

Samson's True Strength

August 10, 2014 ~ Judges 13.1-5, 16.28-31

Introduction

- ❖ Samson is the last of the judges mentioned in the book of **Judges**
 - ✧ But Eli (40) and Samuel (?) were both judges ~ next book **1 Samuel**
- ❖ The story of Samson is an odd one
 - ✧ Samson was a judge of Israel, but of questionable character
- ❖ His story is paradoxical in several ways
 1. He had superhuman strength but lacked common sense
 2. He was singled out for service to God but lacked self-control
 3. He was a judge of Israel but repeatedly lusted after Philistine women
 4. He was a man of faith and prayer but emotionally volatile and self-centered

Overview of Samson's Life

❖ Chapter 13

- ✧ **v1** ~ God gave them over to the Philistines
- ✧ They are Danites and live on the Philistine frontier
- ✧ **v2-7** ~ Child promised to Manoah's barren wife
 - ◆ **v2** ~ Danites live on western frontier next to Philistines
 - ◆ 5 cities of Philistines (Gaza – Ashkelon – Ashdod – Ekron – Gath)
 - ◆ **v5** ~ “.. he shall begin to deliver Israel ..”
- ✧ **v8-15** ~ Manoah prays for the Angel's return and it happens
- ✧ **v16-21** ~ Manoah offers burnt offering and Angel ascends in flame
- ✧ **v22-23** ~ Manoah and wife reason about visit
- ✧ **v24-25** ~ Samson is born, matures and Spirit of the LORD moves upon him

❖ Chapter 14

- ✧ **v1** ~ “Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman”
- ✧ **v2-3** ~ “.. get her for me” ~ His parents protest, but he insists ..
- ✧ **v4** ~ “they did not know that it was of the LORD ..”
- ✧ **v5-6** ~ They go down to Timnah & he kills lion without their knowledge
- ✧ **v7-9** ~ Marriage is arranged & upon return Samson finds honey in lion
- ✧ **v10-18** ~ The riddle / the whining / the threat
- ✧ **v19** ~ Samson kills 30 men of Ashkelon (Philistine city) for garments
- ✧ **v20** ~ Wife given to be wife of his best man

❖ Chapter 15

- ❖ v1-2 ~ Samson returns to wife's home and finds she's not his
- ❖ v3-5 ~ Samson destroys wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves
- ❖ v6 ~ Philistines burn Samson's wife and father-in-law
- ❖ v7-8 ~ Samson went Rambo on them "hip and thigh" then hid in Etam
- ❖ v9-10 ~ Philistines threaten Judah (next clan southeast)
- ❖ v11-13 ~ 3,000 men of Judah tie up Samson and turn him over
- ❖ v14-17 ~ Samson kills a thousand men with donkey jawbone
- ❖ v18-19 ~ God miraculously provides water to Samson
- ❖ v20 ~ And Samson judges Israel 20 years

❖ Chapter 16

- ❖ v1 ~ Samson visits a harlot in Gaza
- ❖ v2-3 ~ Samson carries city gates away at midnight
- ❖ v4 ~ Samson falls in love with Delilah / Philistine & Semitic
- ❖ v5 ~ Lords of Philistines offer her 1100 shekels each
- ❖ v6 ~ She simply asks him how he can be successfully bound
 - ❖ v7-9 – bowstrings
 - ❖ v10-12 – ropes
 - ❖ v13-14 – weave hair into loom
 - ❖ v15-17 – He tells her the truth – shave hair off
- ❖ v18-20 – She shaves his head and he is overcome
- ❖ v21 – They put his eyes out & imprison him in Gaza (grinding grain)
- ❖ v22 – "However, the hair of his head began to grow again"
- ❖ v23-27 – Samson brought out to entertain lords of Philistines
- ❖ v28-30 – Samson topples temple of Dagon killing 3,000 people
- ❖ v31 – Family buried his body in father's tomb

"What shall we focus on in the life of Samson?"

- ❖ There are many lessons in these 4 chapters of **Judges**
 - ❖ I'll point out **4 negatives** and **a positive** from his life
 - ❖ Samson had faults and we ought not paper over them (MH commentary)
 - ❖ We can and should learn from his failures (just as those of others)
 - ❖ But his life also models a positive trait for us

Xition: The first of the four negative lessons is . . . deviated from purpose

1. Deviated from His Purpose in Life

Samson was a Son of Promise

- ❖ Faithful mother and father
 - ✧ Mother barren but blessed with child by Angel of the Lord
 - ◆ v5 ~ “.. shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb”
 - ✧ Father (Manoah) faithful ~ v8 immediately prayed for guidance
 - ◆ Angel of the LORD visited 2nd time & suggested burnt offering
 - ◆ Angel of the LORD ascends in the flames from the altar
- ❖ The Nazirite vow was usually temporary (**Num 6.5** “until the days are fulfilled”)
 - ✧ But God had mandated a lifelong vow in Samson’s case
 1. No wine or similar drink (**Num 6.1-4**)
 2. No razor shall come upon his head (**Num 6.5-8**)
 3. He cannot even be near dead bodies (**Num 6.9**)
- ❖ Samson’s purpose
 - ✧ They are Danites and live on the Philistine frontier
 - ✧ v5 ~ “He shall begin to deliver Israel ...”
 - ✧ v25 ~ “The Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him ..”
- ❖ Samson would have heard the story of his birth / Yet didn’t seek God

2. Indulged in Unlawful Desires (ch 14 only)

Seven Mistakes Samson Makes - He ...

1. Went to the wrong place (Timnah – few miles to west)
 - ✧ Philistine city / passed vineyards on the way
2. Looked at the wrong thing (lusted after Philistine woman)
3. Rejected godly counsel of parents
4. Chose a wife against God’s law (from pagan nations)
 - ✧ **Dt 7.3** ~ “Nor shall you make marriages with them”
5. Violated Nazarene vow (v9 ~ went near dead lion / v10 ~ probably drank)
 - ✧ Samson broke 2 of the 3 parts of the vow early in life
6. Shared answer to riddle with wife (unwisely)
7. Blamed others when it went wrong (and killed 30 people in anger)

Xition: The third of the four negative lessons is . . . personal vengeance

3. Indulged in Personal Vengeance

Samson Used His Strength for His Own Purposes

- ❖ 14.19 ~ “killed thirty men” / “anger was aroused”
 - ✧ He refuses to consummate his marriage with his wife
- ❖ 15.3 ~ “This time I shall be blameless”
 - ✧ He didn’t regard himself as blameless in the previous incident
- ❖ 15.7 ~ “I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease”
 - ✧ He intends to take personal revenge and have that be the end
 - ✧ But the situation escalates after the massacre of those that burned his wife
- ❖ 15.14 ~ “found a fresh jawbone” / “killed a thousand men with it”
 - ✧ This is now far greater than he’d intended
- ❖ 16.28 ~ “take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes”
 - ✧ Even at the last he seeks personal vengeance / not for God or his people

4. Allowed Desire to Override Judgment

Three times Samson pursues a Philistine woman

- ❖ First the woman from Timnah
 - ✧ infatuation with woman he shouldn’t have
- ❖ Second the harlot from Gaza
 - ✧ lust for Philistine harlot in far away Gaza
- ❖ Third, Delilah from Valley of Sorek (between his home and Timnah)
 - ✧ love for (half Philistine / half Semitic) Delilah much closer to home
- ❖ In each case he gets in trouble
 - ✧ His ill-advised wager with Philistine wedding guests (cruel and wicked)
 - ◇ He unwisely shares the answer to the riddle
 - ✧ His ill-advised visit to a harlot in Gaza (way inside Philistine territory)
 - ◇ The Gazites learned of his visit and surrounded him
 - ✧ He returns to Delilah although she’s betrayed him 3 times
 - ◇ Though much older he does not seem to have grown a lot wiser
- ❖ Samson’s sinful desires and spiritual weakness ensnared him
- ❖ Despite his physical strength he was a weak man ...
- ❖ These have been the 4 negatives ...

Xition: So what is the one positive we see concerning him?

1. Recognized God as Mightier than Himself

Samson Served God Faithfully for 20 Years

- ❖ Chapters **13** through **15.19** occurred in his youth
 - ✧ It appears to have occurred well within the space of a year
- ❖ After he'd killed the 1,000 men
 - ✧ We read in **15.20**, “**he judged Israel twenty years**”
 - ✧ 20 years between indiscretions of his youth & subsequent indiscretions

Samson Turned to God in Times of Trouble

- ❖ Samson spoke to God only twice in our text
 - ✧ First, when he prayed for water
 - ◆ **15.18** “**he cried out to the Lord**”
 - ✧ Second, when he prayed for strength to destroy the temple of Dagon
 - ◆ **16.28** “**Then Samson called to the Lord ..**”
- ❖ God gave him what he requested in each case

Samson is Only Mentioned Once More in all of Scripture

- ❖ **Read Hebrews 11.32-34** ~ What phrase or phrases refer to Samson
 - ✧ Is it, “**subdued kingdoms**”? That would seem more like David
 - ✧ Is it, “**stopped the mouths of lions**”? That would seem more like Daniel
 - ✧ Is it, “**became valiant in battle**”? That would seem more like Gideon
 - ✧ Let me suggest another, “**out of weakness were made strong**”
 - ✧ God told Paul in **2 Cor 12.9**, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**”

- “**Even with the wisdom of Solomon we are nothing apart from God**”
- “**Even with the humility of Moses we are nothing apart from God**”
- “**Even with the strength of Samson we are nothing apart from God**”

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .