his promises. Be like Barak? Well sure. Believe in the Warrior God and go to battle with sin and Satan. Be like Jael? Um – that’s a little tougher. Disobey your husband; use your girl powers to lure and then kill. Those don’t seem like biblical lessons.

I think a better approach is to remember these are all broken, sinful people but God is using them anyway to accomplish his purposes. This is what his sovereignty looks like. God is in control, and what looks like chaos and trouble may actually be his plan all along.

Barak didn’t know God was going to send that thunderstorm. He still had to believe that God was going to take care of them, and put his men in the right position. That had to be incredibly frightening. And God came through.

The seemingly insignificant detail of Heber’s tent placement turned out to be essential to the story of how God worked. God uses little things like that. He uses the small things and works like that. Thunderstorms AND tent placement. I’m not saying you’ll be able to figure everything out. In fact, I highly doubt it. But this text reminds us that we must put our faith in the God who is in control. He says in Romans 8:28 that *all things work together for the good for those who are called according to his purpose*. All things. Even sinful things. Even crazy things like Jael.

God used things like that to bring about your very salvation. He used the sinful actions of Judas to betray Jesus and all the subsequent wrongs to get him on the cross and crucify him. That was the most unjust thing ever to happen. God

---

<sup>15</sup> Wilcock but found in *Living in a Pluralistic Society*, 40

orchestrated that, ordained that, allowed that through what seems like insane circumstances. He didn't create that evil, but he oversaw it and used it to bring about the greatest joy and greatest news of the world. That's how he works.

What does that mean for you? It means that if you're a Christian, you know that God is looking out for you. You are then freed to interpret circumstances as opportunities or new ways of thinking and acting. Getting or not getting an internship doesn't make you or break you. If you get it, God gets the glory. If you don't, he still gets the glory, and you'll be doing something else. You can re-interpret life this way, and live a life of freedom instead of bondage. He already loves you. You're already somebody. You already know you'll be with God forever. So you can date or not date, marry or not marry, be successful in the world's eyes or not – he is sovereign and in control and you make the best choices you can according to his word and godly counsel.

It also means this – we see God as a Warrior God. This comes through in Judges quite often, but it really is obvious here. The Lord is the one who fought for his people. If you're like me, the most common picture of Jesus you have in your head is the one with Jesus' head, beard and flowing hair. You know the one.<sup>16</sup>

It's actually called *Head of Christ* and was done in 1940 by a man named Warner Sallman. According to the book *American Jesus*, "As of the turn of the twenty-first century, over 500 million copies had been produced, making *Head of Christ* the most common religious image in the world."<sup>17</sup>

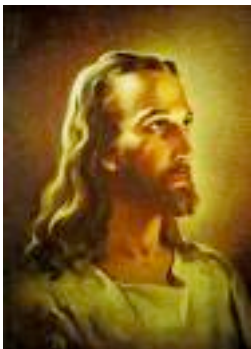
People are crazy about this picture. "During the 1990s [art historian David] Morgan solicited opinions from a variety of Americans on Sallman's *Head of Christ*. One woman told him that the picture was 'an exact likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Another reported, 'When I look at it in prayer, and when I am the most in need, I see not only a painted portrait, but the face of the real, the living Christ.' Others saw the *Head of Christ* as the true image of Jesus – a twentieth-century version of the Shroud of Turin that captured not only his personality but also the shape of his nose and the cut of his beard. At least a few attributed miracles to the picture."<sup>18</sup> "One reason *Head of Christ* supplanted pictures by [other artists] is that Sallman divorced his subject entirely from biblical narratives. Instead of interacting with his disciples or his mother or even with God, Sallman's Jesus engaged the viewer directly, and he did so in a way that was inviting, reassuring, comforting, intimate. Severing Jesus from the Bible stories reinforced the image of Jesus as friend, It also advanced the cause of *solus Jesus*."<sup>19</sup>

This picture of Jesus isn't the one of the Bible. This *Head of Christ* Jesus is barely masculine. With his flowing hair and his beautiful face, he seems rather ambiguous and even wimpy. That's not the Jesus of the Bible. That's not the God of the Bible. We have a Warrior God here, one who fights for his people. You may not like this Warrior God. He may make you uncomfortable. But that's because he won't do your bidding. He will cart his people off into oppression, and he'll save them from it. Personally, I find that to be comforting because that's how a God should be. I shouldn't be able to fully understand him or his ways. He should be somewhat mysterious and powerful. I don't want the wimpy *Head of Christ* God. I'll take the earthy, powerful, Biblical one instead. Even though, or maybe especially because, he doesn't always make sense to me.

This is the God we see in Judges and therefore should serve. "The entire account is deliberately crafted to highlight the salvation provided by God. He is the chief Operator, pulling the strings, raising generals, deploying armies, dictating strategies, and effecting victory. In the end both narrative and song celebrate the saving work of Yahweh."<sup>20</sup>

I'd like to make one last observation of something we see in this text. But we see it in the negative. We see it because we don't see it. We have a great prophet in this story, and her name is Deborah. We have a great king/judge in this text, and his name is Barak. But we don't have a priest. There are no priests mentioned. Where is the tabernacle? Where is the Ark of the Covenant? Where are the Levites? Where are the sacrifices? Where is the atoning work on behalf of the people's sins?

Deborah can't be a priest. She's not a Levite and she's not a man. She cannot do the work of the church, and represent people before God in this way. This text cries out for a redeemer. And in the negative then, we have to see Jesus. He is our prophet, priest and king. Deborah and Barak picture for us imperfect prophets and kings, but we don't have anyone to look for here as a priest. We must think of the rest of Hebrews, and see that Jesus is the one who paid the penalty for his people.



<sup>16</sup>  
<sup>17</sup> Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus*. (Farar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 2003), 116

<sup>18</sup> Prothero, 119

<sup>19</sup> Prothero, 119

<sup>20</sup> Block, 186

When we think of our situations and our days, when we try to make sense of our realities, we are then armed. We know that God is sovereign, and he is good. He loves his people. He sends situations in our lives that may make no sense, but are ultimately for his glory. He works in the big things (like thunderstorms and wars) and in the little things (where a man places his tent), but ALL things are for the good of his children even if we don't get it. Our God isn't a pushover with wavy, curly hair. He's earthy and real, and he's powerful and uncontrollable. And yet he forgives sins. We have the perfect mediator in Jesus Christ, our judge/savior/redeemer/priest. In him is full redemption from the wages and the power of sin. In him we can have victory over the Jabins and Siseras of our souls. He will strike the head of our enemies.

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing: For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us: The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth: Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.*