

Sunday, September 14, 2025

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (44)

Period of the Judges (5)

Samson

Judges 13-16

Tonight we continue our journey through the Bible series, a study of the 17 time periods of Bible history. In this lesson we continue our study of the period of the judges (the 8th period). In our last lesson, we focused on Jephthah and some other judges. Today, we come to who could be the most controversial of the judges, Samson. His life was one of contradiction, as He had many character flaws, but God used Him to deliver His people one more time.

I. The context:

- a. NOTE: The Philistines oppress Judah. Recall in our last lesson that the battle was in the Northeast, across the Jordan in the territory of Reuben. Recall also that in **Judges 10:6-7** we read of Israel sinning against YHWH and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. Jephthah delivered them from the oppression of the Ammonites who had oppressed them 18 years. We now find that the Philistines are dealt with by Samson.
- b. 13:1 - AGAIN, the children of Israel did evil and they are delivered into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years. (This likely overlapped the oppression of the Amorites and lasted twice as long.) PERHAPS (speculation - TT), Samson was born as Jephthah was delivering Israel and 20 years later, he begins to deliver Israel from the Philistines.
- c. 13:2-5 – we are introduced to Manoah of the tribe of Dan. His wife was barren. The angel of the LORD appeared to her and promised her a son, but he was to be a Nazarite, and she was to drink no wine or eat anything unclean as she bore him.
- d. **The Nazarite vow** – Numbers 6:1-21 records the Nazarite vow. It was a vow that typically involved a period of time where one would voluntarily devote themselves to the LORD. During that time: 1) They could not eat/drink anything that came from the grape; 2) They were not to cut their hair – it would become part of the conclusion of the devoted time; and 3) They were not to touch a dead body or eat anything unclean. WE have recorded 3 Nazarites that we dedicated from birth: 1) Samson; 2) Samuel and 3) John the Baptist.
- e. 13:6-23 – Manoah's wife tells him about the appearance. He prays to God that the Man of God would return. God listened and the angel returned (NOTE: In vs. 3 He is referred to as "the Angel of YHWH" while in vs. 6-9 He is described as the Angel (or Man) of God (Elohim), then vs. 13-21 He is "the Angel of YHWH" again. The difference? God was the generic term for a deity, while YHWH was the name of the True God of Israel. The point, Manoah and his wife did not know He was an angel sent from YHWH, but rather viewed him simply as "a man of God") to his wife. She fetches Manoah and the message is confirmed. He also asks the name of the Angel, but is told, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?" (vs. 18) A sacrifice is made and the Angel of the LORD ascends in the flame. Manoah and his wife are fearful because they have seen YHWH. But she reasons, If He desired to kill us, He would not have accepted the burnt offering, or appeared to them, or told them the prophecies.
- f. 13:24-25 – Samson is born, and in time, "the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him."
- g. 14 records his first encounter with the Philistines. He goes Timnah and sees a woman of the Philistines and wants her. He demands of his parents that they get her for him. While hesitant (because of the LOM – Deuteronomy 7:1-3ff). they consent. Vs. 4 notes that this was "of the LORD" as Samson was looking to confront the Philistines. On his way, a young lion came against him. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him and with his bare hands he

- tore the lion apart. He goes and talks with the woman, and she pleases him and became his wife (vs.16) . After some time, he goes again to see her and sees the dead lion with a swarm of bees in its carcass. He takes some of the honey and gives some to his parents. Then at a feast among the Pharisees he poses a riddle that if they could answer in 7 days, he would give them 30 changes of clothes, but if not they would give them to Him. The riddle, "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." They could not answer and thus they pressed his wife to find the answer or they would burn down her and her father's house. She weeps and pesters Samson so that on the 7th day he tells her the riddle. She goes and tells the Pharisees and they answer the riddle. Samon noted, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved the riddle. He goes to Askelon and kills 30 Philistines and gives their garments to the men he had posed the riddle to. They gave Samson's wife to his best man.
- h. Ch. 15 continues the account. Samson goes to visit his wife and finds out that her father gave her to another man believing he had left her. He offers to Samson her younger sister. Samon in anger catches 300 foxes and ties them together in pairs tail to tail and ties a torch in between each pair. They are let loose and burn down the Philistine crops and vineyards and olive groves. The Philistines know it is Samson. So they burn his wife and father to death (anyways). Samson takes revenge by killing a great number of Philistines. They then gather against Judah and demand that they turn Samson over to them. 3000 men of Judah come to arrest Samson because the Philistines still ruled over them (vs. 11-12). Samson agrees to be taken into custody if they did not kill him. Instead they bind him tightly with 2 new ropes and deliver him to the Philistines. AT Lehi, the Spirit of YHWH comes upon Samons and he breaks the ropes as one would burned flax. He finds the jawbone of a donkey and with it kills 1000 Philistines, throws it down and calls the place Ramath Lehi (Jawbone Height). The LORD then sustains him as he is thirsty. Vs. 20 tells us he judged Israel 20 years.
 - i. Ch. 16 is the most familiar story of Samson. He goes to Gaza and sees a harlot. The Gazites are ready to kill him. But at midnight he takes the doors to the gate of the city and pulls up the doorposts and carries them to the top of a hill (he escapes).
 - j. 16:4-22 – In the Vally of Sorek he finds **Delilah**, another Philistine woman. They come to her and bribe her to entice him to reveal the source of his strength. Samson toys with Delilah and tells her different stories. 1) If they bind me with 7 fresh bowstrings I will lose my strength. The Philistines do that. But he breaks the strings (and likely kills some of them). 2) "You have mocked me" she said. He then says, bind me with a new rope. Again it is done and again Samson breaks the rope. 3) If you tie the 7 locks of my hair in a weaver's beam". She does but when he awakes, he destroys the loom. 4) Finally, after persistent pestering and nagging he finally reveals the source of his strength. She lulls him to sleep and the Philistines cut his hair. When he awakes, he thinks he is fine, but "the LORD had departed from him." (vs. 20). The Philistines take him and put out his eyes and bring him to Gaza and put him in prison and hard labor. His hair began to grow back.
 - k. 16:23-30 – The lords of the Philistines gather to worship Dagon, their god with a great sacrifice. They think their god had delivered Samson to them. As they are making merry, they call for Samson to perform for them and station him between 2 pillars. Vs. 27 tells us there were about 3000 men and women on the roof watching Samson "perform". Samson, bound asks a lad to let him feel the pillars that supported the temple. Samson prays to God for strength one more time (he is finally somewhat humbled – vs. 28). It is granted and Samson pushed on the pillars with all his might and the temple collapsed and killed all the

lords and people who were there. The loss of life was greater than all whom he had killed during his life.

- I. 16:31 – his brothers and father’s household took his body and buried him in the tomb of his father. He judged Israel for 20 years.

II. **Lessons to consider:**

- a. God can accomplish His will in unexpected ways and sources. Certainly, Samson is unusual. Miraculously conceived and God was with him throughout much of his life.
- b. The importance of dedication – the Nazarite vow – including Manoah’s wife. When the LORD appeared to them and gave instructions. For the MOST part, they were faithful to Him. We need to view our service to God and Jesus as a dedication. We now belong to Him – Romans 12:1- we present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him.
- c. Samson and faith – He is mentioned in Hebrews 11:32. In this we note that it was because of his stellar life. As we have seen, he had MANY flaws and violated numerous commands from the LOM and even as a Nazarite (he touched dead bodies of animals and ate unclean food – having been in a carcass). But Hebrews 11 is emphasizing acts of faith – 1) Samson for the most part kept to his Nazarite vow, 2) he confronted the enemies of Israel which likely he knew was his work (cf. Judges 14:4 – he was seeking occasion to move against the Philistines); 3) By faith at the end of his life, he prays and acts one last time avenging Israel of its enemies. His standing with God is between him and God- we cannot change that.
- d. Be careful who you marry – Samson TWICE went outside God’s law and married foreigners (though we are told it was of the LORD). His parents even warned him against it p Judges 14:3. While what happened was from the LORD, we still see the problems with marrying an unbeliever – 2 Corinthians 6:14 – do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.
- e. The problem with compromising God’s will – he did not fully follow his Nazarite heritage, by eating unclean food and allowing his hair to be cut. Compromise is always dangerous and usually sinful. Ephesians 5:11, 2 John 9-11. Matthew 6:24 – it is seeking to serve 2 masters.
- f. Will we learn from our past? Samson kept failing because he didn’t learn from his wife’s betrayals. There are details left out of these accounts (such as how much Samson knew about the motives of Delilah), but when every time he told Delilah the secret of his strength, Philistines were waiting to take him should have been a warning sign. The wise man LEARNS from failures and tries to not repeat them.
- g. The cost of betrayal – Clearly Samson was betrayed by Delilah (and his first wife). It came with consequences. While cannot always prevent betrayal, we ought to act with caution.
- h. How many times does one betray you before you learn? We need to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16. This is not about how often we forgive, but learning from how we have been treated. Trust is EARNED! BTW, how many times have we betrayed our Lord? Just a thought!
- i. Persistence is a two edged sword – we need persistence in our lives. Galatians 6:9 encourages us to not give up. In Samson’s account we find the enemies of God and His people are persistent until they get their way – both the Philistines and Delilah show this. We must be cautious that persistence is one of Satan’s strong traits – 1 Peter 5:8.
- j. Pride comes before a fall – Proverbs 16:18, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* James 4:6 tells us that *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* Samson was prideful – throughout his life, we find it is his demeanor, demands and declarations. Even after revealing his strength, when he awoke he THOUGHT he was ok. 1 Corinthians 10:12 – *therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.*

- k. Has God left you? When we are living in open rebellion against God, He is NOT going to stay with us. Understand, that He is always where He is, but when we leave Him, there is a separation. Hebrews 2:1 calls for us to give the more earnest heed lest we drift away.
- l. God WILL accomplish His purpose – we see that in all the judges. In His time, He delivers. Can he use you? Are you living in such a way that you are available to Him?

And thus we continue to examine the tragic roller coaster known as the period of the judges. Samson is a tragedy, both as a person and as a nation. We read nothing in the account about the people's repentance and faithfulness to God, even as they are delivered. But we do learn that God is watching and there will be an accounting, whether good or bad. As you look at your life, Is God with you or against you? Think about it!