

LESSON 4: DEBORAH THE UNLIKELY JUDGE

Biblical Passages: Judges 4:1-16

What do we love about magic tricks? Well, we love the surprise, right? We love the thrill of expecting one thing, but getting something else instead. An illusion is exciting because it takes something ordinary and then makes it do something unexpected right before our eyes. A rabbit is pulled out of a top hat. A quarter is pulled from behind your ear. A bouquet of flowers suddenly appears in a performer's hands. Illusions make us laugh and clap and gasp. People enjoy these tricks because they want to be awed and taken by surprise. And at the end of every illusion people always want to ask, "How'd you do that?" We ask that question because we know that it's just an illusion and we've been tricked, we've been fooled, the performer was able to slip something by us without us noticing.

Read Judges 4:1-16. There's a saying that goes, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." If this is true, then it would seem that our sin nature has made all of us insane, because every person sins knowing full well that it will never give us what we're looking for, it will never make us feel whole, and it will only cause more pain and turmoil in our lives. This is exactly what we see at play in today's passage. The Israelites, like every believer who has ever lived, were stuck in the terrible cycle of sin, repent, repeat. However, what's at focus in today's text is God's use of unexpected people to accomplish great things. Specifically, God used a prophetess named Deborah to rally and lead His people against their Canaanite oppressors. Deborah was an unlikely candidate to lead Israel. First, she was a woman, and it was uncommon for a woman at this point in time to lead. Second, unlike the judge Samson, she didn't have incredible strength and combat prowess. Regardless of what Deborah had working against her culturally, God used her to great success.

People "ooh" and "aah" at magic tricks because these illusions take us by surprise and give us the unexpected. However, they're just tricks. God, on the other hand, is not in the business of tricks and illusions. He accomplishes His plans in the most unexpected ways. He uses the unlikeliest of people to do impossible things. All of that causes us to either stand in amazement or bow in worship.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. Verse 2 says the Lord "sold" the Israelites into the hand of the king of Canaan. God is not cruel and does everything for a righteous purpose. Knowing this to be true, why would He sell His people to their enemy?
2. When Deborah summoned Barak, she told him what the Lord commanded. When talking with others about the Lord, why is it important to first communicate to them the Lord's words and commands?
3. The Scripture says that the Israelites were oppressed for twenty years and cried out to the Lord. Maybe they cried out to the Lord immediately, but then again, maybe they waited a few years before crying out. We don't know for sure. Whatever the case, why do people sometimes postpone crying out to the Lord for help when they are far from Him and struggling?
4. In what ways might today's Scripture prepare us to be the unexpected person that God uses for great things?