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# THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF SAMSON THE STRONG

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### Introduction

The biblical story of Samson is a story that has enthralled adults and children alike for thousands of years, for he was the strongest man who has ever walked the earth. It is a true story, every word of it, without any errors; for it has been given, as all Scripture has, by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16). And yet, as amazing and as exciting as his story is, it has also puzzled and saddened the hearts of God's people through the ages. For here was a man, a mighty man of God, a man greatly used of God in an absolutely unique way – and yet he committed such great sins.

When most people think of Samson, even most Christians, they only think of two aspects of his life: his great strength, and his great sins. Mention his name, and these are the two things that immediately come to mind. But to narrowly focus only on these two aspects of his remarkable life is to miss out on the immense blessing the child of God can receive from a proper study of the life of this amazing man. There is so much more to Samson! He was one of God's ministers, a man who loved the Lord, a man of faith, a man uniquely raised up by the Lord to be a great Judge of Israel!

Perhaps many would be surprised by such a description of Samson. Christians read of his great exploits, his mighty feats of strength, and they are thrilled by them, and by what the Lord accomplished through this man; and yet when they look at his life, and his great sins and foolishness, they are puzzled: how could this man have been a minister of the Lord, they ask? What shocking things he did!

And yet – he was the Lord's servant! And let me be clear on what I mean by this: he was not the Lord's servant as the heathen King Nebuchadnezzar was the Lord's servant, merely an instrument in the hands of the sovereign Lord to accomplish His will. No, Samson was more than this. He was a true believer, a regenerated and converted man, a minister of the Lord, and a man of great faith!

None of what has just been said about this remarkable man is meant in any way to excuse his sins! By no means. Yes, he was a true servant of the Lord, a man whose zeal for the Lord was tremendous; but a man with feet of clay nevertheless; a man who, like many men before him and many after him, had one great weakness, a besetting sin: and that was his unlawful love for women. But in due course we shall come to a proper examination of this sin of his.

As we study the history of Samson, it is vital to keep in mind that it must be studied on two levels. Firstly, his life and ministry must be studied to see what it teaches us about how Christians ought (and ought not) to live and to serve the Lord. As we study Samson, we will find that we are looking through a window into our own souls as well. And this is as it should be, for this is why the Old Testament was written: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4); "Now all these things happened unto them [the people of the Old Testament] for ensamples [or, types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). But secondly, his life and ministry must be studied because Samson was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, in his life and ministry he typified, he foreshadowed, he prefigured, in quite remarkable ways, various aspects of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you surprised by this, dear reader? Perhaps you are, because Samson has not fared well at the hands of many who would teach the Bible. But do not be surprised. Let the Holy Scriptures minister to your soul, and by the end of this study of the life and ministry of Samson, if you are a child of God, you will be filled with awe, and wonder, at what we can learn from this man. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "Search the scriptures... they are they which testify of *me*" (Jn. 5:39). Very true was the saying of a Welsh preacher of old: "From every little village in England – it does not matter where it is – there is sure to be a road to London. Though there may not be a road to certain other places, there is certain to be a road to London. Now,

from every text in the Bible there is a road to Jesus Christ, and the way to preach is just to say, 'How can I get from this text to Jesus Christ?' and then go preaching all the way along it." <sup>1</sup> *All* the Old Testament testifies of Christ; and *all* the great Old Testament characters typified some aspects of the life and ministry of the Lord and Saviour while He was on earth. And as we shall see, Samson was a particular type of Christ as the great *Deliverer* of His people.

This book arose out of a series of sermons which I preached consecutively, chapter by chapter and verse by verse, on the life and ministry of Samson. A number of people testified to the blessing they received from listening to the sermons, which was the reason I decided to use the messages as the basis for this book. It gave me much joy to write it, just as it had previously given me much joy to preach. It is therefore my earnest prayer that this book will prove to be as much of a blessing to the reader, as it was to the writer. And may the Lord receive all the glory.

Shaun Willcock

<sup>1</sup> As narrated by C.H. Spurgeon in a sermon preached in 1879, *How to Read the Bible*, pg.20. Chapel Library, Pensacola, Florida, USA.

## **Chapter One**

## Minister of the Lord, Man of Faith

#### Hebrews 11:32-40

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Samson was a true believer, a regenerated and converted man, a minister of the Lord, and a man of great faith!

How can we be sure of this? We can be sure, firstly, because when his life story is properly studied in the book of Judges, as we shall be doing, it becomes abundantly evident; and we can be sure, secondly, because Hebrews 11 *says* so! In this great chapter on men and women of faith in the Old Testament, we are directly told that Samson was a man of faith:

In verse 32, Samson is listed with other great men of God such as Gideon, Barak, Jepthae, David, Samuel, and the prophets. The very fact that his name is here, included among such a distinguished "cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1), must leave us in no doubt. We are not at liberty to question it. This man Samson was one of the great *heroes* of the faith! God the Holy Spirit has told us so. Samson was one of God's own elect, an Old Testament believer, regenerated, and saved from his sins by faith in the coming Son of God. He was just an ordinary man in himself, but the *Lord* made him into an extraordinary man.

Verse.33 says of those men of faith who had just been listed, that some of them "through faith subdued kingdoms". This was certainly true of Samson. Through faith in the Lord, he subdued the Philistines, who at that time were the oppressors of the Israelites. They held them in bondage, but the Bible says of Samson that he would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 13:5). Samson, like David and others who subdued kingdoms, did this by faith in his God. But faith in God does not exclude the use of *means* to accomplish great things for God – and warfare was the means Samson used.

And Samson also subdued the devil's own dark kingdom as well; for he stormed the very gates of hell, shook Satan's castle, and caused satanic spirits to tremble.

The verse then says that some of those men of faith "wrought righteousness". Again, this was true of Samson. He wrought righteousness, in that he worked *civil* righteousness, by carrying out his duties as a judge of Israel, and their deliverer; he acted

righteously in what he did to the Philistines, the enemies of God and Israel. And he worked moral righteousness too, in that he was a man who loved the Lord (yes, he truly did – as we are going to see), and sought to walk in a way that was pleasing to him (yes, this too!). He failed many times, certainly, as in fact all Christians do; which shows that we cannot possibly be justified before God by any such moral righteousness. To stand righteous before God, one must be dressed in the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us; but when one is dressed in Christ's righteousness, by faith, then one is able to perform works of righteousness. Not in order to be justified, but because one has been justified by faith in Christ. And this was true of Samson! He wrought righteousness, not to be justified by any works of righteousness which he did, but because he was dressed in the imputed righteousness of Christ, and therefore sought to live and act righteously in his life. Living a righteous life is an evidence of saving, justifying faith; and Samson showed such evidence in his life, even though very imperfectly, which is true of all the Lord's saints.

Next, the verse says that they "obtained promises". It had been promised by the Lord that Samson would begin to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5); and truly, he obtained this divine promise. And this he did by faith in his God, who fulfilled the promise concerning him.

Of these men of faith, the verse next tells us that some of them "stopped the mouths of lions." When Christians read this, Daniel in the lions' den is the one who usually comes to mind (Dan. 6). But there were other men of God, men of faith, who stopped the mouths of lions as well. One was David, who as a youth tending his father's sheep did battle with the lion, and drove him away (1 Sam. 17:34-37); and another was *Samson*, who killed a lion with his bare hands (Judg. 14:5,6). The reason Christians do not usually associate Samson with these words in Hebrews – that they "stopped the mouths of lions" – is because so few believers even understand that Samson was a man of God. But he was! And he accomplished this great feat by *faith in the Lord!* This is what the Word of the Lord says:

"Samson [and others]... *through faith*... stopped the mouths of lions" (Heb. 11:32,33). This was as true of Samson as it was of David and Daniel. He trusted in the Lord, and the Lord gave him the strength, courage and wisdom to kill the lion as no man ever did before, and as no man has ever done since.

When we come to verse 34, we are told that men of faith "escaped the edge of the sword." And this, too, was certainly true of Samson, who escaped the edge of the sword many times! He escaped out of the Philistines' hands, defeating them, even at one time killing a thousand of them with nothing but the jawbone of an ass, though they were armed to the teeth against him! And again, how was this accomplished? By *faith* in the Lord he loved and served.

The verse then says, "Out of weakness were made strong". How very true of Samson! For what made him strong? This is where many have gone astray. They attribute his great strength to some magical powers supposedly in his hair! This is such a superstitious notion, and no wonder atheists and liberals reject the Scriptures when they hear foolish statements like this. It was not Samson's hair that made him strong, but his faith in God! "When I am weak, then am I strong," wrote Paul the apostle in 2 Cor. 12:10; and this was true of Samson, as it is of all the Lord's people. The Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9); and the Lord's grace was sufficient for Samson too. And the strength of the Lord God Almighty was displayed in the moment of Samson's weakness because of his blindness, and because of his sin, when, after praying for the Lord to strengthen him, he took hold of the pillars, bowed himself, and caused that great heathen temple to collapse (Judg. 16:28-30). Samson was weak physically in that he was blind, just prior to that moment; and he had been weak in faith too. Yet when he was so weak, physically and spiritually, as he lay in a Philistine prison, his eyes having been put out and his hair shorn, the Lord

again granted him his supernatural strength. Truly, out of weakness Samson was made strong! He called upon the Lord, his faith was strengthened, and he performed the greatest feat of his momentous life.

Some of the men of faith, v.34 says next, "waxed valiant in fight." How true of Samson! Over and over again, this amazing man, this hero of the faith, waxed valiant in fight, and truly lived out in practice the words of the Psalmist who came later, who wrote, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Psa. 60:11,12)! Samson was a man who was valiant upon the earth, and being valiant he did great exploits for the Lord. All by faith in the Lord his God! And he is set before us as a great example, for by faith we too can do great exploits in the Lord's Name. In 1 Tim. 6:12 we are commanded: "fight the good fight of faith". Samson fought that good fight of faith, and by faith he overcame. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

The verse then says that some of those men of faith "turned to flight the armies of the aliens." True again of Samson: the Philistine armies fled before him, as he dealt them such blows that they could do nothing else. And this was done by faith.

Verse 36 says, "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment". When the Philistines finally captured Samson he was treated very cruelly, his eyes were put out, he was bound with fetters and imprisoned, he was mocked (Judg. 16:21-25). But he endured all this by faith in his Lord, in whom he trusted. Indeed, the divine truths of Rom. 8:35-37 were powerfully illustrated by his life, even though only committed to permanent written form by Paul centuries later: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted

as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Verse 37 says, "they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented". Samson was a man who was at times destitute, afflicted, tormented, even by his own people, and of course by his enemies the Philistines.

And finally, verse 38 says, "(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Samson was a man of God who wandered in mountains and caves of the earth. And as we shall see, he truly was a man of whom the world was not worthy!

## **Chapter Two**

# The Background

To paint the backdrop for the life and ministry of Samson to follow, some background information is very necessary.

Samson was raised up by the Lord to be one of the judges of Israel. The account of his life occurs in four chapters of the book of Judges. Knowing something about this book, then, is very helpful.

The book of Judges is a very ancient book. Judg. 1:21 says that the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem when this book was written. This means it was written before David captured Jerusalem, as described in 2 Sam. 5. Also, Judg. 1:29 states that the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer, which indicates that this book was written before Pharaoh gave Gezer to King Solomon, in 1 Kings 9:16. There are indications in the book of Judges itself that it was compiled during the early years of the kingdom of Israel. <sup>2</sup> This places its authorship, then, in the eleventh century BC, and it is entirely possible, as the Jews themselves believed, that it was written by Samuel the prophet, who was the last of the judges before God gave Israel a king, and who himself referred to events described in this book, in 1 Sam. 12:9-11. However, whether it was Samuel or some other man who wrote the book, he was merely the instrument of the Lord to write down the words given by God the Holy Spirit. As with all the books of the Bible, Judges was "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16); He was its Author.

<sup>2</sup> An Introduction to the Old Testament, by Edward J. Young, pgs. 169-170. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1969.

After Joshua's death, and before the Lord gave the nation a king in the person of Saul, the Israelites were governed by a succession of judges: men (and one woman) whom the Lord raised up from time to time to lead them whenever they were greatly oppressed or troubled by their enemies. These judges were far more than mere civil magistrates over the nation; that is, far more than what we generally understand by the term "judge" today. First and foremost, they were deliverers - saviours - raised up by God and given power by the Holy Spirit of God to deliver the Israelites from their enemies, and to govern them. The book of Judges covers the period of time (a few centuries, in fact) between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel. Samuel was both a prophet (1 Sam. 3:20) and the last judge of Israel, before God gave them a king (1 Sam. 7:6,15-17). And the account of Samson is the last account of a judge in the book of Judges, for he was the last before Samuel, whose history is given in the book of 1 Samuel. Truly, then, in the book of Judges, "The divine power displayed in the Judges was culminated in Samson".3

During this period of time the Israelites, instead of obeying the Lord and annihilating the wicked Canaanites who dwelt in the land, kept forsaking Him and following after the false gods of the Canaanites; and thus Judg. 17:6 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes"; which is repeated in Judg. 21:25. In Judg. 1:21,27-35, we are told that although the Lord had commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy the Canaanites when they came into this land promised to them by the Lord, and although (according to v.28) Israel was strong enough to do it, they failed to do so. Instead, as the verse says, "they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." They made them their slaves, but that was all. And the Canaanites remained as a thorn in the side of Israel afterwards. In fact, they actually dwelt *amongst* the Israelites! Sometimes in their very cities; and certainly in cities of their own that were often right next door, as it were, to the Israelite cities.

<sup>3</sup> *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pg. 175.

New Testament believers are to learn from this. For all these real physical events were designed to teach believers about the *spiritual* warfare they face. And one lesson which these things teach them is that in this life they do not ever reach a point where they are totally free of all sin. Indwelling sin remains, and they strive against it their whole lives long. They gain victories, and they have setbacks. This is the warfare they face, as Christians.

Another lesson this teaches is of course that believers must always *obey* the Lord's commandments! They must not obey only partially, for this will always lead to great trials for them. Happiness is found in fully obeying what the Lord has commanded.

And because of their sin in this matter, we read the following: "And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you" (Judg. 2:1-3).

This Angel, or messenger of the Lord, was no other than the Son of God Himself, in one of His pre-incarnate appearances. We know this because of what He says. He does not say, "Thus saith the Lord", but He speaks *as* God, showing that He is a divine Being. He says, "I made you go up out of Egypt." Exod. 20:2 says, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." So the identity of this Angel, here, is clear. The word, "angel", simply means "messenger", and is often used in the Old Testament to describe God the Son on those occasions when He appeared to men, though of course He had not come in the flesh as yet.

And the Lord said here that He brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, and that He had said He would never break His covenant with them. This was the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, when the Lord had brought them out of the land of Egypt. And it is true, the *Lord* would never break it; if it was broken, it would be by *them*, not by Him. And break it they did. It was a time of constant falling away from the worship of Jehovah, by the people for whom He had done so much. And whenever this happened, the Lord permitted them to be ruled over, and sorely oppressed, by the heathen, until they cried out to Him in repentance and He sent them a judge, a deliverer. But as soon as the judge was dead, they would go back to their sinful, idolatrous ways.

Even before they came into the land, while they were still in the wilderness, the Lord had commanded Israel to do as the Angel now reminded them: to make no league with the Canaanites, and to throw down their altars. This can be seen plainly in Deut. 7:1,2,5: "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee... thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them... ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." These commandments the Angel now reminded them of, and then adds: "but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?"

They had done well under Joshua; they had made an excellent start; but after his death, they went to their homes, and gave up fighting against the heathen inhabitants of the land. Instead of destroying them and their idolatrous religious practices, they entered into leagues and covenants with them, and allowed their altars and places of worship to remain. This was blatant disobedience to the Lord, and here He told them that because of their disobedience, He would not drive them out from before them, but that they would be as thorns in the sides of the Israelites, and their gods would be a snare to them. And this precisely came to pass! The Israelites fell into

idolatry and began to worship the abominations of the heathen; and thus the Lord's prophetic warning given through Moses came to pass: "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall comes to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell" (Num. 33:55).

There are great spiritual lessons for Christians in all these things. Although New Testament believers are not to *destroy* the heathen, for the Lord has not given Christians a specific *land* as He gave to the Israelites, yet we who are His people are still commanded never to enter into any league or covenant with them, in religious matters (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11)! We are to abominate their vile idolatrous religions, and have nothing to do with them, but remain separate from them all. Israel was a theocracy, and was not to permit any heathen religious practices within its borders; and although the Christian Church is to be found within all nations, and no Christian is to harm another because of his religious practices or destroy what belongs to him, yet we are certainly to throw down all idolatrous altars from our *hearts*, to keep ourselves from idols, and to worship the Lord alone (1 Jn. 5:21)!

And, as pointed out already, we also learn from these things that indwelling sin is as a thorn in our sides. We struggle against it our whole lives long, as was typified by the Canaanites dwelling in the land among the Israelites, and troubling them.

And what was the sequel to the words of the Angel in Judg. 2:1-3? It is described for us in verses 4-15: after Joshua died, another generation arose, which knew not the Lord (they did not know Him personally, they were not regenerated and did not have a saving or a practical knowledge of Him), nor the works which He had done for Israel; and they did evil before the Lord. Forsaking the Lord God of their fathers, they turned to the worship of the gods of the Canaanites. They began to worship Baalim (the plural of Baal, meaning the many

different forms of the god Baal which the heathen worshipped, and the many images of him); they worshipped Ashtaroth and Baal. And this worship of Ashtaroth and Baal was nothing else but the worship of the great heathen goddess-mother and her son, which had begun in ancient Babylon with Nimrod (Gen. 10:9-10) and his mother, and which had spread in various forms across the whole earth! <sup>4</sup> It was the same mother-and-child worship that is today found in Roman Catholicism under the names of the "Virgin Mary" and "Christ" (though not of course the *true* Mary nor the *true* Christ of God, revealed in His Word)! This is precisely why the Roman Catholic institution is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great", in Rev. 17:5.

The sad departure of the nation of Israel from the true God and His worship, despite all the external blessings He had heaped upon them, reveals to us the natural inclination, the natural bent, of the unregenerate heart – to go after gods of its own making and imagination. This is what all men do when left to themselves, being destitute of the grace of God – such is the depravity of the human heart. Only God's grace can turn a man away from the idols he worships, and cause him to worship the true and living God.

And so, because of their great sins, the anger of the Lord was hot against the Israelites, and He delivered them into the hands of their enemies – exactly as He had promised to do, in Deuteronomy 29 and elsewhere, if they forsook Him after coming into the Promised Land. The Lord was true to His Word, and He was also righteous and just, for this is what their sins deserved.

This is a picture of the state of men by nature, spiritually. By nature we are all the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3)! We are under the sore displeasure of God, and will suffer His deserved wrath for our sins, unless the Lord Jesus in mercy sets us free. Those physical enemies of the Israelites were *types* of our spiritual enemies. As the Israelites were in bondage to their *physical* enemies, so we (as all men) are in

<sup>4</sup> See *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop. Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, New Jersey, USA. 1959.

bondage to our *spiritual* enemies while in an unregenerate state: sin, Satan, and death. And these three enemies hold us in greater bondage than the Israelites ever experienced under the Canaanites.

Nevertheless the Lord was gracious to the Israelites, as shown in Judg. 2:16-23: in His infinite goodness, He heard their cries and their sufferings, and He raised up judges from time to time to deliver them from their physical enemies. And this typifies how good and gracious the Lord has been to all His elect, spiritually, in that, despite their terrible sins, He sent Jesus, their Judge, Deliverer and Saviour, to set them free! He hears their groanings, by reason of their sins, and Christ comes to them and saves them and delivers them!

The Lord raised up these judges, these deliverers of His people; but of course, each one, no matter how valiant, faithful, and zealous, was, even so, imperfect, fallible, and mortal: each one eventually died. And all of this was designed to teach them (and us!) that only the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect and true Deliverer, who can deliver His chosen people from the greatest enemy of all – the sin that dwells within them – and who lives forever, so that His salvation is a perfect and everlasting salvation! Those earthly judges were simply feeble representations, feeble types, of Him who was to come. The Israelites, even when physically delivered from bondage by those judges, were still for the most part dead in sins, and they quickly returned to their old ways afterwards. A Judge was needed who would be greater than all those judges, who would deliver His people from the reigning power of sin in their hearts, and make them willing to hear and obey Him! For when Christ delivers His people, it is a perfect deliverance, and they turn from their old ways forever!

Judg. 3:1-7 says, "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before

knew nothing thereof.... And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgat the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves."

The Lord left the heathen inhabitants in the land, to *test* the Israelites, whether they would follow the Lord or not. Likewise, New Testament believers are surrounded day to day by the people of the world, the ungodly, as a test, to prove whether they will follow the Lord or not. For truly, Christians live "in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation, among whom" they are to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

Also, just as those heathen nations forced the Israelites to learn the art of war, so too, Christians must learn the art of warfare, although their warfare is spiritual, not physical: they must wage war against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16); against indwelling corruption (Rom. 7:14-25) and a roaring devil (1 Pet. 5:8).

Tragically, we read that the Israelites continued to rebel against the Lord: they took wives of the heathen for their sons, and took husbands of them for their daughters, contrary to the express commandment of the Lord in Deut. 7:3,4: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."

And this is no less a commandment to we who are New Testament believers, than to them! We are not to be yoked together in marriage with unbelievers either: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (see 2 Cor. 6:14-18). They can lead our hearts astray! How many foolish professing Christians give in to their desires in matters of marriage, and marry those who are not the Lord's people!

And just as dangerous is it when an unbeliever says to the Christian, "I'll become a Christian to be able to marry you." Oh, this is a subtle trick of the devil! One does not "become a Christian" just by changing allegiances from a false religion to Christianity! It is not a case of simply throwing incense on a different altar to a different deity! To become a Christian, *the Lord must give a new heart* (Ezek. 36:25-27)!

Well, things went on thus; and as we read the book of Judges, we see the Lord in His great mercy and compassion raising up judges – deliverers – over and over, who delivered the people from their enemies: men such as Gideon, Jephthah, and others, including also the female judge, Deborah. But time and again, after the death of the judge, back the people went to their old ways, showing the depravity of their hearts, and how they loved sin.

And thus we arrive at the life and ministry of Samson the strong, recorded for us by God the Holy Spirit in Judges 13-16. Let us carefully study his amazing story.

## **Chapter Three**

#### The Announcement

#### Judges 13:1-3

- 1. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.
- 2. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.
- 3. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord". (verse 1a)

They did evil *again;* they did as all men always do, because men are evil by nature. This truly illustrates the great biblical doctrine of man's total depravity. How else could it possibly be explained, that a nation so favoured with the Lord's presence, His power displayed in delivering them, etc., should so easily and quickly turn from Him over and over again, and commit wickedness?

The Israelites were no different from other men, by nature. Yes, they were God's chosen people, nationally; but not all of them, nor even the majority of them, were His chosen people by divine election from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6)! As a *nation*, He cared for them, protected them, etc.; but while there were always *individuals* within the nation who were the Lord's elect, regenerated and converted, the majority of them were *un*regenerate and *un*converted; and thus their hearts went after sinful things, as the

hearts of all unregenerate men have always done since the fall.

Despite all their blessings and privileges (listed by Paul in Rom. 9:4,5) – more blessings and privileges than any nation on the face of the earth has ever experienced – the plain fact of the matter is that at that time, as at all other times, "they [were] not all Israel, which [were] of Israel" (Rom. 9:6); meaning, although they were all *physical* Israelites, they were not all *spiritual* Israelites. They were *outward* Israelites, but not *inward* Israelites. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:28,29). They were of the nation descended from Abraham, but were not all the elect, possessing the same faith as Abraham had. They were all born *dead* in trespasses and sins, just as all men are (Eph. 2:1); and most of them remained that way, with only the Lord's elect among them being given new hearts; being born again (Jn. 3:1-8). Thus they did evil in the sight of the Lord – each and every generation of them.

During the lifetime of each judge whom the Lord raised up, the Israelites (at least outwardly) worshipped the true God; but when the judge died, they went back to the idols and sins of the heathen nations around them. And now this had happened once again: "the children of Israel did evil *again* in the sight of the Lord." This evil they did would have consisted of many sins; but above all others, their greatest sin was *idolatry*. This was what they continually fell into. They forsook the Lord, who had done such great things for them, and went whoring after other gods, the graven images of the heathen nations around them

And for this reason, just as the Lord had done so often before to their fathers, and to their fathers' fathers, He did again to them:

"And the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." (verse 1b)

The heathen Philistines rose up, gained the military ascendancy over Israel, and brought Israel into a position of servitude to them.

And in this particular case it lasted a long time – forty years! This was their chastisement from the Lord. They did evil in His sight and departed from Him, so (very righteously) He gave them up, delivering them into the hands of their cruel and heathen enemies, to teach them by painful lessons what it *really* was like to be in Satan's kingdom, and by this means to cause them to long for deliverance, and for the kind and gentle yoke of Jehovah.

Let us now see the typology in this verse. As has already been pointed out, the life of Samson typifies, in many wonderful ways, many aspects of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was on earth. For Samson was the deliverer (and thus the saviour), in a temporal sense, of the nation of Israel; and Christ is the Deliverer, the Saviour, in a spiritual sense, of His elect, the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), His true Church.

Even in this very first verse, we see Samson as a type of Christ. Firstly, there is the typology of the moment in history when he was born. Just as the Israelites were delivered into the hands of the Philistines at this time, before Samson was born, so the Jews were delivered into the hands of the Romans in the period before the Lord Jesus Christ was born. Samson's coming thus typified Christ's coming, for the coming of the latter occurred at a moment in history in many ways similar to the time of the coming of the former. And in both cases the people were oppressed by a heathen nation as a chastisement for their sins. Furthermore, just as in other times in the book of Judges they would have been sighing for a deliverer at this time, a saviour, so the Jews before the birth of Jesus were sighing for the Deliverer, the Saviour, the Messiah, the Christ, to come and set them free.

Secondly, as Samson was sent by God to set His people free from their *physical* enemies, so Christ came into this world to set His elect free from an even greater bondage to greater *spiritual* enemies. The Lord's elect, of all nations, by nature have done evil

in the Lord's sight; and they are under the cruel dominion of, and spiritual bondage to, spiritual "Philistines", until the Lord sets them free. These spiritual "Philistines" are sin, the world, Satan, hell and death. Note the language used by the father of John the Baptist, Zacharias, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us... that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk. 1:68-79). When Zacharias spoke in prophecy of the enemies they would be saved from, he was referring to the spiritual enemies mentioned above! For he is very clear that John the Baptist would give the knowledge of salvation to the people by the remission of their sins. The prophecy must therefore be read spiritually; though couched in Old Testament language (for Zacharias was an Old Testament believer), it was about spiritual realities.

The Scripture says, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20); and in the life of Samson we see this great truth powerfully illustrated; for the sin of the people abounded, that the grace of God might be shown to abound even more, in the mighty deliverance the Lord would work for them by sending Samson to be their judge and deliverer. If their sin had not been so great, there would have been no need for such a great and mighty saviour! Samson was raised up by the Lord to affect a mighty deliverance, and thereby to demonstrate the grace of God abounding to His people even when

their sin had abounded so much. And what was true in this case, is even more true when God's grace in salvation abounds over the sin in our own hearts! For He sent, not just a *mighty* deliverer like Samson, but an *Almighty* Deliverer, His own sinless Son, to deliver His people from their sins! Samson could deliver the Israelites from physical bondage, but he could do nothing for their souls. Only Christ can deliver from sin.

Truly, just as Solomon typified Christ, and Christ said of Himself that He was "a greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42), so too Samson typified Him, but our almighty Lord is "a greater than Samson"!

"And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah". (verse 2a)

Manoah, who was to be the father of Samson, was of the tribe of Dan. Dan was the son of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; and when Bilhah bore a son for Jacob, Rachel said, "God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan" (Gen. 30:6). The name "Dan" means "Judging"; and from this particular tribe of Israel, with this particular name, would come Samson, one of Israel's greatest judges and deliverers.

This great man Samson would be one of Dan's greatest sons, indeed the glory of the tribe of Dan. And in this too he typified Christ, the One "greater than Samson" (as we may say); for when old Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, and blessed God for letting him see the Christ, he said, with joy in his heart and voice as he looked into that infant's face, "mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Lk. 2:30-32). Samson was the glory of his tribe, the tribe of Dan; but Christ was the glory of all Israel! The type was great, but the blessed antitype was greater.

Jacob, when he was dying, blessed all his sons, and prophesied over them of things to come to their descendants even a great way off in the future; and doubtless, with his prophet's eye, he saw through the years to the coming of Samson, in particular, when he prophesied of Dan: "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel" (Gen. 49:16). Not that the meaning of the prophecy is to be restricted to Samson; for in a general sense the meaning would be that this tribe, no less than the others, would give to the nation heads and rulers and judges. But perhaps in a special way, the patriarch and prophet Jacob saw to that time when Samson would be raised up, the glory of Dan, to judge God's people.

Now from all that is written of him in this chapter, Manoah stands out as a very godly man, as we shall see. In those very dark days, when most of the nation had departed from the Lord and was committing idolatry, and was held in captivity by the Philistines, the Lord still had a *remnant* who loved and followed Him. And Manoah and his wife were among that godly remnant. In every age, the Lord has His faithful ones: men and women who love and follow Him (Rev. 14:4), seek to keep themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27), and to walk blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (Lk. 1:6). In many periods they have been very few and scattered (1 Pet. 3:20; Rom. 11:2-5); but the Lord has always had a witness in the world. So it was even at this time of darkness and sin.

And in his godliness, Manoah truly typified Joseph, the husband of Mary, whom the Scripture speaks of as "a just man" (Matt. 1:19); a man who, like Manoah, was justified by faith in the Lord. Of course, the antitype does not answer to the type in *every* respect; and nor does it have to. Manoah truly was the father of Samson, whereas Joseph was only the foster father of Jesus, not His true father. Nevertheless, Manoah typified Joseph in this respect, that he was a just man, as Joseph would be centuries later.

The very name, "Manoah", signifies "rest"; very much the same as the signification of the name "Noah". Samson would give Israel rest from their enemies; and likewise Christ the Lord, the antitype of Samson, would give rest to His *spiritual* Israel from all their *spiritual* enemies (Matt. 11:28,29)!

"And his wife was barren, and bare not." (verse 2b)

Barrenness, in those times, was considered a very heavy burden for a woman. Of course, they did not understand medical matters as we do today, and thus had little idea that there are physical reasons for barrenness. But in the case of Manoah's wife, her barrenness was not caused by any medical problem; it was of the Lord! It was His foreordained will that she *would*, indeed, bear a son; but it would be in God's perfect time. The fulness of time! Not a moment too soon, not a moment too late

And in this matter the birth of Samson typified the birth of the Lord Jesus; for it says in Gal. 4:4, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman". The conception and birth of Samson occurred in precisely the time ordained by the Lord before the world began; and the conception and birth of Jesus occurred, also, in precisely the right time, as ordained by God from before the foundation of the world!

Again, the antitype did not answer to the type in every single detail; for Mary was not barren, she was a virgin. But again, it does not have to answer to it in every particular. Nevertheless, as we read, we can clearly see the type here, and the antitypical fulfilment many centuries later. Both conceptions were miraculous, though in this respect as in all others, the antitype was greater than the type, for Christ's miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin was greater by far than even Samson's miraculous conception in the womb of his mother. That a barren woman could conceive and bear a son was

a divine miracle; that a *virgin* could conceive and bear a son who would be "Immanuel", "God with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23), was an even greater divine miracle!

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son." (verse 3)

When that perfect fullness of time arrived, then the angel of the Lord appeared to her and spoke these words. And by this announcement she knew that He was sent from heaven; for although she had never seen Him before, yet He knew she was barren.

Thus in a very real sense, as we have seen, the conception of Samson was a *miraculous* conception. A barren woman conceiving is a miracle! Truly, Samson was to be an extraordinary man; a unique man; a man raised up by God for a specific and great purpose, and given strength such as no other man was ever given, or ever would be given in the future. The Lord was letting the woman (and afterwards her husband) know that He was about to do something astounding. Truly, the child who was to be born to this woman would grow up to be a deliverer of his people, in a way never before seen upon the earth!

And think too of the wonderful type that is set out for us here, and the antitype of it! This barren woman received an angelic visit, at which it was announced that she would conceive and bear a son, contrary to what was humanly possible. And when one reads it, one cannot help but immediately think of the angelic visit to *Mary*, when the angel announced to her that she would miraculously conceive, and bear a son! "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art

thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS" (Lk. 1:26-31).

Of course there are distinct differences between the two: Manoah's wife was barren, whereas Mary was a virgin; Manoah and his wife were of the tribe of Dan, whereas Mary and Joseph were of the tribe of Judah; and also, in the case of the angelic visit to Manoah's wife, as we are going to see, the Angel was the Lord Christ Himself, whereas the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. But again let it be said: the antitype does not have to answer to the type in every particular! Not every single thing about Samson foreshadowed or typified Jesus! Yet even so, there are enough aspects of his life which definitively reveal that he was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in many respects. The announcement to Manoah's wife was, beyond all doubt, a foreshadowing of what would occur many centuries later, when an angel would announce to a young virgin that she would miraculously conceive Israel's promised Messiah.

For truly, *both* conceptions were miraculous! An *almighty divine power* was displayed in Samson's conception; and in this he typified Jesus in *His* conception, which was an even greater miracle! Again, a barren woman conceiving was a miracle; but the even greater miracle was a *virgin* conceiving! Manoah's wife, although barren, conceived in the normal, natural, physical way; whereas Mary conceived a child without the involvement of a human father at all.

#### And even this is not all:

Samson was a child of a promise: the Lord promised his mother, "thou shalt conceive, and bear a son." Long before, Isaac had been a child of promise: Gal. 4:23. God had promised Abraham that he would have a son in his old age, even when (as far as being able to beget children was concerned) his body was now dead, and also

Sarah was now too old and past child-bearing age (Rom. 4:17-21). Isaac, then, was the child of the promise God made to Abraham. And Isaac's mother Sarah had *faith* in that divine promise. Although she had laughed in disbelief at first (Gen. 18:9-15), she was given faith to believe the promise; and through faith in God she "received strength to conceive seed", and "judged [the Lord] faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11).

And like Sarah before her, the wife of Manoah had faith in the divine promise as well – and Samson was conceived as a result of that promise the Lord made to her. The Lord promised, Samson's mother believed in the promise, and he was conceived and born in due time. The strongest man who ever lived was thus the child of a divine promise.

And just as Samson was a child of promise, so his blessed antitype, Jesus, was the Son of promise as well! For Mary was told, "thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son" (Lk. 1:31). Samson was the promised child, the seed of a woman, he who would "deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 13:5); and Jesus was the promised seed of the woman, He who would bruise the serpent's head, thereby delivering all the spiritual Israel of God out of the devil's hands, according to the divine promise made to the serpent in Gen. 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

In his conception, then, Samson was already a wonderful type of the great antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come centuries later and bring about an even greater deliverance than anything Samson could ever have done, or ever did do.

## **Chapter Four**

## Warnings, Instructions, Prophecies

#### Judges 13:4-14

- 4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:
- 5. For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.
- 6. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:
- 7. But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.
- 8. Then Manoah intreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.
- 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.
- 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.
- 11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.
- 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

- 13. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.
- 14. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

Samson was to be a Nazarite. *This* was why his mother was not to drink wine nor strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; and although it does not say so here, we know from the Lord's instructions about Nazarites that Samson himself was not to partake of these things either; nor was he ever to cut his hair. Let us see what the Word of the Lord says about the vow of a Nazarite. It is found in Num. 6:1-8.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord" (vv.1,2). A Nazarite was someone who took a vow to separate himself or herself unto the Lord, meaning such a person was to be devoted to the service of God in a very special sense. And there were different kinds of Nazarites. For example, Samson was appointed to be a Nazarite from his mother's womb, and for his whole life long; Samuel the prophet was devoted to God as a Nazarite by his mother; whereas others devoted themselves to God in this special manner. Samson and Samuel were perpetual Nazarites; but there were others who were Nazarites only for a period of time – for as long as they devoted themselves to God.

"He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation [margin: "Nazariteship"] shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk" (vv.3,4). Nothing made of grapes was to pass his lips! He was to separate himself from every product of the grape, and from grapes themselves. This included all alcoholic drinks made from grapes, and the reason for this is obvious – that he would then be always

sober, never intoxicated, and thus properly able to serve the Lord (cf. Prov. 31:4,5; Isa. 28:7).

But also, he could make *no* use of grapes whatsoever – not even drinking *non-alcoholic* grape juice, nor even eating grapes (which cannot intoxicate in themselves). The reason for this was, in the first place, simply because this is what the Lord commanded for Nazarites! God has the authority to make the rules; and this He did. The second reason for this was because these things represented luxurious living, from which, being devoted to God, Nazarites were to abstain. The lesson for Christians is obvious. And the third reason was because, although these things cannot, in themselves, make a person drunk, we are taught to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). We must avoid not only what is sinful, but everything that borders upon it or that could lead to it.

"All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow" (v.5). Why this (to us) strange law? One reason was because he was to be holy (as the verse says), separate *and different* from other men – and this would certainly make him stand out from others! Another reason was to show that he was not concerned with the outward appearance, giving (as so many do) too much time and effort to making themselves look good by fancy hairstyles, etc. And still another reason was to show that he was wholly offering himself to the Lord; for v.18 says that he had to offer his hair to God; which signified the believer offering himself, consecrating himself, wholly to God's service.

And a final, spiritual reason: hair always continues to grow, and has to be cut; but Nazarites typified New Testament believers, holy and separate unto the Lord, who are to be *constantly growing* in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:18); growing stronger in the Lord.

"All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head" (vv.6,7). A Nazarite was not permitted to touch a dead body, nor even to go near one. The law of Moses said that *any* Israelite who did so was ceremonially unclean for seven days. But the Nazarite, during the time of his vow, was to be wholly and constantly devoted to the Lord's service; he could not be ceremonially unclean for *any* length of time at all; he had to stay away entirely from all dead bodies, to keep himself from coming under this ceremonial defilement.

And this was to typify *holiness!* It was to typify that believers and servants of the Lord are not to be *morally* defiled by the spiritually dead! Christians must be holy, and not defile themselves either by the sinful speech, or the sinful actions, of the people of the world, who are dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1). And they must have their consciences purged from all dead works, to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). It also teaches them that they must moderate their affections for even their dearest relations – these must not be worshipped by the Christian, turned into idols, or set up higher than God in their hearts! "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:21,22).

"All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord" (v.8). Clear enough; and this typifies both Christ the Lord, and all true believers.

And now, having considered the Nazarites and the vow of a Nazarite, we are in a position to properly understand verses 4 and 5 of Judges 13.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing". (verse 4)

Samson's mother was forbidden to drink wine or strong drink. There were two types of wine in those times, just as there are today: alcoholic wine, and pure, non-alcoholic grape juice. But a Nazarite was not even to drink the good wine, the grape juice, fresh from the vine; for nothing made of the vine was to pass his lips. As for what is called in Scripture "strong drink", this too was not always alcoholic. There were non-alcoholic drinks which are referred to in this way, in Scripture; but a Nazarite was not to drink any of them. And nor was Samson's mother permitted to do so, during the time of her pregnancy. Not that she was a Nazarite; but she was going to be the mother of a Nazarite, and therefore, although she was not under a Nazarite's vows, she was put under a Nazarite's laws. She was certainly under them for the duration of her pregnancy, for while Samson was in her womb he would receive nourishment from her body; but in the text no termination to these Nazarite laws is given to her, which would indicate no doubt that at least also while she was breast-feeding him, and possibly forever, she was to observe them.

The text says that she was also not to eat any unclean thing. And it might be wondered why this commandment was given to an Israelite woman. After all, Israelites knew that there were beasts which the law of God declared to be clean, and beasts which were unclean and thus forbidden as food (see Lev. 11); and a godly Israelite woman such as Manoah's wife would not have been eating any unclean beasts. But the meaning here is that she was now also commanded not to eat those foods which were forbidden to *Nazarites* to eat! Such foods would *also* now be unclean to her, namely, grapes, raisins, or anything made of the vine.

"For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son". (verse 5a)

The promise of a son, already given in v.3, was now repeated to her here in v.5, firstly for emphasis, but also because the Lord was now telling her that her child would be a Nazarite unto God.

"And no razor shall come on his head" (verse 5b)

From the time of his birth till his death, it was forbidden that he should ever cut his hair. Some men took a vow to be a Nazarite for a certain period of time only. But others became Nazarites their whole lives long. Such a Nazarite Samson would be.

The Bible says it is a shameful thing for a man to have long hair. 1 Cor. 11:14 says plainly, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" This is a verse hardly taken notice of in today's "Christian" circles, where it is viewed as being old-fashioned, a mere custom of those times. But this is not so. Nature itself, Paul says, teaches that it is a shameful thing. Thanks to artists' fanciful and unscriptural depictions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and equally unscriptural depictions of Him in films, large numbers of professing Christians are under the mistaken impression that the Lord Himself had long hair during His earthly ministry. There is nothing in all of Scripture that even implies such a thing, and this very verse shows He did not; for why would the Lord say it was shameful for men, if He Himself wore it long? And many professing Christians are also under the mistaken impression that in the Old Testament, godly Israelite men wore their hair long. But those pictures of Old Testament characters with long flowing locks are not based on biblical truth! If all men generally wore long hair in those days, then Nazarites would not have stood out as different! Yet they did. The Nazarite's long hair was something very unusual; out of the ordinary. He was an exception, for the Lord commanded him to grow his hair, whereas for all other men it was a shameful thing.

And this is even shown by the long hair of Absalom, David's son, being noted (2 Sam. 14:25,26). It was very evidently something *unusual*; and let it be remembered that Absalom was a rebel against God and man. Long hair and rebellion have so often gone together!

<sup>&</sup>quot;For the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb". (verse 5c)

Not just a Nazarite for a while, but his whole life long. Now when it comes to the type, it is true that Jesus was not a Nazarite; He was called a *Nazarene*, because He lived in the city of Nazareth (Matt. 2:23); but a *Nazarene* was not a *Nazarite*. Nevertheless, He certainly was *typified* by the Nazarites, for He was perfectly *holy and pure* from all sin, He *sanctified* Himself, and *devoted* Himself unto God *from the womb*, being *set apart* in divine predestination by God His Father, and conceived without sin.

"And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." (verse 5d)

This great work of deliverance, let it be noted, was only *begun* by Samson. He did not complete it; and even what he did was an imperfect deliverance. The great work of deliverance for Israel from Philistine oppression was continued, after Samson's death, during the times of Eli, Samuel, and King Saul; and it was *completed and perfected* by David! This, too, is very significant:

Samson was their deliverer. And Christ, his antitype, is the glorious Deliverer of His people, from an even greater bondage, for He delivers His people from greater enemies than the Philistines, and enemies which are spiritual rather than physical (although Christ often delivers the believer from his physical enemies as well): sin, Satan, the world, hell and death. And in this almighty deliverance, as in so many things, the glorious antitype exceeds the type by far. For not only are the enemies Christ delivers His people from spiritual enemies, which Samson could never do, but also it says that Samson only *began* to deliver Israel; whereas Christ's deliverance and salvation of all His elect from their powerful spiritual enemies is a *perfect and complete* salvation! He "is able... to save them *to the uttermost* that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25). On the cross, just before He died, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (Jn.19:30). He completed the work of redeeming His people, of atoning for their

sins, of saving them to the uttermost. There was nothing left to be done. No sinful man could add anything to it, and Christ Himself left no part of it undone. It was *finished*.

No single man could typify *everything* about our Almighty Lord and Saviour! Samson typified Him in some ways, and David in others; Samson *began* to deliver Israel from the Philistines, and David *completed* the work; but *Jesus* is both our antitypical Samson *and* our antitypical David; and thus He is both "the *author* and *finisher* of our faith" (Heb. 12:2)!

And finally, we learn from these verses that Samson also typified the Lord Christ in that he performed his mighty work *alone*, without any help from anyone! "He shall begin to deliver Israel," the Angel told Samson's mother. As we shall see, he did it with no help whatsoever; he was always alone. Other judges (Gideon, for example) had an army; but not Samson. He wrought deliverance for Israel alone. And in this he wonderfully typified our Jesus, who accomplished the salvation of His people alone, by His own almighty power and without help from anyone. Only He could accomplish it, and only He did.

"Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible". (verse 6a)

The news about her having a son must have been very good and wonderful news to her, which she hurried to tell her husband! After all, she was barren, and her words show that she believed this Being to be a prophet of God, so she was very excited by the wonderful news that had been delivered to her. Verse 3 said that this was "the angel of the Lord"; and now the woman describes Him as "a man of God". It is obvious that this glorious Being had the *appearance* of a man; so much so that she believed Him to be a man. And she

took Him to be "a man of God", meaning a prophet, because He prophesied that she would have a son.

Well, certainly He was a prophet; but so much more than a prophet!

However, at the same time that she called Him a man of God, she also said that His face was like the face of an angel of God. It must have shone very gloriously, as angels' faces often did when they appeared to men in those times. According to v.16, she did not know that He was Jehovah's Angel, for if she had known this she would have told Manoah so, and he would have believed her, since (as shall be seen) he believed everything she told him; in which case it would not say in v.16, "Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord." At this point, as she told Manoah the thrilling news, the woman believed He was a prophet sent from God, who happened to have a face like an angel's face. And she said it was a "terrible" countenance, not because it was ugly – quite the opposite, in fact! – but it was "terrible" because it was majestic, glorious, it shone brightly, and knowing that she was in the presence of a wonderful being, she was frightened. Who can blame her?

But even so, this glorious Being was not a created angel, although He appeared as one, and is called "the angel of Jehovah" because the word "angel" means "messenger", and He came as the messenger of the Lord. He was also not a created man, although He appeared as one. This great and resplendent Angel of the Lord, this great "Man of God", was none other than the eternal Son of God Himself!

Even though He was not to come in the flesh for many centuries still, God the Son sometimes *appeared* in those times to men, as a Man, or as an Angel; which is why those who saw Him sometimes referred to Him as one, and sometimes as the other. This was one of those times. It is what is referred to as a *pre-incarnate* appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity: a time when the Son of God chose to appear to men in visible form, even before He was incarnated – before He took flesh, assuming a human nature into union with His

divine nature. In such a form He (along with two holy angels) came to Abraham's tent door, and told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son (Gen. 18:1,2,13,20-22); He wrestled all night with Jacob (Gen. 32:24,29,30); and He appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord's hosts (Jos. 5:13-6:2). There are also other examples in the Old Testament of Him appearing this way.

And we are certain that it was God Himself who met with Manoah's wife here, rather than one of the created holy angels of the Lord, because what is said of Him in this chapter proves it beyond all doubt; and we know it was God the *Son*, because the only divine Person of the Trinity who has ever appeared in visible form to men is the Second Person; and also because of the way He is described here.

Truly, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Deliverer, was intimately involved in the life and work of Samson, for Samson was not only a minister of the Lord, but also a *typical* deliverer, one who typified the true and great Deliverer, Christ Jesus Himself. Samson was thus a type of Him who made the announcement to Manoah's wife that she would bear Samson!

"But I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name". (verse 6b)

She did not ask Him, doubtless because she was amazed and overcome by what she saw and heard, and as often happens to people when they experience a great shock, she was not thinking clearly and simply forgot to ask where He came from. And He did not give her any information about Himself.

"But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death." (verse 7)

Here she simply related to her husband what the Angel had told her. And we have in this verse some additional information – that he would be a Nazarite "to the day of his death". But this does not mean she just pulled this out of the air and added to the Word of the Lord, as Eve had done (Gen. 3:3)! The woman was in fact very correct in saying this, because if her child was to be a Nazarite from the womb, as the Angel had said, then he was to be a *perpetual* Nazarite, to the day of his death.

She also failed to tell her husband everything. Although part of the Angel's message to her was that her child would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines, she did not tell Manoah this. But in all likelihood, in her excitement and her shock she simply forgot to mention this particular aspect of the message, being more concerned with the fact that she would be having a child after what were doubtless some years of barrenness. As we shall see a little later, however, the fact that she forgot this part of the message was of the Lord, and it was a good thing! The Lord told her, and it was recorded in Scripture so that all who read would know Samson's mission; but she did not remember to mention it, for a purpose we are going to see. And thus, as always, the Lord worked all things together for good (Rom. 8:28), even her forgetfulness at that time.

"Then Manoah intreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." (verse 8)

This verse reveals Manoah to be a godly man, and a man of prayer. Upon hearing the news, he *immediately* went to prayer, and called upon the Lord. And in this he was a true type of Joseph the husband of Mary: a godly, just man (Matt. 1:19,24-25).

Manoah truly believed that a man of God had appeared to his wife and given her this wonderful message; for he spoke with confidence and faith of "the child *that shall be born*." He believed it fully! As the Scripture says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (Jn. 20:29); for what is faith? Heb. 11:1 gives us the definition: "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This means that faith is the *foundation*, the *ground*, of the hoped-for future things which God has promised; it is the *confident assurance* that what God has promised will certainly come to pass. By faith one already possesses them in the soul. Faith is the *certainty* of these as-yet future things. It is the *evidence* of them: the fact that the Lord grants such faith in a man to believe that they will come to pass, is the evidence that they will. For mere human faith could never believe such things.

As this verse shows, Manoah immediately wanted the Lord to show them what to do! He wanted the Lord to teach them! He asked the Lord to send "the man of God" back to them, to teach them more about their duty towards this son they were going to have! Manoah felt the great weight of responsibility upon them both. If this was to be no ordinary child, then they needed much wisdom from the Lord. He was desirous to know his duty in raising the promised son. He wanted to please the Lord in this matter.

And truly, we need the Lord Jesus Christ to come unto us, and teach us, just as this couple needed Him all those centuries ago! And this is exactly what our Saviour does do: not anymore in a visible appearance, as He sometimes did in those times and as He did to Manoah and his wife; but by His Holy Spirit He comes to His people, and by His Word He teaches them. Thus Christians must pray to the Lord very earnestly for His guidance and instruction! This is what Manoah did – he prayed to the Lord for further guidance. Christian, emulate Manoah in this, and pray for guidance in all the events of your life. As Christians we too have received messages from heaven (through the written Word of God, as we understand it more and more), and we long for yet more of them, as Manoah did; by which I mean, believers today, who have the full and completed revelation of God written down for us in permanent form, long to understand its

truths more deeply and more clearly, so that we may live to the glory of the Lord in this world.

Also, as Manoah at this point simply believed that this glorious Being was a "man of God" – a prophet, a minister sent by God – he asked for Him to be sent to them again, to teach them their duty. And when a Christian has the privilege of hearing the Word of the Lord from a true minister of Christ, this should be *his* prayer to the Lord as well – that the man of God would teach him more and more of the Lord's ways, that he may know his duty. Note, too, that Manoah did not send someone else to find this man of God; he immediately went to prayer himself, and asked the Lord to send Him back to them! The Lord's people must pray for Him to send them His ministers, to teach them! As Paul wrote to the believers in Rome: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me... that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God" (Rom. 15:30,32).

This verse teaches us something else as well: something wonderful about the relationship between this man and his wife, which is a lesson to all married Christian couples. She came to him with this amazing message; and he believed her! He did not get angry with her, and shout at her to stop telling idle and foolish tales; he was not disbelieving.

It is evident that this couple were very close and loving, and had a very good marital relationship based on trust. Manoah's reaction to the amazing news his wife told him shows that she was a virtuous woman, in whom he safely trusted: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Prov. 31:10,11). Manoah's heart could safely trust in his wife when she brought him this message, *because* she had obviously proved herself to be a virtuous woman in the past, and utterly trustworthy.

This is how Christian marriages should always be: neither one ever having any reason to doubt the other's honesty, etc.; each one being able to safely trust in the other.

"And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah". (verse 9a)

We should always be filled with awe when we read expressions like this in the Scriptures – that God heard the voice of a man! Do you ever pause to think about this? Manoah was a godly man, yes; but a mere man all the same! A creature of dust, a sinful human being. And yet when he prayed, God hearkened to him! God, the eternal God, the Almighty God, the Holy God, the God so infinitely above man – this God condescended to hearken to the voice of a man! What grace this is! And yet, every time a believer prays, if he prays according to the will of God, the Lord hearkens to him (1 Jn. 5:14).

And why did the Lord hearken to Manoah? He did so because he was a humble, godly, regenerate, praying man! He went to his God in prayer, and God delighted to hear him, and to answer his prayer! And so the Lord will do for each one of His chosen people, if they humble themselves, meekly go to their prayer closet (Matt. 6:6), and seek the face of the Lord there. The Lord loves to hear their prayers, and to answer them when they are prayed according to His will.

"And the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her." (verse 9b)

The reason He appeared to her again, and not to Manoah, was because she would immediately recognise Him as the same Being who had appeared to her before. And it says she was in the field when He did so. Perhaps she had business to do there, such as tending to a flock of sheep (which women often did in those times – Rachel, for example: Gen. 29:6,9); or because she had gone there to pray. It is

necessary to be alone when in private prayer to the Lord (Matt. 6:6; Gen. 24:63).

"And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day." (verse 10)

We are told she made haste; she even ran. She was very excited, and doubtless very happy, that her husband's prayer had been answered; and she lost no time – she ran to tell him about it.

But in doing so, she left the Angel of God out in the field! Perhaps she asked Him to wait there while she called her husband; or perhaps, more likely, in her excitement she just ran off and left Him there. But because this was the Son of God who appeared to her, He was willing to wait for her to bring her husband. For we see Him again, our wonderful Lord and Saviour, centuries later when He was manifest in the flesh, sitting at a well and speaking to another woman, a Samaritan woman, and asking her to go and call her husband. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither" (Jn. 4:15,16). This woman had no husband at the time, as Jesus well knew, for previously she had had five husbands, and was at that time living with a man who was not her husband (vv.17,18). But as Jesus asked that woman to go and call her husband, we can then be sure that He had no objection to Manoah's wife running off to call *her* husband!

Another thing we can learn from this incident (and also from the meeting at the well) is that the Lord Jesus desires that others are told about Him, and urged to come to Him! This is evangelism: earnestly imploring others to come to the Saviour! The woman at the well went back into her city and said to the men there, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (Jn. 4:29). She did not ask that question with any doubt; she spoke

from conviction. And she must have been very persuasive, for they listened to her, and came (v.30). And we read of Philip doing the same: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (Jn. 1:45,46). Oh, let every believer exhort men and women: "Come"! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

How important it is, even, for Christian wives to do what they can to encourage their unconverted husbands to seek the Lord! Christian wives: even if he will not listen to you speaking of the salvation to be had through Christ alone, make sure that your godly *behaviour* speaks as loudly as your words – and he may be won! As it is written: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [conduct] of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation [conduct] coupled with fear" (1 Pet. 3:1,2).

"And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man". (verse 11a)

Although now for the second time, the Angel had appeared to his wife and not to him, the head of his home, Manoah was neither angry nor jealous. Not in the least. He was only too willing to follow where his wife should lead, if it led him to the Angel!

Although the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23), yet if the Lord has revealed Himself to a wife before her husband (and by "revealed", I mean not in a visible way, for this is not how the Lord reveals Himself in these times, but revealed Himself to her through His Word, and the preaching of it, as the only Lord and Saviour, so that she has come to trust in Him for salvation), and she exhorts him

to come to Christ, he should hearken to her! To follow a godly wife in that which is good, is to do right! Husband, do not let pride stand in your way! If you have a Christian wife, and you yourself are yet unconverted, pay heed to her! Listen to her pleadings, come to the Christ she loves and follows, and bow before Him as well.

"And said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am." (verse 11b)

Again, there was no anger or jealousy on Manoah's part; he simply put a humble question to Him.

Now this "Man" was of course God the Son Himself: uncreated, immortal, eternal. He had not yet come in the flesh, as a man. But because He appeared in the *form* of a man to Manoah and his wife, it was perfectly natural for Manoah to say, "Art thou the *man*?" and for the Lord then to reply, "I am." He answered Manoah according to Manoah's perfectly natural and reasonable supposition, for thus far Manoah did not know that he was in fact in the very presence of the God of Israel.

"And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass." (verse 12a)

He did not doubt; his faith was strong; he had believed his wife's amazing report, and now he believed this great Messenger from heaven.

At this point Manoah and his wife knew that this Being was sent from God, and was a prophet of God. They did not as yet know that He was the eternal *Son of God* Himself. And here we find this godly man earnestly desiring that the Angel's prophecy would come to pass. This was not a mere wish that the prophecy would be fulfilled; these were words of faith that what the Angel had said would indeed come to pass. Manoah had no doubt.

And his words remind us of the words of faith spoken by Mary so many centuries later, after hearing the angel Gabriel's wonderful message to her: "be it unto me according to thy word" (Lk. 1:38). "Let it come to pass", said Manoah; "be it unto me according to thy word", said Mary. They are essentially the same. It is the language of faith. It is faith speaking and saying, I believe it; I depend upon it; I know it will come to pass in God's time.

"How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (verse 12b)

Again we see the humility and godliness of this man Manoah. All he was interested in was what the Lord would have him do regarding this child of promise. How should they raise him? What special things should they do? He wanted to know, so that they could please the Lord. Truly we can learn so much from Manoah! Our constant prayer should be, "Lord, what must I do? How should I live? What dost Thou require of me?"

Manoah knew that the child would be a Nazarite unto God; and of course he knew what the Lord's commandments were concerning Nazarites, because they were written in the law of Moses; but because the child was quite obviously going to be extraordinary, he wanted to know if there was anything else they should be doing.

And what a powerful lesson to Christian fathers to be very intimately involved in the raising of their children in the ways of the Lord! Yes, the Angel had given specific instructions to Manoah's wife, because she would be the one carrying him in her womb; and once he was born, she would nurse him, and she (being the mother) would be the one principally involved in the raising of the child. But even so, Manoah wanted to play his part too, as a father! He wanted to assist as much as possible, and watch over both, and perform a father's part. Christian fathers must do more than simply bring home the money and administer discipline. They must be actively

involved in raising their children in the ways of the Lord. It is most significant that the New Testament specifically addresses *fathers*: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph.6:4); "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). The father's responsibility is very great. He bears an awesome responsibility to see to it that his children are raised in the ways of the Lord, and that they understand the Gospel of Christ and are urged to flee for salvation to the Saviour. "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live" (Prov. 4:1-4).

What a lesson this verse contains, in fact, to all Christian parents, to work *together* in fulfilling the responsibilities of raising children! "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). When the Lord has given a Christian couple children, their sacred duty is to go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to *show* them (from His Word) how they should order their children, and what they should do to them. For the Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6), for "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15).

The marginal note at v.12, however, says that the Hebrew can also be rendered like this: "What shall be the manner of the child, and what shall he do?" or "what shall be his work?" And if we read it like this, then Manoah was asking what kind of child he would be, and what he would grow up to do; because it was plain to him that this would be no ordinary child, and he knew that the work he would do would be something extraordinary. He was curious to know what it was.

But the Angel did not gratify his curiosity! And the reason He did not do so was because, if word got out, and the Philistines heard of this child, they would try to kill him, and perhaps his mother while she was carrying him. For the child's own safety, then, and that of his mother, the details were kept from Samson's father. And here we must go back to verses 5-7. There, it will be remembered, the Angel told Manoah's wife that her son would begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines; but we saw that she did not repeat this to her husband. As I said at the time, it would appear that she simply forgot. But her forgetfulness was of the Lord, because it was better that Samson's great work of deliverance be kept hidden until he was grown, for his own safety and that of his family. After all, a godly man like Manoah would be very excited if he knew that his son was born to be a great deliverer for Israel; and he might have found it difficult to keep his mouth shut. And very soon the story would have spread, and found its way to the ears of the Philistines. And then they would have tried to kill the child, just as Herod tried to kill the child Jesus. But if Samson's mother forgot that part of the message, at least for the time being, the purpose of the child coming into the world at that precise time would have been unknown to both Israelites and Philistines; and this would have been a good thing.

Thus we see a wonderful fulfilment of the truth of Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

"And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine nor strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe." (verses 13,14)

The Lord simply repeated to Manoah what He had told his wife before: that she must be very careful to obey all that He told her regarding abstaining from eating or drinking any product of the vine, or eating any ceremonially unclean thing. She was to carefully observe the Lord's commandments.

And for Christians, New Testament believers, although we are not under such commandments, nevertheless this verse contains that which is for our instruction as well: "beware" and "observe"! There are many commandments of the Lord to New Testament believers. Beware and observe! Beware of all that is sinful, and observe to do all that is right. Guard yourself against sin, and strictly follow, strictly walk in, the Lord's commandments. The Lord Jesus Christ told His apostles to teach the believers as follows: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Whatever the Lord has commanded, that we must do; whatever He has forbidden, that we must abstain from.

And the type? The woman had the child Samson inside her, and during that time she was to keep away from any unclean thing. In Gal. 4:19 Paul wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you". Believers have Christ formed in them, spiritually; He dwells within them. And having Christ within us, what must we do? How must we live? 2 Cor. 7:1 provides the answer: we in whom "Christ is formed" must be very careful to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Christ dwells in us; and we must be holy unto Him. He has come to us, and taken up His abode in us (Jn. 14:23); and we must beware of anything that would be sin in us.

In this way, too, then, Samson typified the Lord Jesus Christ; and the pregnancy of his mother carries a message to all Christians of how they should live because Christ Jesus our Lord is formed within us.

## **Chapter Five**

## **Seeing God the Son**

#### Judges 13:15-23

- 15. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.
- 16. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord.
- 17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?
- 18. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?
- 19. So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.
- 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.
- 21. But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord.
- 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.
- 23. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

"And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee." (verse 15)

Manoah, having had this wonderful message about becoming a father, which he had heard from his wife and which was confirmed by the Angel, wanted to show hospitality to the Angel. For at this stage Manoah still did not realise who this was – he thought He was a man of God, a prophet. And hospitality to strangers was a sacred duty to the Israelites: it was therefore Manoah's duty to offer this wondrous Man a meal.

In like manner, Christians are to care for the physical wellbeing of the Lord's ministers, the men of God, providing them with what they need to live, so that they can devote themselves to the service of the Lord. There is much in the Bible about this; for example: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14); "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6); "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:17,18).

Besides, in general, Christians are to show hospitality to all men, even to strangers: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). Abraham did so, not knowing two of his guests were angels and one was the Lord Himself, God the Son (Gen. 18:1-8); Lot did so, not knowing he was entertaining angels (Gen. 19:1-3); and here Manoah, also ignorant of the true identity of this Man, desired to show hospitality to Him. What a sacred duty this is, and to be much in evidence among believers in Christ: "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13); "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:9). It is a virtue not often found, yet how ornamental it is to those who profess to be followers of Christ! Our Lord said, "For

I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:35,40).

"And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread". (verse 16a)

Doubtless He chose not to eat the food Manoah was wanting to prepare for Him, to show this couple that He was *not* a man, but the Lord God Himself. Men have physical bodies, and need to eat, but angels are spirits and do not; and neither does the Son of God, who in the days of His flesh said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (Jn. 4:34). And what was true of Him after His incarnation was true of Him before it as well, whenever He was sent on a mission such as this.

"And if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord." (verse 16b)

In the King James Version, the word "Lord" is in capitals, which the translators used in order to show that the name "Jehovah" is the word in the Hebrew. Thus, in this place the Lord was saying to him: instead of offering Me a meal, take your kid and offer a sacrifice to the Lord. And He said this to Manoah to prevent him from sinning by offering any sacrifice to one he thought was a mere man. Christ is God, and as God He certainly deserved to be worshipped, and to receive sacrifices; but Manoah did not know this was God He was talking to, so that, if he had offered a sacrifice to Him, he would have (in his mind) been offering it to a mere man, which would have been very sinful on his part. Sacrifices had to be to the Lord alone.

But would Manoah have done such a thing?

Well, these were dark days of apostacy for the Israelites, and many of them were offering sacrifices to heathen gods. And although Manoah clearly loved the Lord, he was very likely in great ignorance about many things, and could easily have fallen into sin in this manner. After all, he did not have a Bible to read, as you and I do! And faithful priests of the Lord, who could teach the Scriptures, were virtually non-existent at that terrible time in Israel's history. Cornelius, in his ignorance, though he was "a devout man, and one that feared God", fell down at Peter's feet and foolishly worshipped him (Acts 10:2,25); and John, the beloved apostle, a man who had leaned on the very breast of the Lord Jesus, in a moment of great foolishness almost worshipped an angel (Rev. 22:8). If an apostle, with all his knowledge from the Lord, could be so foolish, then poor Manoah, in all his ignorance because of the sad times of apostacy and declension in which he lived, or just out of fear and uncertainty, may have erred as well in offering sacrifice to one he perceived to be a prophet, had the Lord not prevented it.

"For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord." (verse 16c)

The word "for" shows us that this was *why* the Lord said the things recorded in this verse, to Manoah. Manoah thought he was speaking to a wonderful human prophet. He did not know it was an angel, he did not even think it was a *created* angel he was speaking to, much less did he realise that it was in fact the *uncreated* "Angel of the Lord", the Son of God Himself! He had no idea; and so the Lord was warning him to beware of committing sin in this matter.

And is there something typified in this verse? Indeed there is. The truth of Jn. 1:10 is typified for us here: of Christ it is written, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." When in the fulness of time the Son of God came into the

world as a Man, the world knew Him not. He was unknown as such to the vast majority. They thought Him to be a mere man, a prophet at best, but no more. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16:13,14). They had no idea that He was "GOD manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16), who walked among them.

"And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?" (verse 17)

It is right to do honour to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is divine; but at this stage Manoah did not perceive that this was God the Son. Perhaps he was thinking that when the baby was born, he could do Him honour by telling others that it all came to pass in fulfilment of the man of God's prophecy; or perhaps he meant he would send Him a gift of gratitude at the time. Gifts were sometimes given to prophets, as tokens of gratitude, as can be seen from 1 Sam 9:7,8, and 1 Kings 14:3. And of course it is right, in its place, to honour men who do something kind or great for us. It was not then sinful of Manoah to say this, if all he meant was to show his gratitude to the man. In the same way, supporting a Gospel minister materially is called "honour", in 1 Tim. 5:17,18. It is right to do. Those who receive his ministry with spiritual profit are to support him materially; this is the Lord's appointed way: Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:1-14.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (verse 18)

This is a most interesting answer. He does not tell him His Name at all; instead He says, "Why do you ask what my Name is, seeing it

is secret?" In an earlier time, when Jacob had wrestled with this very same divine "Angel" all night, he asked Him to tell him His name; and he had received pretty much the same answer: "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" (Gen. 32:29). He did not tell Jacob His Name, just as He did not tell it to Manoah centuries later. But we have to ask: why not?

The Lord, after all, told His Name to Moses! Moses asked what he should tell the Israelites when he went to them and said God had sent him, for he knew they would ask him, "What is His Name?" He wanted to know what answer to return to them. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exod. 3:13,14). The Lord did so in this instance, because there was a *reason* for Moses to know it. On these other two occasions, however, there was no need to know it. Manoah was sincere in his question, but the reason for wanting to know the Angel's Name was mere curiosity; and the Lord did not gratify him.

The reason the Angel gave for refusing to answer Manoah's question, was because His Name was secret! And in answering the way He did, the Angel indicated that He was more than a prophet, and even more than a created angel; He was *God!* For in saying, "My Name is secret", He was pointing to His divine *nature* and *essence*; the fact that He is a *divine Person!* 

In Scripture when we read of the *Name* of the Lord, it means more than just the syllables of a word applied to Him as a name; it refers to His very essence; His character as a divine Person; His divine nature. But Jehovah's divine nature, etc., is "secret" in the sense that it is *infinite*, it passes full human knowledge or understanding; it is in fact *incomprehensible* in all its fullness! No wonder Solomon wrote, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Prov. 30:4).

And another reason: at this point in history, the time of the Judges, the Name of the Son of God was not known, nor was it meant to be known as yet. It was kept hidden; but the day was coming (still many centuries away) when He would be manifest in the flesh, and *then* – as part of the greater Gospel light that would then be given – His Name would be revealed to all: that blessed name of JESUS (which means "Saviour")(Matt. 1:21). The time of the Judges, the time of Samson, was not the time for it to be made known; but the time *would* come. And then all would be revealed.

Deut. 29:29 says, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God". There are things which the Lord God keeps secret from the sons of men; things we do not need to know, this side of heaven. And at that time in history, the divine Angel's Name was one of those things. We have great cause to bless the Lord that it is no longer the case now, and that the precious Name of JESUS is known to all His saints!

But there is even more to it than this; and this aspect of it is lovely to contemplate. Where the Angel says, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" there is a marginal note at the word, "secret", which tell us that the Hebrew can also be rendered as, "wonderful". And if we read it like this, the Lord said to Manoah, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *wonderful*?" How revealing this is! Indeed, how *wonderful* this is! For this is what Isaiah the prophet prophesied of the coming Christ:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called *Wonderful*, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

In this great prophecy of Christ the Lord, given by Isaiah centuries after the time of Samson, we are told that when He came into the world, He would be called (among other lovely and great things) "Wonderful"! Christ the Lord would be called Wonderful; because

in truth He *is* wonderful! Wonderful as no other is wonderful. And for so many reasons:

He is wonderful in His Person, as God; wonderful in His Person, as Man; wonderful in power, wisdom, and glory; wonderful in His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension; wonderful in His offices as Prophet, Priest, and King; wonderful in His election of some of mankind to obtain salvation; wonderful in His love for the elect; wonderful in the salvation He accomplished for them; and so much more. Truly, His Name is wonderful! "Thy name," the beautiful Song of Solomon says of our Lord and Saviour, "is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee" (Song. 1:3). Truly, truly, His Name is great and wonderful and worthy to be praised! There is none like Him in heaven or on earth. And "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

In answering Manoah thus, the Lord was revealing Himself to him as *God*, and declaring how wonderful He is as such!

"So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord". (verse 19a)

Now at last, Manoah knew that this Angel was the Lord God Himself! And He – Jehovah, the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – had *appeared* to Manoah and his wife! They must have been awestruck. Manoah took the kid, which he had offered to the Angel for a meal, and offered it instead as a sacrifice to the Lord God of Israel. And this meant, of course, that now that he knew that this "Angel of the Lord" was the Lord Himself, he offered it to the wondrous Being who was right there beside him!

This sacrifice was an astonishing thing in itself. Manoah was not

a priest of the Lord, and thus under normal circumstances he was forbidden from offering sacrifices, which only the priests could do. Not only that, but this was not the tabernacle, and it was only at the tabernacle that sacrifices could be offered. And yet here we find Manoah offering a sacrifice, with the full approbation of the Lord who was present right there! How come?

The answer is simple: the divine Person who appeared to him *told* him he could do it, in v.16! "If thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord". The Lord Himself gave him permission, otherwise he would never have been justified in doing so. The Lord is free to dispense with His own laws, as and when He sees fit; and He did so in this special case. And because of this divine permission, what would have been a great sin at any other time was now perfectly justified.

"And the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on." (verse 19b)

His Name is wonderful; and now He did wondrously. What did He do? The next verse tells us. And the awestruck, astonished couple watched what the Lord did as the sacrifice was being offered to Him:

"For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar". (verse 20a)

This was the wondrous thing that the Angel did, in accordance with His Name, which is Wonderful: as the flames consumed the sacrifice, He ascended up to heaven in the flames!

This revealed that this Angel was not a man, for he was not harmed by the flames. It showed Him to be a spiritual Being. And He showed them that He was ascending to heaven, because He had come down from heaven! Truly it was a wonderful sight. But it was much more than that – it was a type as well:

Firstly, it typified the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of all His chosen people. As *all* the sacrifices of the Old Testament typified our Saviour and the sacrifice of Himself, this one did as well. His is the one and only sacrifice men need. And when He offered Himself upon the cross for the sins of His chosen people, He ascended to heaven in the "flame" of His own offering, so to speak, just as He ascended in the smoke and flame of this typical sacrifice here; for as Heb. 9:12 says, "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place."

Secondly, it typified His actual ascension back to heaven! It prefigured, and pointed to, what this same divine Being would one day do, when, having come in the flesh, He would ascend back to heaven from the Mount of Olives in full view of all His disciples (Acts 1:9,10). Just as the Angel went back to heaven, showing this is where He had come from; so Christ the Lord ascended back to heaven after His earthly ministry was finished, showing this was where He came from. As He said of Himself: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (Jn. 3:13). And just as the cloud hid the Lord Jesus from the sight of His disciples as He ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:9), so the smoke of the sacrifice would have hidden Him from the sight of Manoah and his wife as He ascended back to heaven.

Thirdly, by this amazing ascension the Angel showed them that their sacrifice had been *accepted* by God. For by ascending in the flame of their sacrifice, He was signifying to them that He was, so to speak, carrying their sacrifice to heaven with Him, as being of a sweet savour unto the Lord! And this, too, was typical: just as Jesus was to bear the sins of His people, with God's wrath falling upon Him instead of them as He hung on the cross, so the burning up of the sacrifice showed Manoah and his wife that the wrath of God had fallen, not on them, but on the sacrifice which was in their place.

And fourthly, it typified that believers, who offer the *spiritual* sacrifices of prayer, praise, etc. (Heb. 13:15,16; 1 Pet. 2:5), have these sacrifices accepted by God solely because of the mediation of Christ! All that we do is tainted by sin; but our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God *through* Jesus Christ; they are accepted by God when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

"And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground." (verse 20b)

Just as these two Old Testament disciples of His looked on in wonder and amazement, so too did the disciples who watched Jesus ascend centuries later (Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9). And in an attitude of reverence and worship, for they knew that they were seeing *God*, they fell on their faces in awe and holy fear, in wonder and amazement!

"But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord." (verse 21)

There was no need for Him to appear to them any more. The message had been delivered, the promise made, the prophecy given; and now they simply had to wait for the fulfilment.

And Manoah knew He was an Angel of the Lord, for a number of reasons: because of the prophecy that He had given; what He had said about His name; and now also, by what they had just witnessed Him doing. And have no doubt about this, that when it says that he knew He was an Angel of the Lord, it means he knew He was *God Himself!* This is crystal clear from the next verse:

"And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God." (verse 22)

He was in no doubt, and nor was she: they knew that this wondrous Person who had been speaking to them was the Lord God Himself! They did not know Him as God the Son, of course, for as such He had not been revealed; but He was God, the true God, the God of Israel, the Lord God Almighty! *This* they knew. And Manoah was very afraid, and thought they would die, because their eyes had looked upon the God of Israel!

How different their time was from ours, in this respect! For us, Christ has come in the flesh, and in the face of Jesus Christ New Testament believers see God, and are not afraid! For in Christ the Lord God has smiled on His people. Christ Jesus is "the express image of [God's] person" (Heb. 1:3). In Christ, God has revealed Himself as the God of love to His people. It is true that in Exod. 33:20, the Lord said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live"; but the Lord Jesus Christ is the *Mediator* between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), and men saw *His* face, and did not die; and one day *all* His people shall see His dear face too, and will not die, but live in His presence forever.

Manoah had spoken with such faith just a little while before, of the son that would be born to them; he believed the promise the Lord had made. Yet now he was filled with fear, and thought that they were going to die. His faith failed him at this point. And truly, every child of God knows the reality of this! One moment his faith is strong; the next, he is weak in faith and full of fear. Yes, Manoah was filled with fear at this point. But not so his wife! Her faith stayed strong, and is expressed in her reply:

"But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." (verse 23)

How right she was! While her husband was filled with fear, she was examining the case sensibly; and her answer showed her faith, and also her common sense. Note, also, that she now called the Angel "the Lord" (Jehovah) here; again showing that He truly was God the Son, in a pre-incarnate appearance.

And she gave three solid reasons for knowing that they would not die:

First, she said that if the Lord was pleased to kill them, He would not have accepted their burnt offering. Yet He did! And they *knew* He did, because He *told* them to offer it, and then when they offered it He ascended in the flame of the offering back to heaven, signifying His acceptance of it. Prov. 15:8 says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord"; but Manoah's wife was in effect saying to her husband, "Clearly our sacrifice was *not* an abomination to Him! So what have we to fear?"

Second, if He was pleased to kill them, He would not have showed them all the things He did: He would not have shown them *Himself*, in such a gentle way, appearing as a Man and quietly speaking to them. And He would not have shown them the wondrous sight of Him rising to heaven.

And third, if He was pleased to kill them, He would not have told them such amazing things: that they would have a son; that he would be a Nazarite unto God; that his mother was to guard herself as well, while she was carrying the child; and that their son would do great things when he grew up! After all (she reasoned, and perfectly logically too), why would the Lord promise them a son, if he was going to kill them? Why give such careful instructions regarding him, if they were going to be killed? It would simply make no sense.

And what is more, He would not have told them that His Name was wonderful, thereby identifying Himself to them as God!

Her faith was strong, and she sought to encourage her husband, thereby strengthening his faith. The Bible calls the wife "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. 3:7), and so she is; but sometimes the weaker vessel is

the stronger believer, and certainly this was the case here. The Bible also says that the Lord gave the woman to the man to be an help meet for him (Gen. 2:18); and truly Manoah's wife proved to be such a help and such a blessing, and all Christian women should seek to emulate her in this. As a true help meet for him, she encouraged him, she sought to strengthen his faith and remove his doubts; which is what all Christian wives should do, when their husbands (if Christians) are feeling weak in faith. Truly the words of Eccl. 4:9,10, not written as yet but which would be given by divine inspiration later in Israel's history, were fulfilled by her: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." When Manoah fell, being weak in faith, his wife in truth lifted him up. Faithful woman! True help meet for him!

This was a wife of whom the Bible says, "her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10); and, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom" (v.26). As the Lord Jesus said in Matt. 15:28, of another woman at another time, so He could say of this woman: "O woman, great is thy faith!"

And from this woman's good answer, all the elect of God may learn something else. When a person is enlightened by the Lord to see his true spiritual state by nature; when the Lord reveals to him his sinful state, the depravity of his heart, and reveals to him that Christ alone can save; then he comes to Christ for salvation. But many times afterwards, the devil might tempt him to question his salvation. When this happens, however, he must remind himself that the Lord would not have revealed these things to him if He was pleased to kill him! The Lord does not reveal Himself as Saviour, He does not grant a man revelations of His great love, etc., if He is going to destroy Him and damn him! He would not do what every believer knows He has done for him in the past, if He was going to damn him. And the remembrance of such things will encourage the person's faith, causing him to overcome such temptations to doubt, when all the evidence points to him having been accepted of the Lord.



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## **Chapter Six**

# "Like the Sun": Birth and Beginning of His Work

Judges 13:24,25

- 24. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.
- 25. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

"And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson". (verse 24a)

The word of the Lord came to pass, just as He had said. After the Lord had appeared to them, they returned home, and in due time this barren woman bore a son. It has been reliably calculated that the birth of Samson occurred in the year 1155 BC.<sup>5</sup>

And even in his name, one can see him typifying the Lord Christ! The name "Samson" is derived from the word for the sun, which is "Shemesh"; and "Samson" means "sun-like"; "like the sun". It was a very appropriate name. For what does the Bible say of the sun? "In them he hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Psa. 19:4,5). The sun is compared with a strong man who can run a race well; for it dominates the sky, its great strength being felt across the earth, and running, as it were, from one end of the heaven

5 *The Annals of the World*, by James Ussher, pg. 56. Master Books, Inc., Green Forest, Arizona, USA, 2003. Originally published in 1658.

to the other. And perhaps Samson was named this way, because his parents knew, by a divine influence of the Spirit of God upon them, that he would be a man of great strength; and certainly they knew, from the words of the Lord to them, that he would do much to dispel the darkness of oppression which Israel was in at that time.

And the Lord Christ, like the sun, rejoiced as a strong man to run the race that was set before Him: believers are told to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus", for He, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1,2); and He, the One greater than Samson, is "the mighty God" (Isa. 9:6), who, as the sun dispels the darkness, delivered His people from the darkness of sin and unbelief. The Bible indeed calls our Lord the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2). And with this we see the type continuing:

Samson's name could also mean "little sun"; and if so, this would be because, although he was a type of Christ, the antitype is greater than the type: Christ is the great "Sun of righteousness", and Samson, though he was "like the sun", was but a little sun in comparison with Him. Believers are like Christ their Lord, but very feebly do they emulate Him. The Lord Jesus commanded His people, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (Lk. 12:35); and the Lord through Paul said that believers are "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15); but although Christians are lights, compared with Christ they are as the light of a candle compared with the sun in its strength. And indeed this is what the Lord said of His people: "Ye are the light of the world". He said that their light must shine before men, but yet compared their light with that of a candle (Matt. 5:14-16). "Ye are the light of the world", Jesus said of His people; and, "I am the light of the world", He said of Himself (Jn. 8:12). He is the light of the world as a sun; Christians are lights as candles. He is the Sun of righteousness, they are little suns compared with Him. Yet still believers must shine as lights in this world, with the light of their Lord and Saviour burning within them!

But even more properly, the name "Samson" signifies a *minister* or *servant;* for the sun in the sky is the minister or servant of God (which is in fact what the Hebrew word for the sun, "Shemesh", means), in that it serves the Lord by serving the earth, giving its light and heat to our planet. Samson was the Lord's minister or servant, carrying out the will of the Lord and delivering Israel from the Philistines. And in this he typified the Lord Jesus Christ as well, who was the Father's sinless minister (Heb. 8:2) and servant (Isa. 42:1; Matt. 12:17,18), who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

"And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him." (verse 24b)

This part of the verse is somewhat similar to Lk. 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Once again, the antitype answered to the type. Samson's childhood was blessed of the Lord: as he grew to manhood the Lord was with him to bless him, caring for him, guarding him, and preparing him for his life's ministry. Of him, also, it could be said that he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. The Lord blessed him with amazing strength, such as no man ever had before and no man would ever have again; but He also blessed him with the precious gift of salvation; with the Holy Spirit; and with His own gracious presence. He was, truly, in an Old Testament sense, blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus who was yet to come (Eph. 1:3).

And just as Samson was blessed of the Lord, so in an even greater way His great antitype, the Lord Jesus, was blessed of the Father as well – and is blessed for evermore (Rom. 9:5).

"And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol." (verse 25) This camp of Dan appears either to have been established for the purpose of protecting the tribe from the incursions of the Philistines, who were troubling them; or it was a place by the name of "Mahanehdan", as the marginal note at this verse says. Such a place is mentioned in Judg. 18:11,12. As for Zorah and Eshtaol, they were two cities in the tribe of Dan, on the very border of the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Dan was particularly susceptible to Philistine attacks, because it was situated right near the Philistines; and so it was that from this very tribe the Lord raised up this mighty deliverer.

The Holy Spirit of God began to move Samson from time to time to do some great exploits, valiant deeds, which are not recorded for us in the Word of God. The Holy Spirit would come upon him in an extraordinary manner, and at such times he would, through God, "do valiantly" (Psa. 60:12): great things, mighty things, which began to give the Israelites an inkling of how the Lord would soon be using him in an even greater way. And he himself was made increasingly aware of it as well. The Lord began to incline his heart towards doing something for his people; and by the tokens the Lord gave him of his amazing strength and power, he began to see clearly that this was to be his work in life.

The reason the Holy Spirit only began to move him *at times*, was to teach him (and all Israel) that what Samson was going to be able to accomplish was not due to his own strength, but to the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit. If it was done in his own strength, he could have done such mighty deeds at *any* time; but it was only *as* the Spirit moved him. Thus all the glory had to go to the Lord, and not to man. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Psa. 78:65 says, "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." Men think they are mighty, and invincible, when they are drunk, and they shout bravely and make a lot of noise; but Samson drank no wine, and yet was truly strong, by the Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit who truly

makes a believer strong, brave, and able to do valiantly! So then, let every believer always take heed to the commandment of Eph. 5:18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit". Samson was never drunk with wine, but he was filled with the Spirit; and by the Spirit he did mighty deeds.

And lastly: we see Samson in this verse, too, typifying our great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus: for Jesus was so "moved", even when He was just twelve years old, in a period of His life before His actual public ministry began, just as was the case with Samson at this time. Jesus at twelve was moved by the Spirit to debate with the Jewish doctors of the law in the temple, and astound them with His wisdom (Lk. 2:42-51).

## **Chapter Seven**

# "It Was of the Lord": His Marriage Choice

#### Judges 14:1-4

- 1. And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.
- 2. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.
- 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.
- 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

"And Samson went down to Timnath". (verse 1a)

Josh. 19:43 says that Timnath (called there Thimnathah) was a city in the tribe of Dan – Samson's tribe. But at this time Timnath was controlled by the Philistines.

And it says that Samson went "down" to Timnath; because geographically he lived above it. Spiritually, however, this speaks to us of the fact that Samson was in a backslidden state: his heart had gone "down", he was setting his affections on things below, contrary to the will of God. The New Testament says to believers, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above,

not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1,2). Samson was not doing this, at this time in his life. His heart was not, at this time, seeking those things which are above. His affection was not on heavenly things but earthly. To be precise, his affection was fixed on a woman.

"And saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines." (verse 1b)

Samson, although a man of God, a regenerated man, a man raised up by the Lord, was still a mere man! As someone has rightly said, "The best of men are still men at best." Christians know the truth of this. In Rom. 7:15 Paul was brutally honest when he wrote of himself: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." And in vv.18 and 19: "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." And in vv.22 and 23: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Bear in mind that Paul was a regenerated man when he wrote this of himself. Every true Christian knows, by painful experience, the truth of these words. There are two natures warring within him, the old and the new, and the warfare is real, powerful, and constant.

Samson was a child of God, and a servant of God; but he was also a man, and he struggled against the flesh as all regenerated men do: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). And sometimes, in Samson just as in all believers, the flesh gained the upper hand. Sometimes he gave in to it, and sinned. Oh how carefully we must guard our affections, and where we set them! When we are not spiritually minded; when we allow worldly things to fill our minds and thoughts; then our

affections will *lower*, and will be placed on *unlawful* things, which will lead us away from our walk with the Lord.

The Bible says, "Flee... youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Perhaps in no other area of life are young people (and Samson was a young man at this point) apt to be so foolish, and to sin, as in this matter of falling in love. It seems that in matters of the heart, all common sense, let alone biblical principles, so often flies out the window. This is why it is essential for Christian young people to make this a matter of constant prayer, to saturate their minds with the Word of God, and to seek out a truly *Christian* marriage partner.

Here was Samson, a man who was, firstly, an Israelite – a member of the national people of God; secondly, a regenerated man, whom the Lord was about to use mightily as a deliverer and a judge; and thirdly, a Nazarite, especially devoted to the Lord! A man whose very birth had been miraculous, a man whose very mother had been under strict instructions as to how to live while she was carrying him. And yet this "Israelite indeed" (Jn. 1:47), this Nazarite unto God from his mother's womb, had now in his young manhood set his heart upon a woman who was a worshipper of the heathen god Dagon! Dagon, the fish god, was worshipped by the Philistines (see Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:2-7; 1 Chron. 10:10). This Dagon was just another name for Nimrod, the mighty hunter of old, who had led men astray into idolatry in the years after the Flood (Gen. 10:8-10). Nimrod created a religion centred in himself, and was worshipped as a deity under many different names. The Philistines worshipped him as Dagon.

It was sinful enough that Samson had set his heart upon a woman who was a heathen; but in addition, she was a member of the nation which was Israel's great enemy! There was *nothing* in common between her and Samson, *nothing* that could make her a true "help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18), a man who was devoted to the service of the Lord, a minister of the God of Israel! A godly wife is described in Prov. 31:10-12, and what a lovely description it is: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her

husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." There was no possible way this heathen Philistine woman could be to Samson a virtuous woman, more valuable than the most precious stones, in whom he could safely trust, who would always do him good and never evil.

Likewise, whenever a true Christian man sets his affection on a woman who is not a Christian, he sets his heart on one who, no matter how beautiful or appealing, can *never* be to him a woman who shares all his joys and sorrows, all his trials and tribulations, a true companion in all things. Even if she really loves him, as the world understands love, there are aspects of his life to which she is a total stranger, for she does not love the God he loves, nor does she want to submit herself to the Lord's holy commandments.

Samson was not the first man, and he would not be the last, to fall for a woman who was utterly unsuitable for him as a wife. Today, just as there have always been, there are Christians who, when it comes to matters of the heart, sin greatly against their Lord. They foolishly allow their emotions, their feelings and affections, to control their actions. Many a Christian has suffered great misery by falling for someone who was clearly off limits to him because he was a Christian and the object of his affections was not. A true Christian who is unmarried must look for a fellow-Christian to marry, and no other. That is the most important criterion of all. To marry someone of a false religion, or someone who is ungodly in their lifestyle, etc., is plainly sinful, and will cause great distress and trouble in the long run. On this matter the Bible is crystal clear:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the

temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:14-16). The Christian must marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). When a Christian man sets his affection on a non-Christian woman (or vice versa), he not only seeks to join light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, the temple of God with the temple of idols, but he also consorts with the great enemy of souls and enemy of his own King, Jesus – and that is Satan himself!

This is the true "mixed marriage"! An "inter-racial" marriage is not a "mixed marriage". Such marriages are not wrong in the Lord's eyes. The Bible has a number of examples of "inter-racial" marriages. But the *true* "mixed marriage" is where a true Christian marries someone who is not a true Christian. It is not *inter-racial* marriages which are sinful, it is *interfaith* marriages which are sinful.

Exod. 34:12 says, "Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee". And how explicit the words of Deut. 7:1-4: "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee... and then the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." *This* was the divine prohibition which Samson now wanted to disobey.

Now one might say, "But what's forbidden here in Deuteronomy are inter-racial marriages!" Is this true?

It is true that the Israelites were racially different from the nations dwelling in Canaan; but that was not the problem, nor the reason for the divine prohibition on intermarrying with them. The reason the Lord forbade Israel to marry into these nations was because they

were *heathens!* They worshipped false gods; their religions were false religions! He was forbidding *interfaith* marriages, not interracial ones. If a heathen *renounced* his or her false gods, repented, and *joined* himself or herself to the people of God, then an Israelite was free to marry such a one. Rahab was not an Israelite by birth, but she married an Israelite when she was converted (Matt. 1:5; Jas. 2:25; Heb. 11:31); Ruth was a Moabitess, but she was converted to the true God, rejected her false Moabite gods, and married a godly Israelite called Boaz (Ruth 1:16,17; 4:13); etc. Even Moses had a wife who was not an Israelite (Num. 12:1).

And likewise, when anyone, of any race whatsoever, forsakes his false gods, repents of his sins, and believes in Christ for salvation, he or she is then free to marry any other true Christian, from any race whatsoever.

I exhort all Christian young people to be extremely careful in matters of the heart! A young Christian man must seek a wife who is a true "King's daughter" (Psa. 45:13); a young Christian woman must seek a husband from among the princes of God's spiritual Israel, and settle for nothing less. What misery has come into marriages when Christians have failed to do this!

"And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife." (verse 2)

Continuing to pursue this sinful course, Samson, having fallen in love with the girl, next asked his parents to get her for him, to be his wife. This was the way things were done in those times – it was the custom: a young man, wanting to marry, asked his parents to go and arrange the wedding, by visiting the girl's family and making all the necessary arrangements.

He did not try to hide it from them: although she was a Philistine, he wanted to marry her and he wanted his parents to do this for him. One wonders what he thought their reaction would be! He knew they were godly parents. It would be like a young Christian man coming to his Christian parents today and openly saying, "I've met a Hindu girl, and I want to marry her. Please make the arrangements."

Under other circumstances, what Samson did here would have been commendable. It is very good when a young man (or woman) seeks to have his parents' consent and approval of his marriage, if at all possible. And it is very good to seek their counsel and advice in such an important, life-changing matter. But Samson was not seeking their approval, nor their advice: he had already made up his mind. He wanted this girl, come what may. He simply wanted his parents to make the arrangements, and that was all. In this, then, he greatly sinned.

Human nature never changes, does it? This very scenario has been played out countless times, in countless families, all over the world, ever since then. We can be certain it was played out countless times before the time of Samson as well. It is enough to break a parent's heart, and untold numbers of parents have shed rivers of tears over the foolish marital choices of their children; yet so many young people never learn.

The heart is a very strange thing. It is also (as Jer. 17:9 says) "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Young people, who in other matters may be level-headed and sensible, so often become utter fools when it comes to love. In a word, they act like idiots. Samson was reflecting the foolishness of countless young people in love in the way he behaved here.

But there is, even here, a type. Yes, Samson *sinned personally* in wanting to marry this woman, and in actually marrying her in due course; and no excuse can be made for his sin. Nevertheless, in his love for her, and desire to marry her, and in asking his parents to get

her for him, he typified the Lord Jesus Christ. For in the first place, the Lord Christ loved, and desired, the Gentile elect for His mystical bride. Although, as God, His focus, if I may so speak, had been on the Jews in Old Testament times, and although, as Man, He came to this earth as a Jew, yet He had set His heart on taking Gentiles into a mystical marriage union with Himself. The elect of God – Gentiles as well as Jews – are called the bride, and wife, of Christ, loved by Him (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 21:9ff.). The non-Jewish elect were heathen and unlovely; and yet the Lord Jesus desired them! He loved them with an everlasting love. And for them, He left heaven and came down to earth, just as Samson "went down to Timnath" for his bride (Judg. 14:1). Oh, if you are a Christian, think of this! All true Christians are by nature "Philistines" – sinners, heathens, "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12) – and yet the Son of God "saw" us (as Samson said "I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines"), desired us for Himself, and was prepared to come down to this earth to take us into union with Himself, laying down His own life that we might be saved from our sins and become the spouse of the Lord.

In the second place, like Samson, the Lord Jesus desired His Father, and His "mother", to "get" the Gentile elect for His holy bride. How so?

Psa. 2:6-8 says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." God the Father said to God the Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance". In the eternal Covenant of Grace, before the world began, the Son asked the Father for the elect to be given to Him as His spouse, His wife; and this was granted. God's elect among the heathen nations were given to the Son to save, to secure, and to preserve as His sheep for all eternity.

But what about asking His "mother"? What, spiritually and antitypically, is the meaning of this?

His "mother", in a spiritual sense, can be understood to be the *Jewish Church*; the elect of God among the *Jews*. For Jesus was born of the Jewish nation according to the flesh, and in this sense that nation can be called His "mother". And the first local church planted in the world was Jewish; and Christ's "asking" this "mother" to get the Gentile elect for His wife, would mean, therefore, those first Jewish Christians *sending forth missionaries* to the Gentiles; which is what they did, for the Scripture says those early Jewish evangelists "went forth for his name's sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 Jn. 6,7), but were *supported* by the Jewish Church; and when the Jews rejected the Gospel, those preachers turned to the Gentiles; "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:45-48).

They thus were the instruments used of the Lord to espouse the Gentiles to Christ the heavenly Husband, as a chaste virgin to Him; as Paul, a Jew and an apostle, said, when writing to Gentile Christians: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

"Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" (verse 3a)

His parents, being the godly Israelites they were, tried to dissuade their son from this foolish and sinful act. And they were quite right to do so. This is what *all* believing parents *must* do, when their grown children are on the point of doing something foolish or sinful in the matter of marriage. If the parents can see that it would be a foolish mistake, or a sin, they must speak up and urge their child not to pursue such a course. Once a child has grown to adulthood, the parents cannot forbid it, but they most certainly *can* and *should* 

advise, remonstrate, implore, and urge him or her not to do such a foolish or sinful thing.

"And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." (verse 3b)

Their words of advice fell on deaf ears. Samson had made up his mind. Yes, there certainly were plenty of Israelite maidens he could have married; but he did not desire any of them. He had fallen head over heels for this Philistine girl, and nothing they could say would now change his mind.

But the marginal reading throws some more light on this. It says the text can be rendered in this way: "Get her for me; for it is right in mine eyes." And this would indicate to us that Samson himself was conscious of there being something more behind this; which, as we shall see when we get to the next verse, there was! It was of the Lord! And so it was right in Samson's eyes; meaning, in his judgment.

And here is the way in which Samson, in this matter, typified the Lord Jesus Christ: as Samson passed over the women of his own nation, and desired a wife of the Philistines, so the Lord Jesus Christ passed by the vast majority of the Jews, and chose out for Himself a *Gentile* bride!

Jesus was born as a Jew; yet His mystical spouse has been predominantly of the Gentiles of the world. From the apostolic age onwards, there were some of God's elect among the Jews, but far more among the heathen nations of the world. Christ's desire was towards *them*, they pleased Him well (not in themselves by nature, but in that He had chosen them), and He could not be turned from His course: for *them* He came into the world, and for *them* He bled and died.

"But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines". (verse 4a)

Ah! *Here* is the real reason behind this otherwise strange incident! It was "of the Lord!" The sovereign Lord of heaven and earth was secretly directing Samson's steps, because "he sought an occasion against the Philistines." This "he", here, refers to Samson himself, who was looking for an opportunity to make war against the Philistines.

We must pay very careful attention to the teaching of this verse, because it is really important; and it is also important that we do not misunderstand it. The question that needs to be answered is: did God *make* Samson sin? Without a proper understanding both of God's sovereignty, and man's depravity, some might be confused about this, and be tempted to think so.

But no! Samson's sin was all of himself; the Lord did *not make* him sin. The Lord is not the author of sin! But the Lord merely withheld the grace that would have *prevented* Samson from sinning! Oh how vital it is to rightly understand this:

It is by the grace of God that believers stand. In ourselves we are weak, foolish and sinful, and if the grace of God was not put forth to prevent us, we would constantly fall into sin! And sometimes, either to test us, or to show us how helpless we are without Him, or for His own wise purposes as in this case, the Lord withholds His grace for a time – the grace that keeps us from falling – so that we do fall into sin.

But the sin is our own! We are guilty. God does not take a righteous man and make him sin; He merely withholds the grace which would prevent him from sinning. So it was in this case. And He did so because it was of the Lord to destroy the Philistines and break their oppressive dominion over Israel. It was of the Lord to use Samson to begin to deliver Israel. And Samson, knowing this, was looking for an opportunity to fight against the Philistines! An occasion was needed — and this incident presented such an occasion, as we will see in due course.

We see throughout the Bible similar examples of matters being "of the Lord"; and what this demonstrates to us, very wonderfully, is that the Lord is able to make even the *sinful* acts of men serve His purposes! Not because such sinful acts are pleasing to Him, for they most certainly are not; but because He is all-powerful, and can overrule them for good! To give a few examples:

Jos. 11:20 says, "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses."

Gen. 50:19,20 says, "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

And take 2 Sam. 24:1, compared with 1 Chron. 21:1: the former says, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah"; and the latter says, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." It was of the Lord, but He did not *cause* David to sin; instead He withheld His preventing grace, and permitted Satan to tempt David to do it; which Satan did, and David fell for the temptation because of the sin in his own heart.

Thus, although Samson marrying a Philistine was contrary to God's law, yet "it was of the Lord". Firstly, it was of the Lord because Samson "sought an occasion against the Philistines"; hereby teaching us that God can bring good out of evil, as He has so often done (this in no way, however, excuses Samson's disobedience to God's law). And secondly, it was of the Lord because in this matter Samson was to be a type of Christ, who also loved and desired a Gentile bride. Samson was acting sinfully; but at the same time it was of the Lord, who withheld preventing grace so that Samson followed through with this, giving an occasion for the Philistines to be punished; and demonstrating most powerfully that the LORD is

in control of *all* events on earth – not man; and that even those things which are sinful, He is able to overrule for good!

Also, although his parents did not know it was of the Lord, we have seen that Samson appeared to have had at least some intimation that it was; some inkling of there being something more behind his desire for the woman. He could feel some mysterious divine impulse within him, which made the desire for this woman seem right in his eyes, though he hardly seems to have fully understood it himself. Again, this does not excuse his sin! We do not see him praying to the Lord, seeking His guidance about this marriage; and of course he knew the Lord's Word forbade it, so even praying about it would not get him an affirmative answer; an answer of encouragement. But even so, he felt a mysterious inclination in this direction.

But exactly how would marrying this Philistine woman provide Samson (and thus the Lord) with an occasion against the Philistines? How would it give him an opportunity to be avenged on them, and to begin to deliver Israel from under their yoke?

Well, if he married her he would then be in something of an alliance with the Philistines through his marriage to one of their own (royal families have used this very tactic through the centuries!); and then, as happens in so many extended families, there are often incidents which occur which (if not quickly resolved) lead to all kinds of frictions and hostilities! And Samson could use his alliance to actively look for such things, and to stir them up, till eventually they would turn against him – and then he could fight them.

At this time the Philistines were not fighting against the Israelites in regular warfare as such, with armies ranged up on both sides of a battlefield, and at a given signal coming together with clash of arms; but rather, at this time they used guerilla tactics, small incursions here and there, troubling the Israelites, plundering them where they could – opportunistic forays against Israel from time to time. It thus made sense for Samson to use similar tactics against them. If he could just

get in among them, which he could by this marriage, then he could be as a thorn in their sides, troubling them, picking them off here and there, niggling at them, distressing them first in one place and then another

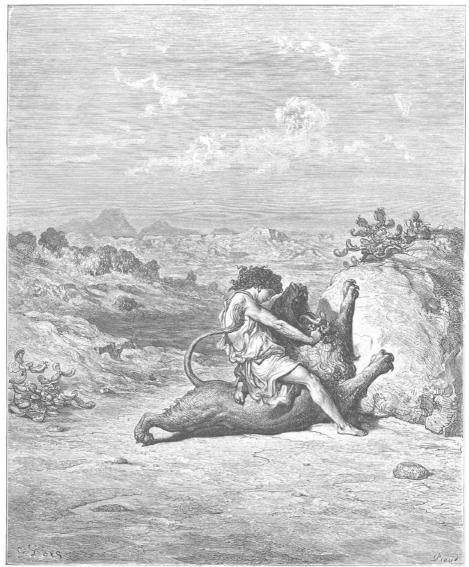
And as it turned out, of course, this is exactly what did happen: Samson was given the occasion he sought.

"For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." (verse 4b)

Yes, and this is what irked Samson, whom the Lord had been preparing to be the deliverer of Israel. So he sought for an opportunity against them.

And the type in all this? Samson sought to get in among the Philistines, where by being among them he could do great damage to them; and Jesus, our heavenly Samson, in order to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) and to deliver His elect from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4), came into this world as a man; He dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14); He got in among us as it were; He assumed human nature, and lived and walked in this sinful world, among sinful men, so that He could deliver His people from it, by defeating that great enemy of their souls!

#### "Samson Slaying a Lion" by Gustave Doré



Jdg 14:5-6 ...a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and  $he\ had$  nothing in his hand: ....

Samson Slaying a Lion by Gustave Doré. In public domain.

# **Chapter Eight**

## **Rending the Roaring Lion**

Judges 14:5,6

- 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.
- 6. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand; but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

"Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath". (verse 5a)

It is very sad that his parents, who (in v.3) had remonstrated with their son, and tried to persuade him not to marry a Philistine girl, had now given in to his wishes and were going along with him to do as he desired – to get the girl for him as his wife by going to make the wedding arrangements with her family in Timnath. As Samson had (spiritually) "gone down" to Timnath (v.1), so now his parents did so as well. And we cannot excuse them by saying that perhaps Samson explained to them that it was of the Lord; because we are specifically told in v.4 that "his father and his mother *knew not* that it was of the Lord". As far as they were concerned, this was just Samson's sinful desire for a woman not of the nation of God; and yet, despite trying to reason with him and turn him from his course, they had now given in and agreed to make the marriage arrangements.

Christian parents need to pay very careful heed to this! All too often, when it comes to the marriages of their children, they relent and go along with their children's choices, out of love for them. Now

it is true that when a child has grown to adulthood, and makes his choice, they cannot actually forbid it or prevent it; but that does not mean they have to give approval to it, by their actions! They should not participate in the wedding arrangements; they should not go along with it, just for the sake of "keeping the peace", of "showing that we love him", or whatever other excuse they may come up with! If the grown child of Christian parents makes a wrong choice in a marriage partner, they should not support him in this! Yes, the Bible says "marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. 13:4), and if he goes ahead and marries the girl, they must fully accept that he is now married, and treat her properly as a daughter-in-law, etc.; but they should never be complicit in bringing the marriage to pass! They should lovingly but firmly voice their reasons for believing it to be a mistake. Once it is a fait accompli, there is nothing for it – they must accept it; but they should never just throw their own convictions out the window and give their support to setting it up and bringing it to pass! When they do that, they sin!

Here, then, we have an example of godly parents who nevertheless sinned at this point. For the godly still have within them the sinful nature, and tragically, they give in to it all too frequently, as every true believer knows all to well (Rom. 7:9-25).

"And came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him." (verse 5b)

The land of Israel had lions in those times; and as he reached the outskirts of Timnath where the town's vineyards grew, a young lion was lurking there. The fact of it being a young lion shows that it was strong, in the prime of life, and therefore very dangerous to a man.

At this point we know that his parents were not with him, because the next verse says he did not tell them when he killed the lion. Evidently he had turned aside for a little while, letting them continue on the journey, knowing he would catch up with them. But let us make good use of this incident; for it has much to teach us, especially as we compare Scripture with Scripture.

Hear, then, the Word of the Lord to His people: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). And truly, when we use this incident from the account of Samson to illustrate the text from 1 Peter, we have two very good lessons set out for young people!

The first is this: when young people wander away (so to speak) from their parents – especially when their parents are believers – they expose themselves to dangers from Satan; and the verse in Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant"! Many times, as young people enter into adulthood, they desire to be free of their parents' influence, and rebel against it; but they land up all too often in deep trouble, because Satan waits to pick them off, with all kinds of temptations and pitfalls, which being young they are either not used to, or even unaware of! Samson's parents evidently stayed on the road, but he turned aside into the vineyards; and in doing so, he found himself face to face with a lion. Stay on "the King's highway"! The Israelites said to the Edomites, "Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders" (Num. 20:17). Truly, applying this spiritually, the highway of our great King is that narrow way which leads to life, as the Lord said: "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). Of this royal highway, this narrow way that leads to life, the prophet Isaiah declared: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). But alas, Samson did not stay on this highway. At this time he was a wayfaring man, and in himself he was a fool by nature, as all men are; but if he had stayed on that highway, spiritually speaking, he would

not have erred. He erred when he turned aside from it. Perhaps he desired the fruit of the vineyards to the right and left of the highway, and turned aside into them, although they were forbidden to him as a Nazarite; and when he turned aside the young lion met him there. Walk only on that narrow way that leads to life! Turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but stay on the King's highway.

And the second lesson to young people is this: vineyards are where grapes grow; and grapes are used to make alcoholic wine. As they come into adulthood, many young people are very attracted to the drinking of alcohol, that deadly poison, so as to appear "grown up", and to fit in with their peers. They want to partake of those things which (if they had godly parents) they were forbidden from partaking of before. Prov. 23:31,32 warns, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Alcohol is like a poisonous serpent. Oh but be warned! – a *lion*, no less than a *serpent*, lurks in that direction! For it destroys, it mocks, it rages, it deceives: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Keep far from it, young man, young woman! Keep far from it, do not turn aside into those paths!

"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand". (verse 6a)

What occurred in that vineyard of Timnath on that long-ago day had never been done before in the history of the world, and would never be done again. A human being, a mortal man, tore a mighty lion to death with his bare hands!

Men have killed lions many times, with strong weapons; and there have even been a few who have killed lions with simple weapons, such as a knife. We are not told what weapon David used when he slew a lion which took a lamb out of the flock he was shepherding

(1 Sam. 17:34-37); but that he used some weapon cannot be doubted, for to kill a lion with one's bare hands would require the superhuman strength of a Samson—and there was only one Samson. Harry Wolhuter, a pioneering game ranger in the great Kruger National Park of South Africa in its early days, was attacked by a lion, and managed to kill it with his knife while it was dragging him beneath its legs after it mauled him;<sup>6</sup> yet in the whole history of the world, for a man to kill a lion with nothing but a sheath knife is surely something extremely unusual and rare, if indeed it was ever done by anyone before him.

But for a man to kill a lion with nothing but his *bare hands* – in the annals of world history, surely such a feat was never heard of before or since! A lion is far, far more powerful than a mere man, it is much faster, and it does not just have its jaws as weapons, but four huge paws as well, with talons that can disembowel a man. A man stands no chance against it with his bare hands alone. Not a normal man, at any rate; but Samson was not a normal man. He was unique among men.

What then was the secret to Samson's victory over this king of the beasts? The answer is given right here in the verse: "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him"! Ah, *there* was the secret to Samson's mighty strength and astonishing victory! God the Holy Spirit, coming upon this man in this extraordinary way, *gave* him the strength he needed to tear the lion to death! To rend it as easily, we are told, as he would have rent a weak kid of the goats!

Truly, Samson was a mighty man of God who through faith stopped the mouth of a lion, as Heb. 11:33 says.

It was indeed a marvellous feat; but the question that has to be asked and answered is: *why?* What was the reason, at this precise time, for the Lord providentially bringing a lion across Samson's path?

<sup>6</sup> *Memories of a Game Ranger*, by Harry Wolhuter, chapter 6. Books of Africa (Pty) Ltd., Muizenberg, South Africa. First Edition 1948, Thirteenth Edition 1984.

That it was of the Lord there can be no doubt. Just as the Scripture says that "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah" (Jonah 1:17) – prepared, that is, every link in the chain of providence, so that the great fish was at that precise spot in the ocean and at that precise moment; so too the Lord had prepared this lion to be where it was, at that very moment. Nothing is by coincidence; He who controls the flight of tiny sparrows (Matt. 10:29) and prepares even the lowly worm for its task (Jonah 4:7), controlled and prepared all events for this moment in Samson's life; and the same is true of all God's vast creation, and all the actions of men as well, though they know it not (Isa. 10:5-7). Whales or worms, He controls them all by His providence, and they act precisely according to what He predestinated before the world began. Nothing catches the Lord unawares; there are no accidents with Him; no "Plan B's"; everything unfolds according to what He has foreordained. This lion that roared against Samson - it was of the Lord; the Lord had some purpose behind it. What was it?

Well, he had not yet fully begun his great, public mission; and although, as we saw, Judg. 13:25 says that "the Spirit of God began to move him at times in the camp of Dan" to perform certain exploits, as yet he had had no truly astounding opportunity to discover just how great his strength was. He would not have been sure of what he was capable of accomplishing, and thus of what he could do to the Philistines, unless he was given the opportunity to put his great strength to a real, extraordinary test! It was a practice run, if you will. It was in fact far more, even, than this, as we shall see in due course; but let us confine ourselves to this aspect of it for now:

Let us consider the young David, about to go up against the giant Goliath. Never before had David been in battle; but he certainly had received excellent training for what he was about to do! As he told King Saul, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God" (1 Sam. 17:34-36). David had never been a soldier, never fought in battle against another man, let alone such a man as the giant Goliath; how would he know what he was capable of? Answer: he knew what the Lord had enabled him to do to a lion and a bear; and with this knowledge, and his faith in the living God, he was sure that Goliath would be as one of them in his hands!

And the same was true of Samson: these early victories over dangerous beasts, for both Samson and David, taught them what they were capable of accomplishing when the Lord worked through them by His Spirit; and that knowledge, and their faith in the Lord, enabled them to move on to still *greater* victories, against even greater enemies than lions and bears!—mighty *human* enemies. David would complete what Samson began. Samson began to deliver Israel from the Philistines, and David would finish the great work, and both men were trained and prepared for the great battles to come by their victories in other fields; fields of vineyards and fields of pasture. Vineyards and pastures seem to be worlds away from fields of battle, where swords clash against shields and the shouts of fierce soldiers are heard, and blood flows from terrible wounds; but the truth is, cultivated vineyards and quiet pastures can be battlefields as well, at times.

And what lessons this contains for men today who are called by God into the ministry of the Word! For as the Scriptures say, Gospel ministers are the Lord's soldiers, and are in a perpetual spiritual war (2 Tim. 2:1-4). Indeed, the churches themselves, over which the Lord places His ministers as pastors and overseers, are called in His Word His *flock* and *vineyard*. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" (1 Cor. 9:7). Paul is writing of ministers; and note the connection between them going to war, planting and eating of a vineyard, and feeding and eating of a flock. Truly, Samson and David typify the Lord's servants

under the Gospel, who labour in the vineyards and among the flocks of the Lord, and who find, even in those places, that there are great battles to be fought.

And still more: this is why, when a man will enter into the Christian ministry, there will *already be* indications that the Lord is using him! For a pastor is not to be a novice (1 Tim. 3:6). This means that *before* he enters upon the work of the ministry, he should already have shown that he has some aptitude for the work, to indicate to the brethren in the local church that the Lord is raising him up for a greater task yet! Like Samson and David, he must prove himself to be an able warrior against lions and bears, so to speak, before he is ordained to the ministry and has to wage war against giants. As it says of deacons – "let these also first be proved" (1 Tim. 3:10) – so too is it necessary for those called to be ministers to be first proved in lesser battles, before the greater ones; to be no novices in spiritual warfare by the time they are appointed.

"But he told not his father or his mother what he had done." (verse 6b)

Although no reason for him keeping quiet about this mighty feat is given, one reason becomes evident from the rest of the chapter, and two other reasons can easily be surmised. We can surmise, doubtless correctly, that one reason for his saying nothing to them would be his *modesty:* he did not want to boast of his strength and the great deed he had just done, not even to his parents. Another reason would be that he was being very *prudent;* very *cautious*. It was not now the time for his great strength to become known to the Philistines, which it surely would have, if he had told even his parents; for these things have a way of getting out. And the very evident reason, shown by the rest of the chapter as we shall see, is that when it came time to propose a riddle to the Philistines at his wedding, there was absolutely *no one* from whom they could force the answer – not even his parents.

Furthermore, in these two verses, we have wonderful things

typified about the Lord and Saviour! We see again how Samson typified so much of the Lord Jesus Christ in His work as our great Deliverer! This event in Samson's life prefigured what Christ would do in an infinitely greater, and spiritual way!

For just as there was a lion in Samson's way, which roared against him, so there was a lion in Christ's way as well! The lion that roared against the Saviour, that withstood Him, was Satan, described as being like a "roaring lion" in 1 Pet. 5:8.

And just as this lion barred Samson's way from proceeding to espouse his bride, so Satan stood in the way, barred the way, for the Lord Jesus to purchase and espouse *His* bride, the elect! The devil first had to be dispatched by Him! As 1 Jn. 3:8 says, "for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might *destroy* the works of the devil"! Think of how the devil tried to stand in the way of the mission of the Lord Jesus; how he tried to prevent the Lord Jesus from claiming His bride – from purchasing the Church, His bride, by His death on the cross! The devil worked through those who hated Him:

He worked through King Herod, who tried to have Him killed when he was still a young child; he worked through the wicked Jewish religious leaders, who wanted to have Him killed; he worked through the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and another Herod, at the time of His death; he worked through the Jews, and through the Romans! In the words of the first church in Jerusalem when the members assembled together and prayed, as recorded in Acts 4:26-28: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Truly, Satan "roared" as a mighty lion against the Saviour! But God the Holy Spirit was upon God the Son (Matt. 3:16,17)! God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him (Jn. 3:34); and filled with

the Spirit, Christ our great Deliverer *defeated and destroyed* Satan, the one whom the Bible says "had the power of death" (Heb. 2:14)!

But there is still more to the type than this:

Just as it says here of Samson, that he had "nothing in his hand", this was, in a most glorious way, true of the Lord Jesus Christ as well: He had nothing in His hand! He defeated and destroyed Satan *on His own!* His victory over the devil was accomplished by Himself alone, without the aid of anyone or anything! *He alone* is the Saviour! Salvation is of the LORD (Jonah 2:9)! – the Lord alone.

Christ the Lord "rent" Satan! Hear our Saviour's own words: "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Lk. 11:20-22). Satan is the strong man armed; but Christ is the one mightier than he, who came upon him and spoiled his goods, delivering his captives by the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

And what is more: many of those who had been under this satanic lion's sway, and who had played a part in the murder of the Lord Jesus, were converted on the day of Pentecost and afterwards (Acts 2:41); so that this was a *yet further* "rending" of the satanic lion.

Then too, there was another "lion", one that was under the influence of Satan the "roaring lion", and one that also "roared" against Christ, but "roared" against Him in the ministry of His servant Paul; and this "lion" was the Roman Empire. Paul, when a prisoner of Nero Caesar in Rome, wrote: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." We can understand this "lion" to be Satan himself; but also Satan's servant, Nero; and even, also, the physical lions in the Roman arenas. From them all, the Lord at that time delivered Paul.

And the Lord did the same for so many of His servants in that apostolic age, and afterwards – delivering them from the power of the empire; and eventually the empire itself, at least in its pagan form, fell; it was "rent." And this was the Lord's doing (Rev. 12).

And furthermore, the Lord continues to rend Satan, that roaring lion, every time a soul is converted, being delivered from the devil's power; for all believers can say with rejoicing and victory that the Father "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13), "from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18)! Each time this happens, anywhere in the world, Satan is "rent"! For truly, our deliverance from Satan's power and control required nothing less than One who was mighty, one full of the power of the Holy Spirit, who could rend Satan's kingdom and set His captives free. And this is what Christ our Lord has done. He is the One stronger than the "strong man armed". When He works mightily through His ministers as they proclaim the Gospel, and souls are converted, the great work is all His own! For it is accomplished by the preaching of His Word, in the power of His Spirit. It is not the men, but Christ giving them strength and blessing His own Word with power, who does it all.

And even Samson's modesty in not telling his parents what he had done, was typical of the One of whom it is often recorded in the Gospel accounts that He told people whom He had helped to tell no one about it. Of Him it was prophesied, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets" (Isa. 42:2). And Samson's prudence typified Jesus' prudence too; for until His hour came, He did not want these things to be as widely known as they later would be.

## **Chapter Nine**

#### **Sweet Sequel: Bees in the Beast**

#### Judges 14:7-9

- 7. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.
- 8. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.
- 9. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

"And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well." (verse 7)

She should *not* have pleased him *at all!* He was an Israelite, and a Nazarite, holy and separated unto God! She was a heathen. But the sovereign Lord, the God of Israel, overruled Samson's sin and brought good to pass out of it (just as He did the sin of Joseph's brothers: Gen. 50:20). This did not in any way excuse Samson for the sin he committed; but it demonstrates the great power of God, His utter control and sovereignty over all the affairs of men, and how He can bring good to pass even out of their evil acts.

Samson (and his parents, we know) met the girl, and would have also met her family; and he talked with her, and proposed to her. This was the purpose of the meeting. It was not yet the actual marriage, but the betrothal.

The type, though, is lovely: the Lord Jesus Christ came down to this earth, this place of sin, and was pleased – very pleased – to take unto Himself a spouse from among the Gentiles; nothing would dissuade Him; nothing could stop Him!

"And after a time he returned to take her". (verse 8a)

He was betrothed to her; but now the time had come for the actual wedding. And although it does not say so here, from the next few verses it is clear that his parents went with him again, although they were not with him when he turned aside to see the lion's carcase.

"And he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion." (verse 8b)

How long it was after his betrothal that he went down to marry her, we are not told; but it must have been quite a long time, months at least; because, for the bees to have made a hive in its carcase, the bones must have been picked clean, so that nothing but the skeleton remained.

Samson turned aside to see the carcase, because the Lord had done something wonderful for him at this spot. He had revealed to him just how great was the strength He had given him, and had in this way encouraged him to know that he was more than able to take on the Philistines, which he knew was to be his great life's work. And so he went to see the lion, doubtless to remember what God wrought there, and to give God thanks for it. It is very right of us to *remember* the Lord's past mercies and favours towards us, and to give Him thanks for them! We must never forget what the Lord has done for us.

And what is the great type here, fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ the antitype, centuries later? For we can be sure there *is* something

wonderful typified by this unusual event! Satan is typified by the lion, as we have seen; and knowing this, we can understand the wonderful truths buried within this type, as the bees were, so to speak, buried within the lion's carcase:

The inward parts of the lion (the carcase) represent all those in the devil's kingdom; all the unregenerate. For they are "in" Satan, as true Christians are said to be "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). They are the "goods" within the devil's "palace" (Lk. 11:20-22). In this sense, then, the lion represents not only Satan himself, but also all the subjects of his dark kingdom. And just as a lion roars through its mouth, so Satan roars through the words (and actions) of sinful men.

But here we see the lion as a *carcase;* the antitype of this being that Christ has *conquered* the devil. He has defeated him! And this being so, we are to understand that it is a picture of sinners *delivered from Satan's power;* they are *dead* to that old life, and now live unto God (Eph. 2:1-13).

As for the honey in the lion's carcase: this is a picture of the sweet blessings of the grace of God, which belong to Christians because their Saviour has defeated the devil and his works. It is also a picture of the fact that when the Lord converts a sinner, delivering him from the devil's power, then instead of Satan's "roars" coming out of that person as they did before, *sweet words* come out of him instead. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious" (Eccl. 10:12); "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6); "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely" (Song. 4:3). Instead of using his mouth for evil, the converted sinner now uses it for good. He uses it to preach the Gospel, and witness for Christ the Saviour.

Psa. 119:103 says, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." The words of the Lord (the Holy Scriptures) are sweeter than honey to the believer. He loves them, and he wants to share them with others! And take careful note of the words of Psa. 19:7-10: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the

soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." This refers to the *Gospel*; for the Gospel converts the soul, and is the law that goes forth out of Zion (Isa. 2:3). And the Gospel is, truly, sweeter than honey to the converted soul, and thus greatly to be desired. It enlightens his spiritual eyes, just as honey is said to enlighten the physical eyes (1 Sam. 14:27).

"And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating". (verse 9a)

It is not easy to get honey away from a swarm of bees; but why would Samson be afraid of them? He had not been afraid of the lion's teeth and claws, so he would have no fear of bees. And just as his killing of the great lion had shown him that he was more than a match for fierce Philistines, so his taking of the honey from the swarm of bees showed him that he was more than a match for a *multitude* of Philistines! "All nations compassed me about," wrote the psalmist, "but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.... They compassed me about like bees" (Psa. 118:10-12). The Philistines would indeed compass Samson about like bees, on more than one occasion; but like the psalmist he could say, "In the Name of the Lord will I destroy them!"

But Samson was a Nazarite; and the law of the Nazarite says, in Num. 6:6: "All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body"; for to do so was to make himself ceremonially unclean. Why, then, did Samson do so here?

It is possible that he was able to get the honey without actually touching the lion's carcase at all. But even if that was not sufficient to keep himself from being defiled, it must be remembered that a ceremonial law could be set aside for a higher, moral law. There is the example of David, who in a time of extreme necessity ate of the shewbread in the Lord's house. It was not lawful for any but the priests, yet it was given to David because of his great hunger (1 Sam. 21:1-6; Matt. 12:1-4). The higher moral law of self-preservation took precedence, and no sin was committed. Very possibly this was the case with Samson here: that he was desperately in need of sustenance, and therefore knew, by a divine influence upon him, that he was permitted to eat the honey from the carcase.

It is also possible, however, that he was not in dire need, and thus that he sinned in taking it, thereby defiling himself ceremonially. But if so, then the Lord overruled it for good in this case. It does not excuse his sin; but *all* believers sin, even against the eternal *moral* law of God, and yet the Lord in mercy forgives them.

"And came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat". (verse 9b)

They were all journeying to Timnath. And truly, although Prov. 25:16 had not been written as yet, for Solomon had not been born, Samson nevertheless fulfilled this Scripture: "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." We are never to be greedy, or gluttonous; we must eat only what we need, and not gorge ourselves like pigs. We are to control our appetites at all times (Prov. 23:1,2). Also, his sharing what he had with his parents teaches godly children, when they have come to adulthood, that they have a sacred duty to care for their parents, and provide what they can for them; for this is "to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents", which is "good and acceptable before God" (1 Tim. 5:4).

<sup>&</sup>quot;But he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion." (verse 9c)

Why not? There are two probable reasons. The first is, because no doubt they would not have wanted to eat it, if they knew it came out of a lion's carcase. They were godly Israelites, and knew that they must not eat what was ceremonially unclean, having touched a dead body. Samson, therefore, did not tell them. And the second reason is that he was probably already formulating the riddle that he would tell at his wedding; and did not want even his parents to know about the carcase and the honey, so that the young men at the wedding could not squeeze the answer of the riddle out of them.

For New Testament believers, of course, there is no ceremonial defilement whatsoever in eating anything, from anywhere! On this the New Testament Scriptures are crystal clear: 1 Tim. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 10:25,26; Rom. 14:14,20. We should never reject what God has provided, simply because it comes from somewhere we may find unpleasant. Joseph Hall declared, "those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson that decline the use of God's gifts because they find them in ill vessels"; and Matthew Henry wrote, "Honey is honey still, though in a dead lion." <sup>7</sup> The Lord provides, and we must gratefully receive, regardless of the source from which it comes.

And as for the wonderful antitype to this verse:

In a very literal sense, after the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, after He had destroyed the devil by His death, "they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb", to eat (Lk. 24:42). As Samson ate a honeycomb after conquering the lion, so Jesus ate a honeycomb after conquering Satan.

But the *spiritual* antitype is this: in Song of Solomon 5:1, Christ says, "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In Song. 4:16, the Church had requested Him to "eat his pleasant fruits" (meaning to accept them and enjoy them); and now, in response, the Lord says, "I have eaten my honeycomb with my

<sup>7</sup> *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. II, on Judg. 14:9.

#### honey". And the meaning of this?

In Song. 4:11 Christ says of the Church, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue"; which in the beautiful language of the Song means that the Christian's speech is to be as sweet as honey. Believers are to offer "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15). The Christian's speech must be sweet to the Lord, as the Lord says to His Church in the Song: "O my dove... let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song. 2:14). Thus the words of the Lord Christ in Song. 5:1 mean that He *receives* the holy words and praise of His people with pleasure. As Samson took the honey and ate with pleasure, so *our* antitypical Samson receives our praise and thanksgiving, or holy and sweet speech, with pleasure and delight!

And also, typically, Samson's sharing of the honey with his parents teaches us that when we have tasted the sweetness of true Christianity; when we have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:3), tasted and seen that the Lord is good (Psa. 34:8); then we must *share* the sweet honey of the Gospel with others, including our nearest relatives!

## **Chapter Ten**

## The Marriage and the Mystery

#### Judges 14:10-14

- 10. So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.
- 11. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.
- 12. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:
- 13. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.
- 14. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

"So his father went down unto the woman". (verse 10a)

This was the same trip that had been described in vv.8 and 9. Now, however, only his father is mentioned, even though his mother was with him as well, because it was the father's duty to get everything arranged for the wedding which was about to take place.

"And Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do." (verse 10b)

This was the nuptial feast; he was espoused to the girl after his first visit to her with his parents, and now this was the wedding itself. The custom of those times was for the bridegroom to provide the feast for the wedding guests. At a later date, as shown by Jesus' words in Matt. 22:2,3, it was the custom for the father of the bridegroom to provide it.

In this verse, also, we see Samson as the great type of the Lord Jesus. This marriage of Samson to a Gentile bride typified the union of Christ to His chosen people from among the Gentiles. For God the Father draws the elect to the Son: Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Jn. 6:44). This is the precious doctrine of irresistible grace: all the elect are, at the appointed time of the Father, drawn irresistibly to the Son for salvation. And Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, has made a spiritual feast for His beloved bride, the Church. The elect are effectually called to this Gospel feast; and to it they come, each and every one, in the divinely appointed time. It is truly a wonderful feast which the Bridegroom has spread for His chosen ones! It is a "feast of fat things" (Isa. 25:6). See the table spread with the glorious fare: there is Christ the fatted calf (Lk. 15:23); Christ the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29); Christ the Bread of life (Jn. 6:35); there is the milk and meat of the Word (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2); the new wine of the Gospel (Isa. 55:1); the water of life (Rev. 22:17); and so much more! Truly a feast of fat things, to delight the heart and soul of the called one! And such a feast, for the one given a spiritual appetite by the Lord, a hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6), is better than all the earthly banquets he could ever attend.

And where is this spiritual feast spread? In the *Gospel!* In the *ministry of the Word*, which is the ministry of the Gospel. When we come to the Word, whether it is read or preached to us, we truly find a spiritual banquet spread for us, to feast upon.

"And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him." (verse 11)

They did it because it was the custom at weddings in those times. The Philistine citizens of Timnath, when they saw that he had come to hold a wedding and to take his espoused to himself as a wife, brought thirty young men to "be with him". These men were to be the "friends of the bridegroom" (cf. Jn. 3:29). In those times, the "friends of the bridegroom" kept him company at the wedding. Sometimes, as Jn. 3:29 shows, there might only be one such man; but there could be many more, as seen from Samson's wedding. In a certain sense our modern-day "best man" at a wedding fulfils a somewhat similar function. These are all just customs, but such they are, and were.

One thing this does teach us is that there is no need to cast aside the customs of the place one lives in, the society one belongs to, as long as those customs are harmless. Obviously if they are heathenish and sinful, it is a different matter entirely, for then they must be forsaken by the believer; but innocent customs may be kept, and even in certain cases should be, so as not to cause *unnecessary* offence in society. If a stand must be made for truth and righteousness, and this causes offence, so be it; but there is no call to unnecessarily offend people in matters that are indifferent, neither here nor there in themselves.

But there is a type even in this verse: the Lord Jesus Himself, of course, is the antitype of Samson, for Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom, as many Scriptures show; and then "the friends of the bridegroom", in this verse, typify the *Gentile believers*, those who are directly referred to, by the Lord Jesus Himself, as His "friends", in Jn. 15:14: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." They are the ones who follow Him wherever He goes (Rev. 14:1-5), who stay with Him through thick and thin, because they love Him and belong to Him. In Jn. 3:29 John the Baptist referred to himself

as "the friend of the bridegroom", the Lord Jesus Christ being the bridegroom. And this is what all His people are: His friends.

But there is another way we can view these "friends" of Samson's at his wedding; and that is, as typifying also the men of the world; and this shall be seen a little further on in our study.

"And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you". (verse 12a)

This was another custom of those times: at weddings, for the amusement of the guests, people told riddles. For those weddings lasted a long time! We are told here that the wedding feast lasted seven days; and from Gen. 29:27-29, which occurred centuries before, we learn that this custom of week-long weddings had been the norm for a very long time in eastern lands. Jacob's wedding to Leah lasted a week, as Samson's did. And in addition to eating during the week-long wedding feast, the people present told riddles for entertainment. This riddle-telling also served another, more subtle purpose as well: it played a part in binding the families together more strongly, because this innocent fun, and the laughter that naturally would accompany it, helped to break the ice, encourage the formation of friendships, etc.

"If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments". (verse 12b)

A riddle is a secret thing, difficult to be understood; a dark saying, hidden in figurative language; something to tax the brain. And Samson told them this riddle on the very first day of the wedding feast, because this gave them seven days in which to figure it out.

His promise to the thirty young Philistine men who were his wedding companions was that if they succeeded, he would provide each of them with a sheet and a change of garment. In those days, clothing was not as readily available, nor as inexpensive, as it is today. A change of garment was a very expensive gift, and would refer to clothes worn during the day-time. As for the "sheets", the marginal note informs us that the Hebrew word can also be translated as "shirts". It meant a covering for the body at night – either a sheet to wrap around the body, or a night-shirt of some sort.

"But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it." (verse 13)

The terms and conditions were very fair; and the young men agreed to them.

"And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." (verse 14a)

This was his own invented riddle, based on his experience with the lion, and what he had seen when he returned to its carcase long afterwards. Let us consider the riddle itself:

The word "meat", as used here, is the old English word which means, in general, "food", rather than as used by us today when we limit the meaning to flesh. Understanding this, we realise that Samson was saying the same thing twice, which was a very common way of speaking in Bible times. He was saying, "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The lion is a great eater, a devourer of other creatures; and he is very strong. Out of him, Samson said, came forth food; specifically, *sweet* food. It came forth out of him, being taken out of his carcase, which would mean not only that the lion was strong when alive, but that when it was dead it was strong-smelling as its carcase rotted away.

Yet even out of a strong-smelling carnivore, something extremely sweet was extracted for food.

Normally, of course, one would not extract food of any sort, let alone sweet food, from inside a strong carnivorous animal like a lion. Yet Samson's riddle was that man could indeed obtain food from within a beast of prey.

"And they could not in three days expound the riddle." (verse 14b)

Although they racked their brains, discussing it endlessly among themselves, trying their best to figure it out, yet in three days they could not solve it. And time was running out!

It was a difficult riddle, certainly, but it was not utterly impossible to figure out. The answer, given in v.18, is simple enough: "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" After all, lions and honey were both very common in that land, and there was no animal that was a stronger eater than a lion, as they well knew; and nothing they possessed was sweeter than honey, as a food. But they just could not figure the riddle out, and they were getting angry, for in all likelihood they did not like Samson very much – he was an Israelite, after all – and they certainly did not want to pay that expensive prize to him if they failed to solve the riddle!

There is also the very real possibility that these Philistines realised Samson was implying that, although at this time the Philistines were strong, and were devouring the Israelites, the day was coming when they would become meat to the Israelites. And in all likelihood Samson *was*, in fact, implying such a thing! – using his killing of the lion to get this message across to the enemies of the Lord's people, via the riddle he had propounded.

But there is a truly wonderful spiritual application of all this, which will be seen in due course

# **Chapter Eleven**

# **Plowing with His Heifer**

#### Judges 14:15-20

- 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?
- 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?
- 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.
- 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.
- 19. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.
- 20. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

<sup>&</sup>quot;And it came to pass on the seventh day". (verse 15a)

This was now the seventh day of the marriage feast. The marriage had been consummated on the first day already, and she was now living with him as his wife. It was just the feast that was still going on.

"That they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire". (verse 15b)

This shows what kind of men these were! Wicked men, full of hatred to the Israelites, and so wrathful and ill-tempered that they were even prepared to burn Samson's wife, and her parents' house (and thus no doubt her parents in it) to the ground, if she did not find some way to get her husband to tell her what the riddle meant, so that she could tell them.

It was just a riddle, after all! It was a jest, yet they took it so seriously; they were in deadly earnest. What kind of men would say such a thing, to one of their own women? *Those* men would! They were vile sinners, and the Lord was going to destroy them. Life was so cheap in their society that they were prepared to commit a hideous murder of one of their own, just so as not to have to look foolish, or give Samson some garments! For some changes of clothing, they would burn her and her parents to death! Truly, these men were far sunk in savagery and heathenism.

It is clear from v.17 that they had asked her to find out the answer from the very first day of the wedding feast, but they only threatened her on the seventh day. For this was the final day, they had run out of time, and thus they threatened her to find out the answer to the riddle immediately.

"Have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?" (verse 15c)

What they were asking her was, "Have you and Samson called us to this wedding so that you can make profit from us, by forcing us to give him those thirty sheets and changes of garment?" They were so angry that they were going to have to pay him these things that they threatened his wife in this way. What cowards! What utterly degenerate and evil men!

"And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me." (verse 16a)

This was very wrong of Samson's new bride to do; but at the same time one can only imagine how very afraid she was, not only for her own life, but for her parents. She had grown up among these people, and she knew that this was no idle threat they were making. She knew they were perfectly capable of carrying it out. Still, she wronged her husband by this. She should have been honest with him from the beginning, and told him the whole story. Honesty, from the very start of a marriage, is essential. But here she was, filled with fear, trying to get him to tell her the riddle's answer.

And she used two tactics which countless wives have used on their husbands throughout history – and countless times with great effect! First, she used tears. When women turn on the waterworks, many husbands crack and agree to anything they want. It is an ageold trick, and the reason it has been employed countless times by countless wives is precisely because it is so successful, so often. But the fact that it works does not make it right. And second, she used that other old, old tactic of wives who do not get their way: "You hate me! You don't really love me!" Countless wives, down through the ages, have tried to manipulate their husbands with this trick – again, precisely, because it works so often. But it is very wrong of them to do it.

"And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?" (verse 16b)

Samson had no intention of telling her what the riddle meant; and really, this was perfectly understandable. After all, it would spoil the surprise, but more importantly, he knew, as we all do, that these things have a way of getting out. He certainly did not know her very well as yet. His parents he knew well; he knew that they were godly people, and could be trusted; yet he thought it best not to even tell them the riddle, in case someone should find a way to squeeze the answer out of them. Why then would he tell this woman he barely knew, even if she was now his wife? He did not yet know how well he could trust her. Referring to a different matter, the words of Solomon nevertheless illustrate very well how things spoken at times even in a private bedroom have a way of getting out, when the marriage is so ill-matched as this one was: "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter" (Eccl. 10:20). Even if Samson did not suspect that she would go to those young men and tell them the answer, he may have thought that she would probably at least whisper the answer to her own parents, or to some other relatives, or to some close friend. Young brides are often very tearful and emotional at leaving home, and are in the habit of telling their mothers everything, or confiding a little too much in their best friends. But he knew that if the men could not get his wife to talk, they might be able to get her relatives or friends to do so. He surely could see the type of men they were. He therefore said to her, "Why should I tell you, when I have not even told my own parents the answer?"

"Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the

men of his own house" (Mic. 7:5,6). This passage does *not* mean that at all times and in all places, one must distrust one's friend or wife! A true Christian friendship, and a true Christian marriage, are precious things; but this text is not referring to true Christian friendships or marriages. The Lord Jesus referred to these words, and applied them to any time when a believer's close relatives would even turn on him or her (Matt. 10:34-36). It has happened over and over, in history; and Samson, a believer, found it to be so by experience, as well. One can certainly trust in a true friend, but one must be very careful of pretended friends. And as for one's wife, of the virtuous wife the Word of God says, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Prov. 31:11); and to such a wife a man certainly may pour out his heart, knowing that what he says is safe with her. But when a man is married to a wife who is a blabbermouth, or not totally devoted to him, he must be very, very careful in what he shares with her. This Philistine woman was not one in whom the heart of Samson could safely trust.

And all this certainly shows the importance of *knowing a woman* well before marrying her. What troubles have come upon young people when they have failed in this respect.

"And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people." (verse 17)

Finally, after her constant pleading and whining, he gave in and told her the answer. We see, in this woman, the truth of the Proverbs: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike" (Prov. 27:15); "the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping" (Prov. 19:13). She succeeded in wearing him down, as countless wives have done to countless husbands through the centuries, by constantly crying, begging, pleading, whining, and

questioning his love for her. No man likes to hear his wife question his love for her, and no man likes to see his wife crying all the time – especially his newlywed wife, during the still ongoing wedding festivities! This is meant to be a joyful time for a young man, a time of laughter and happiness, not a time when his wife is constantly dissolving into tears and wailings, day after day!

We can imagine Samson's dilemma. It was their wedding festivities, everyone was laughing and happy and feasting, and yet, day after day, night after night, there was his new bride, weeping and wailing and questioning his love. *Not* guaranteed to make for a happy wedding time for the man! It certainly must have spoiled Samson's wedding.

And so, finally, he caved in and told her. He was just too weary of her crying and begging; "she lay sore upon him", the verse says. What volumes those words speak! We can be sure she promised him that if he told her, she would keep it secret. And, utterly worn down by her "continual dropping", he told her. And (because there was no time to lose) she immediately went and told the young men.

Samson should have known that he could not trust a Philistine. They were the enemies of his people, and they were heathen idolaters, cruel and wicked people. This woman came from a nation that thought nothing of threatening murder for such a trifle as the answer to a riddle; it was too much to expect that she would be an honourable woman herself.

But Samson had made his bed, and now he had to sleep in it. He was "unequally yoked" to this woman by marriage (2 Cor. 6:14-18); but when a believing man marries an unbelieving woman (or *vice versa*), he has to live with the consequences of his foolishness. Let young people contemplating marriage pay heed to this!

But of course, as we know, all this was being sovereignly overruled for good by the Lord, even though Samson sinned in marrying the woman, for it was to provide him with the occasion he needed against the Philistines.

"And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" (verse 18a)

They were able to triumphantly tell him the answer to the riddle before the end of the seventh day of the feast; and thus they had won, and could claim the prize. Samson would now have to provide them with thirty sheets and thirty changes of garment, which amounted to a very considerable sum in those times.

"What is sweeter than honey?" they said. And of course the answer is: nothing is sweeter than honey. It is the sweetest of foods. "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste" (Prov. 24:13). And, "What is stronger than a lion?" Again, the answer is: no animal is as strong as a lion, at least among carnivores. "A lion which is strongest among beasts" (Prov. 30:30). The book of Proverbs, of course, had not been written as yet; but it was a fact well known in the Middle East, that of all carnivores, none was stronger than a lion.

"And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." (verse 18b)

Samson realised – too late – that his wife had betrayed him. He realised, also, that somehow these men had threatened her, putting her in a most terrible position. And he compared what they had done to a man taking another man's heifer, and using it to plow his own field without his permission. This would mean loss for the heifer's owner, but much gain for the man who took the heifer and used it to plow his field. Also, a heifer is young, and unaccustomed to the

yoke; just as Samson's wife was young, and not yet accustomed to being under the headship of her husband.

The Philistines "plowed" with Samson's wife, because they made use of her. They were like men plowing a field, turning the sods to reveal the hidden earth beneath. They found out the secret of the riddle from her.

But now we must see how all these things typified great and wonderful spiritual truths:

Samson's putting forth a riddle to the men at the feast, which puzzled them and which they could not answer, typified the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ! For the Saviour often preached to the people in parables, which puzzled the men of this world, and the meaning of which remained hidden to them. And this was deliberate on the part of the Lord, as shown by His words in Matt. 13:10-16: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ve shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."

The Lord's parables contained within them "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven". The mystery of the *Gospel* was hidden in them; for in Eph. 6:19 we read of "the mystery of the gospel". And specifically, this riddle of Samson's was typical of what we could call the "riddle" (or mystery) of the *Gospel in general*, which Christ our Lord has put forth! How so? Let us see, for it is wonderful indeed:

The Gospel of Christ is said to be a "mystery" to the men of this world, who are "wise in their own eyes" (and who were typified by the thirty young Philistine men); for it is full of things which are mysterious and hidden to the men of the world, things they cannot understand, things which only the elect can understand when their eyes are opened. As Jesus said, in prayer: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25).

And when we think of what Samson's riddle was about, we actually see the *essence* of the Gospel contained in it! For the Gospel of Christ, the mystery of the faith, the Gospel riddle, is about the destruction of Satan the "roaring lion" by Christ, and the sweet blessings of God's grace, which Christians have because Christ has defeated the devil and his works; and in addition, He enables His people to bring forth sweet fruit unto God

Now the answer to the riddle was, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" As we saw, nothing is sweeter, and nothing is stronger, in the natural world. But in the *antitype*, the wonderful truth is that *the Gospel* is sweeter than honey, and *the Saviour* is stronger than Satan the roaring lion!

But although it is true that the young Philistine men typified the men of this world to whom the Gospel is a mystery, they can also typify the men of this world who, nevertheless, are the Lord's *elect!* For it is the elect who "plough with Christ's heifer" so as to *learn* the mystery of the Gospel, and the various mysteries contained within it, just as those men "ploughed with Samson's heifer" so as to learn the riddle! Samson said to the men that the only way they could have learned the riddle was to plough with his heifer, meaning to go to his wife and get her to explain the riddle to them. Samson typified

Christ; and Samson's wife typified the Church, the bride of Christ. So then, to "plough with *Christ's* heifer" means, to *hear the Gospel truth from the Church*, the bride of Christ the Lord! And this is what the Lord's elect do! They go to the true Church, the mystical spouse of Christ; they go there to hear the Word, and to hear the mysteries of the kingdom explained; they desire to understand the Gospel, and they go to those who already understand it, and proclaim it, and ask them to expound the Gospel to them!

Unless the ones chosen to eternal life "plough with Christ's heifer", so to speak, they will never understand the mystery of the faith, and all the various wonderful mysteries contained within it! How beautifully this is set forth in the Song of Solomon 1:7,8: the woman (representing true believers) asks the man (who represents the Lord Jesus Christ): "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" To which the Lord replies: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." This is the way to understand the Gospel – to follow the footsteps of Christ's true flock, the true Church, and to be fed beside the tents of the faithful and true pastors of the true local churches, the flocks of Christ; not turning aside to the false flocks, led by false shepherds.

Above all, then, we see the Gospel in all of this. But there are other spiritual applications as well:

We may learn from this, spiritually, that God brings good to pass out of evil, for His beloved people. The lion had attacked Samson, but when it was dead, sweet honey was taken from inside it. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery; but God meant it for good, to save many people alive by Joseph's hand (Gen. 50:20). Jesus was put to death on a cruel cross; but the eternal salvation of millions of souls was accomplished by His death (e.g. see Acts 4:10-12)!

And we who are believers may also learn that that which looks as if it will devour us often is turned to our good. We have powerful enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. At times they seem ready to devour us. But even from the work of such enemies the Lord may bring good to pass, by overturning all wickedness and accomplishing His own wonderful purposes.

"And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle." (verse 19a)

Samson honoured and fulfilled the terms of the agreement; but at huge cost to the Philistines! The Holy Spirit came upon him in mighty power, enabling him to do valiantly. He owed these thirty Philistine men the garments; so he went to Ashkelon, one of the principal Philistine cities, killed thirty other Philistines, took their clothes, and gave them to the thirty men to discharge his debt! Ashkelon was a long way from Timnath; but it is possible that he went this far because there might have been some idolatrous festival there, when men were dressed in their best clothes, which he wanted.

In this, of course, private Christians cannot copy him. This was an extraordinary act, performed under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God, and in His strength. Christians, New Testament believers, are never commanded (in their private capacities) to kill their enemies. The wicked *will* still be punished – but not by the Lord's people. The Word of the Lord to New Testament believers is very plain: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). But Samson was raised up to be Israel's *judge*. He thus had a right to do this, as a public person, the leader of the nation; and he acted as the Spirit of God directed him.

Now as a Nazarite, Samson was not to go near a dead body; yet he

did so in this case. And this act of his, also, has its antitype: those who come to understand the mystery of the Gospel (typified by the young men) are the ones whom the Lord Jesus Christ (typified by Samson) dresses in the robe of His own righteousness! Just as Samson went and found clothes for the young men, and gave these to them – the clothes were not their own, and they did not purchase them – so Christ Jesus "dresses" His people in His own perfect righteousness, which is imputed to them in justification; they do not earn it, they do not purchase it (Rom. 4). But just as Samson obtained those clothes at great cost, so did Jesus work out the righteousness of His people at great cost! – that of His own blood. "For ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20); yes, even "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18,19).

Also: Samson's slaying of these men typified Christ's spiritual "slaying" of men by the "sword of the Spirit", the Word of God, the Gospel (Eph. 6:17)! The elect fall beneath the mighty sword of the Spirit, which goes forth out of the mouth of the Lord and "slays" them (2 Thess. 2:8); and they die to self, die in their own estimation of themselves, die to the world, die to sin (Rom. 7:7-11) – and live unto Him!

"And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house." (verse 19b)

His anger was kindled against his wife, justly so, and he left her there; and it was kindled against the Philistines. Therefore he returned to his father's house, leaving her behind and doubtless waiting to see how the Lord would direct him now.

It is better for believers to be righteously *angry* with the spiritual "Philistines", than to *fall in love* with them! And this is true, whether by our spiritual "Philistine" enemies we mean the world, the flesh, the devil, or the people of this world! Samson had joined himself to them in a sinful marriage alliance, and look how it turned out. Let

it be a lesson to all Christian young people! Do not be ensnared by pretty faces, but be true to the Lord! And when we realise that we have sinned, like the prodigal son we must return to our heavenly Father's house (as Samson returned to his father's house), mourning and sorrowful, repenting of our sin (Lk. 15:17-20)!

"But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend." (verse 20)

Although he had married her, and she was his wife in every sense, yet now, because he had left her, her father and her people decided to give her as wife to another man, believing that Samson wanted nothing to do with her and had in effect divorced her. So they gave her to a man who had been one of the "friends of the bridegroom", one of the thirty men who had acted as his "companions" at the wedding. Perhaps, even, this man, being the main "friend of the bridegroom", was already very interested in Samson's wife, or even developed such an interest during the time when he was acting the part of Samson's "best man", so to speak; so that it was very easy for those wicked Philistines to give her to him as his wife when Samson left.

And as this incident follows *after* Samson's wooing of a Gentile bride, we can understand it typically and spiritually as follows: many who are merely *professing* Christians, who join themselves to churches and pretend to be converted, and thus to be part of the number for whom Christ died, in time show their true colours and depart from their profession, going instead into the arms of another. And who would be typified by this other one?

First and foremost, the Papal Antichrist, who *pretends* to be Christ's friend (just as that young man pretended to be Samson's friend), and who calls himself the Head of the Church, but in truth is nothing but an exalted rival of the *true and only* Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-12).

And second, in general it can refer to *any* false Christs; *any* men who pretend to preach the truth but who lead men astray by their lies.

Well, Samson now had the occasion against the Philistines which he had sought (Judg. 14:4)! And the time of the beginning of the Lord's deliverance had come.

## **Chapter Twelve**

### Two by Two: Foxes and Firebrands

#### Judges 15:1-7

- 1. But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.
- 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.
- 3. And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.
- 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.
- 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.
- 6. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.
- 7. And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

<sup>&</sup>quot;But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid". (verse 1a)

The reason for mentioning that this was the time of wheat harvest was because of what Samson would later do to the Philistines' fields. It would be a catastrophe for them because it was the time for harvesting, the wheat was all ready to be picked, and Samson destroyed it all.

As we saw, his anger had been kindled (14:19) against his wife, and against the Philistines. He had returned to his father's house in anger, but nowhere does it say he planned to leave her for good, or to divorce her. He had very good cause to be angry with his wife, but this did not mean he wanted nothing more to do with her! And now that his anger had subsided, he wanted to return to her. But he did not expect that she had now been given to another man! Her father did very wrong in doing this.

Samson went to see her, carrying a young kid of the goats as a gift. In those times this was considered a very special gift, fit even to give to a king. Jesse sent a kid to King Saul, in 1 Sam. 16:20.

Although the sin had been hers and her people's, yet Samson was the one to seek reconciliation. This was good on his part, for *she* was the one who should have come to *him*. But no – she was too busy now as the wife of another man!

We may learn from this that it is very right for the Lord's people to seek reconciliation when something happens in a marriage that has affected the relationship between husband and wife. Married couples are not to hold grudges, but to try to fix things, even if it requires humbling themselves and taking the first step. This is what Samson did.

"And he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in." (verse 1b)

He fully expected to have normal conjugal relations with his wife, in their bedroom. But her father would not permit it. She was now given to another man as his wife.

"And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion". (verse 2a)

Admittedly, Samson had left her in anger; but even so, her father had acted wrongly, with far too much haste, in assuming that Samson was never coming back. It is very probable he was glad Samson had gone; it is even very possible he had always preferred this other man to Samson anyway, for he at least was a Philistine; which was why he so quickly gave her as a wife to him, instead of waiting to see what Samson would do. But even though he was her father, he had no right to take such action. For whether he liked it or not, Samson had married his daughter; and to take such action, on a mere assumption, was great wickedness. When a girl marries, she leaves the authority of her father and submits herself to her husband. This man had no right to act this way.

"Is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her." (verse 2b)

This just shows what kind of people these Philistines were. The law of God forbids a man from marrying his wife's sister (Lev. 18:3,18), which doubtless Samson knew, and therefore had no intention of doing so; but the Philistines had no such scruples. And very likely her father well knew that Samson would not take her sister as his wife, which was why he was willing to make this offer. After all, if he was happy to see Samson leave his first daughter, it was highly unlikely he would have wanted him for a son-in-law by his marrying another daughter!

Was this younger sister really fairer – prettier, more attractive – than Samson's wife? Perhaps; perhaps not. It was irrelevant anyway. The point is that Samson had not chosen the younger sister, but the older one; and a man is not to make a decision on marriage based on looks alone! This is the way the world so often does it, and the

Philistines were of the world; but the Lord's people set a higher standard. A man of God must look at the heart, and so much else, not just the beauty of the woman; for, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Prov. 31:30). Of course, Samson had not done this himself; but we have seen the reason for that.

This portion of God's Word is very instructive to parents, daughters, and sons. It teaches us about marital squabbles, the sanctity of marriage, and how the world looks at marriage as a light matter, easily entered into and just as easily broken.

And now for the type in all this: our Lord Jesus Christ did not desire His elect for any physical beauty that was theirs by nature! The elect were not chosen because they were more handsome, or more beautiful, than others; nor because they were cleverer, or nicer people, than others. Not at all. Just as Samson's wife's sister may have been fairer than she was, but Samson had not chosen her for his wife, so believers, who are the spouse of Christ the heavenly Bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33) were not chosen because they were in any way better, or nicer, or anything else. Paul was the chief of sinners, but God chose him to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:15)! As Deut. 7:7,8 says of Israel, so it is true in a greater way of all the elect of God: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you". Divine election to eternal life is of free and sovereign grace alone! It is not based on anything foreseen in us; not on any supposed goodness. Jacob was not a better person than Esau, by nature; yet God elected him and not Esau (Rom. 9:11-18).

And another typical lesson from these verses is that there are those (typified by Samson's wife) who *profess* to be the people of God, but in reality they are not. For a time they seem to follow the Lord, and submit to him; but after a while they turn away from Him, and follow after some other so-called saviour: some false messiah,

some religious leader, *anyone* except the Lord Jesus! But here is the language of the *true* Christian in prayer to the Lord: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" (Song. 1:7). Samson's wife was one who turned aside to one of Samson's companions (Judg. 14:20); and false professing "christians" readily turn aside to follow after other "saviours", other religious leaders, other "christs". The true Church, however, does not do this. She rejoices to follow after her Lord and Saviour alone, and cleave fast to Him!

"And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure." (verse 3)

Samson was angry, and his anger in this case was righteous anger. For a father-in-law to do such a thing is utter wickedness, a vile act; and Samson determined to take revenge.

His words mean that even though what he was about to do would be a displeasure to them (*that* was an understatement!), it was what they deserved, and he would be more blameless than them; their sin had brought it upon them. What was about to happen to them was all their fault, for the way they had treated him.

Of course, Christians are forbidden to take private revenge, as we have seen (Rom. 12:19-21). When they are wronged, they must leave it to the courts of law to solve; and the Lord Himself will take vengeance on their enemies as well, in His own time. But Samson was not a private person. The Lord had raised him up as the judge of Israel. And therefore, his acts of revenge were right, because the Lord *gives* such power into the hands of the civil authorities. As Rom. 13:4 says of the civil authority, "he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." This is the duty, in fact, of the civil authority. It is a power the Lord has put in his hands.

The Philistines had done a great evil, and Samson was the Lord's minister to take revenge, and execute wrath upon them. The Lord was making use of this terrible incident to give Samson the occasion he needed to take action against the Philistines who were oppressing God's people. The *private* wrong done to him gave him the opportunity to avenge the very *public* wrongs the Philistines had been doing to the Israelites for a long time. After all, if he had simply been acting out of private revenge, he would have punished only the father of his wife, the new husband of his wife, and the Philistines who had been directly involved, at the wedding, and in any way afterwards. But instead, he viewed this incident done to him as the opportunity he had been seeking to take revenge, as Israel's judge, upon the people as a whole. And we can be sure that those Philistines did what they did to him precisely *because* he was an Israelite; so that he viewed their sin as against the whole nation of Israel.

And, antitypically, those who sin against the Lord Jesus Christ will be punished by Him! He will take vengeance on them, as the great Judge and King of all the earth! "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

"And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails." (verse 4)

That land had a great many foxes. And Timnath would have had its fair share, for Judg. 14:5 says that it was a place of vineyards; and

the Song of Solomon 2:15 says that the foxes were apt to spoil the vines

Now imagine the difficulty of such a feat! Firstly, the difficulty of going out and catching wild foxes – three hundred of them! They are not easy to catch: they are fast, wily, and they hide easily. Secondly, the difficulty of keeping them all penned up somewhere. Thirdly, the difficulty of tying them by their tails, two by two. Fourthly, the difficulty of transporting them to where he wanted to release them. And lastly, the difficulty of tying a burning piece of wood to the tails of each pair! Clearly the Lord was with him, and enabled him to perform such a feat. There were surely easier ways, far easier, of punishing the Philistines, but this was the method the Lord led Samson to use, and for very good reasons.

The reason he tied the foxes together in pairs, by their tails, with one firebrand tied between them, was because if he had tied a firebrand to each fox's tail, each would have simply run in a fairly straight line for some hiding place, and little damage would have been done to the crops of the Philistines. But by tying two together, they would have pulled in opposite directions, and would have run all over the place, wildly, doing so much more damage. And by letting them loose at different times and in different fields, the damage would be even greater, and vast fields would have been burned down.

And there was a reason why he used foxes, and not men: never once in all his mighty exploits against the enemy did he ever have any man helping him. *He always acted alone*. And this is a very important point to note, for in this he typified the Lord Jesus, who accomplished the salvation of His chosen people *by Himself;* by His own power alone.

"And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives." (verse 5)

What a huge destruction this must have been! And what a catastrophe for the Philistines! They would have lost virtually their entire crops; crops which were ready to be harvested! And this would have resulted in hunger, famine, starvation even (unless other Philistines came to their aid). It was a terrible loss to them, but nevertheless it was a just retaliation, by Israel's judge, for their shocking sins against him, *and* against the Israelites in general.

Also, we see in this the justice of God: the Philistines would have taken of their firstfruits, of the grain, the grapes, and the oil, and offered of their harvest to their heathen god Dagon; but that which they would have offered to their idol was made a burnt offering to the justice of the true God, the God of Israel!

And in this incident we have a most amazing type set out:

Ezek. 13:4 says: "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts." Meaning, they were *false prophets*, and were compared with foxes. The Lord Jesus said, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11). And *false doctrine* can be compared with *fire*; for Isa. 50:11 says, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." And such men, by their false doctrines, *set fire* to those who are the "tares" and the "stubble", and not the Lord's planting.

But keeping in mind Samson as an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should, I believe, rather see the antitype of this fulfilled in something else: as Samson caught those foxes, and sent them out two by two, with a flaming torch between them, into the fields of the Philistines; so the Lord Jesus went out and "caught" the disciples (and continues to call men to the ministry to this day); He sent them out "by two and two" (Mk. 6:7; Acts 13:2,3) into the world, and they took with them the flaming torch of the Word of God. And that flaming torch of the Word set the world ablaze! It brought light

to those ordained to eternal life, and it spoke of the fiery judgment awaiting those "Philistines" who reject the Gospel, and turn their backs on the only Lord and Saviour. And it has the same effect today. It always has had, and always will! As the ministers of the Lord go forth into the world with the Gospel (Mk. 16:15), it is a light to the elect, and speaks of fiery judgment to the reprobate. It is powerful, quick, enlightening, burning, searching, hot; and it accomplishes the Lord's mighty purposes in the world! The harvest was ripe in Samson's day as he sent those foxes into the fields; and Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (Jn. 4:35); and, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). Yes, labourers who will be like those foxes, carrying the burning, flaming message of the Gospel into the fields of the world ripe for harvesting!

"Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire." (verse 6)

This is what Samson's wife, and her father, got for their sinful conduct. These Philistines had used her; but she was very mistaken if she imagined they thought highly of her. They were so depraved, so sunk in sin, that they would turn even on one of their own. And when they did so, they were cruel and savage, acting worse than the beasts of the field. They blamed the woman and her father for the huge calamity that had befallen them at Samson's hands, completely ignoring the fact that they were equally to blame, for setting her up to her wickedness in the first place! They chose to ignore their own crime, and they burned her and her father alive!

These Philistines were evidently from other towns and cities than Timnath, judging by the answer they gave to the question put to them in this verse; which shows that Samson's vengeance on the Philistines had extended well beyond Timnath's vineyards alone. *Many* Philistine places had suffered.

And thus Samson's wife ended up suffering the very death she had so feared would be hers if she did not obey the Philistines and learn the answer to Samson's riddle from him! They had threatened her and her family with death by fire for not discovering the answer to the riddle (Judg. 14:15), and yet, even though she did discover it for them, she still died by fire at their hands. The Lord is not mocked. She should have trusted in her husband, and not given in to them. If we do the right thing, the Lord may preserve us from what we fear; but when we do the wrong thing in order to avoid what we fear, that very thing may come upon us anyway! It happened at times in the past, when professing Christians denied Christ the Lord, too afraid to confess Him before men because they knew that the penalty for doing so was death, and then were put to death anyway. "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Prov. 10:24).

The law of God made death the punishment for adultery. This woman had committed adultery by marrying another man when she was lawfully married to Samson; and although she was a heathen and not one of God's people, she suffered the penalty of death for her sin. It may not have been the lawful magistrate who sentenced her, but she suffered it anyway. God is not mocked.

And also, without realising it, these wicked Philistines, in their anger against the woman and her father, ended up becoming the instruments in the Lord's hands to punish the woman and her father for their sin! In other words, instead of taking vengeance on Samson, whom they hated, they ended up taking vengeance *for* Samson. He did not do it himself – he did not punish his wife – but the Bible says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19); and He brought vengeance down upon them at the hands of Samson's own enemies. "Surely", even, "the wrath of man shall praise" the Lord (Psa. 76:10).

And this is also what the Jewish nation, which boasted (so to speak) of being the Messiah's spouse, got for their many sins, and above all for their rejection of the Messiah when He came: their temple and their city were burned and destroyed by the Romans, vast numbers of Jews perished in the flames as well, and suffered the fire of hell afterwards. As the Messiah had said, they could not escape the damnation of hell (Matt. 23:33).

But again, the true antitype of all this is to be found in those Gentiles who merely profess to be part of the true Church, the bride And the antitype, then, is the Whore of Babylon! The Roman Catholic system, that pretended bride of Christ, with its pretended head of the Church, its pope, and claiming to be the one true Church, the virgin bride, when it is a harlot! Just as Samson's wife played the harlot, being joined to another man, so Popery plays the harlot, for she does not belong to Christ and has never loved Him; and, as the just punishment for her sins, she has in the past been burned with fire for playing the harlot against Him, by those who once doted on her! "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rev. 17:16); and she shall be burned yet again, once and for all: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (Rev. 18:8). Compare with Lev. 21:9.

"And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease." (verse 7)

The Philistines, being so afraid of Samson after what he had done to their crops, may have thought that by burning his wife and her father they would appease him; that he would no longer be angry with them, now that these two had paid for their sin against him. But what these depraved heathens failed to understand was that *they* were to blame as well! *They* had originally set her up to do what she did, and they were guilty too! And Samson said to them, in effect: Though you have done this terrible thing, though you have committed this shocking murder of my wife and her father, I will be avenged. I will take vengeance on you all, and you will pay dearly.

But he was not primarily referring to their horrible murder of his wife and his father-in-law. This is clear from his words: "Though you have done this (thinking to appease me by it), yet will I be avenged of you". He was saying to them, Though you think this will satisfy me, it won't – in fact, it just adds to your crimes. Though you have done this, I won't be satisfied until I have taken vengeance on all of you, as a nation! And his meaning was, Not for what they did to her, as a crime committed against him as a private person; but for what they had done to Israel, their crimes against God's people, their cruel oppression of them. He had sought occasion against them, and now he had it. He was giving them notice that he would be avenged on them for what they, as a nation, had done to Israel as a nation! He, as the leader in Israel, was declaring war on them!

Thus when he said, "and after that I will cease", he did not mean, "After I have punished you for what you did to my wife, I will cease"; because in fact he did *not* cease, but went on and on against them. His meaning was rather, "After I've taken full vengeance on you, as a nation, as the oppressors of God's people, *then* I will cease!"

For Samson was Israel's judge, and acted as a public representative, and it was his *duty* to be a revenger, to execute wrath on these evildoers (Rom. 13:1-7). But it is not the duty of a private Christian to take revenge on his enemies. He is to leave it to the law, and to God.

And likewise our antitypical Samson, Jesus Christ our great Deliverer, will be avenged on all His enemies for their sins! Though the "Philistines" of this world oppress the Church of the living God, Christ's spouse; though Christians the world over are persecuted at the hands of the wicked; yet the day is coming when our glorious, almighty Deliverer will be avenged on them all. They will be punished, and punished eternally, for their sins. And then He will cease! But *not till* then. He will cease, when every last one of His enemies, and the enemies of His people, are punished.

The prophet Isaiah said: "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come" (Isa. 63:4). It is a prophecy of the Messiah. And just as Samson sought for opportunities to go to war against the enemies of the Israelites, so the Lord Christ has the day of vengeance in His heart when the year of His redeemed comes. The time for the Lord to deliver those He has redeemed by His blood from the hands of their enemies, is a time which He has in his heart. And with that in His heart He goes forth, and will indeed take vengeance when the time is right!



The Cave of Samson in the Sorek Valley Associates for Biblical Research. www.BibleArchaeology.org. Used by permission.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **Delivered Up by Those He was Born to Deliver**

Judges 15:8-13

- 8. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.
- 9. Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.
- 10. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.
- 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.
- 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.
- 13. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

"And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter". (verse 8a)

Samson fought alone, no man helping him; and yet, though only one against so many, they were killed in huge numbers, but he remained alive and unharmed. The Spirit of God was truly moving him and empowering him!



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The expression, "hip and thigh", either means that he smote them on their hips and thighs so badly that they were maimed and crippled, and many died as a result of their injuries; or it was a proverbial expression, the meaning simply being that he laid into them, fighting like a wild beast, lashing out at them here, there and everywhere on their bodies, causing a vast slaughter of them in this way.

In this we see him typifying the Lord Jesus, who has done, and still does, the same, but in a far more wonderful, spiritual sense: on His own, the Lord Jesus "slays" His elect under Him: they die to self, they die to the world, and from then on they belong to Him; and of course He slays His enemies, and will yet do so on the last day with a vast slaughter, such as has never been seen before! "I have trodden the winepress alone," says Christ through the prophet, "and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (Isa. 63:3).

"And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam." (verse 8b)

He did not go to dwell there because he was afraid, but rather to use it as a base, because it was a natural fortress, and to wait for the next opportunity of going to battle with the Philistines.

Now what is called here "the rock Etam" can also be called "the cliff Etam", for that was what it was, and still is:

Some have suggested that the "Etam" referred to in 1 Chron. 4:32 was the Etam where Samson went to dwell. This Etam was a town in the territory of the tribe of Simeon, but it cannot be the Etam of Samson, for the Etam he went to was in the tribe of Judah's territory, as is clear from verses 8-11 of Judges 15.

Another suggestion, accepted by many, is that the Etam of Samson was the same as the "Etam" mentioned in 2 Chron. 11:6. This was a

city in Judah, which means that if Samson's Etam was near this city, either the city was named after the cliff, or the cliff after the city. The main problem with this is that this "Etam" was a long way from Samson's home territory of Zorah and Eshtaol.

But there is a far better location than any of these. It is a cave in what is today called the 'Arak Isma'in. The cave is only about two and a half miles away from Zorah; in other words, in an area he would have known very well. But at the same time it is actually just inside what was the boundary of the territory of Judah – thus explaining the arrival of men of Judah to arrest Samson there (v.11ff.), and the Philistines pitching in Judah when coming against Samson (v.9). These facts would make no sense otherwise. The Judahites would of course also have known the cave well.

At this spot there are great crags overhanging the gorge of the Sorek Valley. And in that place there is a gigantic rock, and in that rock there is an amazing cavern, a natural stronghold. This rock, and its cave, perfectly fit all the facts in the Samson account.

But it becomes even more exciting as we pay careful attention to the wording of v.8: "he went *down* and dwelt in the *top* of the rock Etam." Although this cave is at the top of the rock, or cliff, one actually approaches it by *descending* to it, exactly as the verse says, through a crack or fissure in the edge of the cliffs overhanging the chasm of the Sorek Valley. As the cave is in the *top* of the cliff, going *down* to it is a strange way of describing it – unless one reaches it from above, which was precisely the case, thus showing the absolute accuracy of the biblical text! If the Samson story was simply invented and written down at a later period, by men who just added to a Jewish folk tale (as sceptics believe), this little detail would not have been known and would not have been added to the account. It shows the Bible's utter reliability and the truthfulness of the account.

This crack is only just wide enough to let one person squeeze through at a time. It leads down to a long series of artificial steps, or rather foot-ledges, which were cut into the cliff face, and these descend to a narrow rock terrace which runs along the front of the cave.

What a natural fortress this cave of Etam was, and still is, all these centuries later! It is very high and wide, but not very deep. It is isolated and easily defendable, and once in the cave Samson could hold off an entire army, for the simple reason that only one man at a time could get to him through the extremely narrow fissure.

And still further evidence that this must be Samson's cave is that it overhangs the Sorek Valley. This valley was the home of Delilah! "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah" (Judg. 16:4).

Truly, this cave of *Isma'in* perfectly fits the Samson account; there is no reason to doubt, and every reason to believe, that today's '*Arak Isma'in* was the "rock of Etam" of Samson's day.

It is possible, today, if one visits Israel, to go to this cave of Samson. It is even marked on modern Israeli maps as Samson's cave, just two miles east-northeast of the modern town of Beth Shemesh. It is located in the Sorek River Nature Reserve. And today, instead of reaching the cave from above (the steps are hazardous as they are not in good shape), one can reach it from the valley floor up a well-marked, steep trail.

"Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi." (verse 9)

Unless one understands that this rock of Etam was in *Judah* rather than in Dan's territory, this verse would make no sense. Why would the Philistines pitch in Judah in order to catch Samson? But one can understand it in the light of the facts given when studying v.8!

The name "Lehi" means "jawbone". At this time it was not called by this name. Only after Samson gave it this name, in v.17, did it come to be called Lehi. But it is mentioned here in anticipation of that, as the name by which it would be known from then on. And when it says the Philistines "spread themselves", it shows that a large army had pitched. They had come to capture Samson. War had been declared by Samson against them, and they were angry and ready to kill him – if they could capture him. The fact that such a large body of men came to capture him shows how afraid they were of him. His great strength and cunning terrified them, and they felt they could only face him in large numbers. They did not want to be smitten "hip and thigh" again, as they had recently been, with a great slaughter (v.8).

"And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us." (verse 10)

Why were the men of the tribe of Judah so afraid of them? It was because the Philistines oppressed the Israelites at this time. When, therefore, the men of Judah saw this large body of Philistines arrive, they were full of fear and thought they had come to fight with them. And they could not understand why. After all, they had submitted meekly to the Philistine yoke, and had not caused any trouble. But the Philistines explained the purpose of their mission. They had not come against a tribe, but against an individual. But what an individual! He was a one-man army, so they sent an entire army against him.

"Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam". (verse 11a)

This shows the fear which Samson aroused even in his own nation: such great fear of his strength that they felt the need to send three thousand men to him.

Samson was from the tribe of Dan, not Judah; and Dan bordered Philistia, so that, more than the other tribes of Israel, Dan suffered from invasion, persecution and hostility from the Philistines. But by the time these events were happening, the tribe of Dan had begun to migrate northward, which meant that their territory was now the frontier between Philistia and the tribe of Judah. And this in turn meant that Judah was now very vulnerable to Philistine attacks. This is why the men of Judah were so concerned, and went to see Samson.

"And said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us?" (verse 11b)

One would think that these Judahites would support Samson, whom the Lord had so obviously raised up to deliver Israel; but no! They were such cowards, so sunk in sin and so far now from the Lord God of their fathers, that they did not want any trouble with the Philistines. They were content to be their slaves, rather than go to war against them in the strength of Jehovah.

"Don't you know that the Philistines rule over us?" they said to him. Yes, they did – but this was the Israelites' own fault! They knew that this state of things should not exist. The Philistines should not rule over the people of God. And yet they were not prepared to do anything about it, and even turned on the one who was going to deliver them. How sad that the people of God had sunk to such a low level. These were, after all, men of *Judah!* The tribe of whom Jacob had prophesied, in Gen. 49:8, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies"; and in v.9, ""Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up". This was the tribe from which the Lord Jesus Christ would come, He of whom it is written that He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). Yet at this point in their history, they were frightened, timid, weak.

And note how they said to Samson, "What have you done to us?" All that he did, he did to the Philistines; but these men of Judah took it as having been done to them, because they were afraid that

by Samson's provoking of the Philistines, they would now take vengeance on all the Israelites. Instead of supporting him, these cowards blamed him, criticised him, condemned his actions, and (in so doing) rejected him as their judge, even though it was so obvious that the Lord was with him. And in rejecting him, they rejected the Lord as well, who had raised him up. Ungrateful sinners! Showing their base ingratitude to God and to God's chosen one.

The Bible says in 2 Tim. 1:7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear". It says in Prov. 28:1, "The righteous are bold as a lion." If these Israelites had been regenerate men, they would not have been so afraid and weak. But they were sunk in sin. And they were acting according to their sinful natures, turning on one of their own just so that they could save their own skins. They had all the evidence they could possibly want that the Lord had raised up Samson to be their champion – and yet they were too afraid to rally behind him and support him.

"And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them." (verse 11c)

Again it must be pointed out that this revenge would not have been right for a private Christian. The Bible is very clear about this (Rom. 12:19-21). However: taking revenge *is* right for the civil magistrate (Rom. 13:4), and this is what Samson was. Although he said, "As they did unto *me*, so have I done unto them", he took what was done to the entire nation as being done to him, being now the judge of Israel and therefore its head. He acted in a *representative capacity* as their leader.

"And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines." (verse 12a)

The sheer cowardice and base ingratitude of these men of Judah! Samson had proved that he was more than a match for the Philistines; he had demonstrated that the Lord was with him mightily; and yet they were so afraid of angering their oppressors that they were willing to bind Samson themselves, and deliver him to his and their great enemies. They were more willing to betray one of their own than to upset those heathen idolaters. They would rather be oppressed by the Lord's enemies than delivered by the Lord's friend!

They themselves were afraid of Samson – which is why three thousand of them came to take him – but they were even more afraid of the Philistines

"And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves." (verse 12b)

Amazingly, Samson was actually willing to be taken captive by the men of Judah, if they swore that they would not kill him themselves. And he wanted this solemn oath from them, not because he was afraid of them – after all, he could easily have fought all three thousand of them and won. Even on the open field he could have done it, and certainly he could have done it in that cave of Etam, with its narrow entrance which allowed only one man through at a time. But because they were his brethren, and he did not want to have to fight them and kill some in self-defence, if they tried to kill him first, he asked them to swear to this.

But why was he even willing to let them take him and bind him, and deliver him to the Philistines?

One reason was because he cared for them so much, that he did not want any of them to suffer at the hands of the Philistines because of him; and so he was willing to allow himself to be bound and handed over to the Philistines, rather than that any of them should be harmed. How different was his attitude to them, than theirs to him! He cared for their wellbeing, but they did not care for his. He thought how he

could make their lives better, but they only cared for themselves.

And another reason he was willing to be taken captive by them, and handed over, was because he would then be right in the very midst of his enemies, who would think he was helpless; and he would then be able to kill even more of them! He thus did not speak this way out of fear, nor because he had simply given up. Not at all! He saw it as a great opportunity to again take vengeance on the Philistines. He knew that even if he was bound and delivered to his enemies, he was more than a match for them in the strength of Jehovah. He was not afraid, but supremely confident that "through God he would do valiantly" (see Psa. 60:12; 108:13).

"And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee." (verse 13a)

They promised they would not kill him. Perhaps even these wretched, hard-hearted, cowardly men were reluctant to kill him, because he was one of them, after all, an Israelite; and they knew he was trying to help them, even though they did not like the way he was doing it. But even so, they were quite prepared to tie him up and hand him over to his enemies, which shows what wicked men they were. They were quite prepared to let the *Philistines* kill him, even though *they* would not do it! All they were interested in was saving their own skins.

"And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock." (verse 13b)

They used *new* cords, because these would not be frayed by age, and therefore would not be weak. And they used *two* cords, to be doubly sure. Not that it mattered – Samson could break them easily.

In doing this to him, they were as much his would-be murderers as the Philistines! Their sin was not excused merely because they did not kill him themselves. They well knew that the Philistines would do so, after torturing him. So they were terribly guilty of this great crime.

And note again the accuracy of the Holy Scriptures: it says they brought him *up* from the rock, which exactly accords with the geographical location of the rock Etam.

Now to consider the typology in these verses, and Christ the wonderful antitype of Samson:

Verse 9 says that "the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah". They did this, of course, because they went to capture Samson; and, just as they came to take Samson, so the enemies of the Lord Jesus, his great antitype, came out against Him: the Jews who hated Him, and the Romans.

Verse 10 shows the men of Judah as being very fearful of the Philistines, and very timid; and in the antitype, the Jews of Jesus' day were under the Roman yoke just as the men of Judah of Samson's day were under the Philistine yoke, and the Jews of Jesus' day were fearful of the Romans, and timid, not wanting to "rock the boat", but to maintain the *status quo*.

Verse 12 says that the Judahites went to bind Samson, and deliver him into the hands of the Philistines; and so, too, did the Jews, out of fear of the Romans (Jn. 11:48), desire to take Jesus, and deliver Him to the Romans (Jn. 18:3,28ff.).

A band of men was sent to capture Samson. But a *portion* of that number was all that was needed, as he was *willing* to go with them; and a *thousand times* that many would not have been enough if he was *not* willing to go with them! And again the antitype answered to the type, for "a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" (Jn. 18:3) was sent to capture Jesus as well. But as He

was *willing* to go with them, knowing that their hour had come (Lk. 22:53), they did not need a band of men to take Him; just one or two would have been enough. On the other hand, if Jesus had *not* chosen to go with them, a thousand times as many men would not have been enough to capture Him!

Samson could have delivered himself by his own great strength, and Jesus could have done so as well; but instead they were *willing to allow themselves to be taken*, and bound and given to the enemy, in order to set their people free: Samson, to set them free from the oppression of an earthly enemy, and the Lord Jesus, to set them free from far greater, spiritual enemies – sin, Satan, death, and hell.

And just as Samson first slaughtered many, showing his power and what he could do, and then let himself be taken (vv.8-13), so Christ first showed His power and what He could do, when His divine power felled to the ground the men who came to take Him; and then afterwards He yielded to them: "As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.... Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him" (Jn. 18:6,12).

And in v.13, the men of Judah bound Samson fast, but did not kill him themselves, giving him to the Philistines to kill. Samson allowed himself to be bound and delivered into his enemies' hands by his *own people*, the very ones he was *born to deliver*; and in this he typified the greater Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who allowed Himself to be bound and delivered into His enemies' hands (Pilate's hands, the Romans' hands, Herod's hands) *by His own people*, whom He was *born into the world to deliver* (the elect among them).

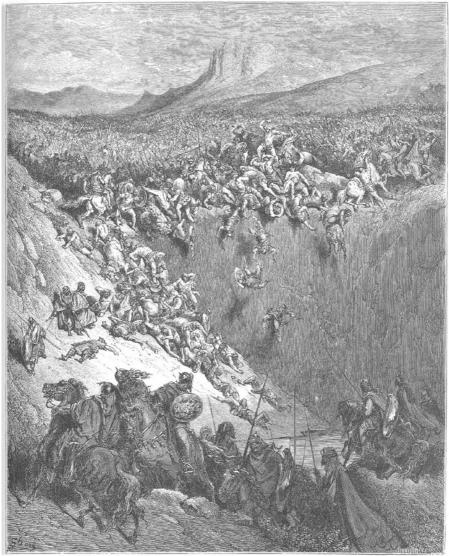
This is how the men of this world are. Satan is a hard taskmaster; but they would rather go on serving him, than come to Christ for deliverance. And they would even rather betray Christ, and remain in bondage to sin and Satan, than submit to Christ's easy yoke (Matt. 11:29,30).

Samson loved his people and longed to do them good, but they loved themselves and were willing for him to die, if it would save them. And Christ, as a Man and a Jew, loved His people (the Jews) and longed to do them good (Matt. 23:37), but they loved only themselves, they were afraid that the Romans would take away their place and nation, and so they were willing that He should die, so that they could be saved (Jn. 11:47-52).

And although the Judahites doubtless thought that by not killing Samson themselves, they were not guilty of his blood, they were terribly deceived. For they were willing for the Philistines to kill him; and thus, if Samson had been killed by them, the Judahites would have been guilty of his death as well, being accessories to it. Likewise, the Jews of Jesus' day were accessories to the death of Christ, and are charged with it, for they were guilty as well: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *ye* have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" – yes, even though it was the Romans who actually carried out the crucifixion; for the Jews delivered Him to the Romans (Acts 2:23; see also v.36).

Thus, again, we see *Jesus* in this wonderful account of the life and ministry of Samson! Jesus our Friend, Jesus the Lover of our souls, Jesus our Deliverer, Jesus who like a lamb being led to the slaughter, willingly submitted Himself into the hands of His enemies so that He could set His people free from their sins, and from the devil's kingdom! We see, prefigured in the life of Samson, the Messiah who would one day come to save His people from their sins with a mighty salvation. O Lord Jesus! The world sees no beauty in Thee to desire Thee (Isa. 53:2), but Thine elect see Thee as the One who is "altogether lovely" (Song. 5:16)!

### "Samson Destroying the Philistines With the Jawbone of an Ass" by Gustave Doré



Jdg 15:15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

Samson Destroying the Philistines with a Jawbone by Gustave Doré. In public domain.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

### The Jawbone of an Ass

#### Judges 15:14-20

- 14. And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.
- 15. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.
- 16. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.
- 17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.
- 18. And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?
- 19. But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.
- 20. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

"And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him". (verse 14a)

Yes, and well they might! They thought it was now all over for him. They thought he was now theirs, handed over to them by his own people! And so a great shout of victory went up from them. At last he was captured, and now they could kill him.

"And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands." (verse 14b)

Those cords were broken as easily as flax when fire has burnt it. And when it says his bands were "loosed", the Hebrew at this point means they "were melted" (as the marginal note says). They parted as if they had been melted in fire!

His great strength was the gift of God the Holy Spirit. As the verse shows, it was *when* God's Spirit came upon him that he was able to burst those cords asunder, and be free. There is a very wrong idea in the minds of many that Samson's strength was somehow to be found in his hair. They assume this because they see that when his hair was cut off, he lost his strength. We shall, of course, examine the cutting off of his hair in due course. But his strength was not found in his hair at all. His superhuman strength came from the LORD! It came from the almighty Spirit of God!

The Holy Spirit dwells within each and every believer; and thus He dwelt in Samson. For Samson was a regenerated man, who loved the Lord, and this was all the work of the Holy Spirit in him, no less than it is all His work in each and every believer. But when it says the Holy Spirit "came" upon him, it means that He came upon him in a *special way*, for a *special purpose*. Yes, like all believers, the Holy Spirit dwelt within him; but now the Spirit gave him this mighty strength, to perform this great feat, never before known upon earth! And thus the cords that bound him popped off him without effort, and he was free! Free to fight against the Philistines, who had thought the victory was theirs.

And the type in all of this is wonderful indeed: it typifies nothing less than the mighty *resurrection* of the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit! As we have seen, Samson voluntarily surrendered himself into the hands of his own people, the men of Judah, and they delivered him to the Philistines. And Christ, his antitype, voluntarily allowed Himself to be taken by His own people, the Jews, and delivered into the hands of the Romans. His enemies, as it were, shouted against the Lord Jesus! They thought they had Him, but how wrong they were. And although He was put to death cruelly, even death could not hold Him. He rose from the grave, having loosed the pains of death! He burst forth to life once again, conquering death!

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words," Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:22-24). Yes, wicked hands crucified and slew Him, but God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death! – because it simply was not possible that He, who is the very "Prince of life" (Acts 3:15), should be holden of death! He, God's "Holy One", could not possibly see corruption (v.27)! He burst out of the tomb, snapping the very cords and bands of death itself, and triumphed over hell's legions which had shouted against Him in the delusion of premature victory!

As the old hymn puts it so well:

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes!
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign!
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah, Christ arose!

"I am He that liveth, and was dead," said the Lord Jesus, "and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). And that mighty resurrection of our Saviour from the grave is what Samson typified here, centuries before the Messiah came, when he burst the cords that held him!

The Bible also says, in 2 Cor. 3:17, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". The Holy Spirit of the Lord was there upon Samson that day in mighty strength, and Samson was set free; and the Holy Spirit sets all the elect free as well – free from darkness and sin, free from Satan and hell!

"And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith." (verse 15)

This was a marvellous thing, a feat never performed before or since. The skeleton of a donkey was lying in that place, and Samson grabbed its jawbone. The donkey had died there recently, for the text says it was a *new* jawbone, which meant that it was still strong, not brittle as an old bone would have been, and thus it was a good weapon in his hands. In God's providence, that jawbone was just where it needed to be for Samson to reach down and pick it up, and use it as his weapon! In this we see how the Lord God is sovereign, and controls all events: He controls exactly where we will be at any given time, and provides all we need at the time, even in situations where we might think everything looks hopeless.

And using that jawbone as his only weapon, he laid into the enemy ranks and killed a thousand men. Think of it – a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass! Men, armed with real weapons of war, surrounded him, but they could not harm him, they could not kill him, and instead he killed a thousand of them!

There have indeed been great feats performed by great warriors through the ages; but nothing like this. 1 Chron. 11:11 says, "And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam,

an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain by him at one time." And 1 Chron. 11:20 says, "And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had a name among the three." Three hundred men killed by one man with a spear is an incredible feat; but even this pales when compared with the killing of a thousand men with a donkey's jawbone!

In Judg. 3:31 we read of another mighty judge of Israel, whose name was Shamgar. It says, "And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel." This feat by Shamgar at an earlier time, comes the closest to what Samson did, and it is miraculous enough in itself; but not even this equals what Samson did here.

Truly, the prophetic word of Joshua, spoken long before to the nation, was wonderfully fulfilled in this man of God, Samson: "For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you" (Jos. 23:9,10). There is no explanation for a feat like this, other than that it must be attributed to God the Holy Spirit, working mightily in and through this man Samson. In the strength of the Lord his God, he performed this miraculous slaughter. Great is the Lord, and He alone is all-powerful! We must praise Him, for with Him it does not matter whether there are many or few, the victory is all His: "for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6).

Truly, as it says in 1 Cor. 1:27-29, God chose a foolish thing of the world to confound the wise, and a weak thing of the world to confound the mighty, and a base thing of the world, a despised thing, to bring to nought things that were; that no flesh should glory in His presence! And thus the truth of 2 Cor. 4:7 was seen in this: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Samson was an earthen vessel, and all glory went to the mighty God for this wonderful victory!

"And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." (verse 16)

This appears to have been a kind of song, or chant, of triumph, which he uttered after this great victory. And well might he be amazed at what he had done, and flushed with victory, after such a battle! All around him were the "heaps upon heaps", the bodies of the dead men he had killed, piled in heaps because there were so many of them.

And Samson composed and sang his own song, or chanted his own chant, of victory, because the men of Judah, the men of his own nation, did not come and join him to celebrate the victory. At a later time, the daughters of Israel would sing in the streets, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:5-7); but there were no daughters of Israel to sing of what Samson had done on that battlefield that day. As at every other time in his amazing life, he acted alone. Surrounded on that desolate spot by a thousand dead Philistines; the living Philistines having fled; his own countrymen not there to rejoice with him; in that lonely spot, with no words of thanks echoing in his ears from a grateful nation, he sung a song to himself. What a figure he cuts in our mind's eye, as we picture him standing there, a solitary warrior surrounded by heaps upon heaps of bodies, no voice to be heard except his own as he recounts the victory of that battle. It is at once both a heart-rendingly sad scene, and yet a most glorious one. Sad, that this man who should have been the hero of Israel's menfolk and the subject of the songs of Israel's maidens, should have none to praise the Lord with him in the hour of his greatest victory to date; and yet glorious, that a lone warrior could perform such a feat, by the strength imparted to him by the Lord of hosts.

But now, when we turn from the type to the antitype, we come to some of the most amazing typologies in all of Holy Scripture. We have seen Samson typifying the resurrection of Jesus. And what followed Christ's resurrection, and ascension to heaven? The sending out of the Gospel into the world, by means of preachers! Apostles and evangelists, who went into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15,16). And this is what we now have typified for us here, by vv.15 and 16:

With the jawbone of an ass Samson slew a thousand men. And in the Bible, sinful, fallen man is compared with an ass: "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). And why are we compared with donkeys?

Well, an ass was an unclean animal under the law of Moses; and men are born unclean, being corrupted by the sin in which they are conceived (Psa. 51:5). A wild ass's colt is just a foolish creature, knowing nothing of God, or holiness, just as ignorant of these things as all men are when they enter the world. And an ass is also a very stubborn creature, just as all men are by nature; not conformed to the image of Christ, not submissive to His yoke, just as a wild ass's colt hates to be placed under a yoke. It wants to be free, and is lustful and loves the wilderness, just as men are by nature, loving pleasures, hating the yoke of Christ and submission to God. "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings" (Job 39:5,6). It is very apt, then, that men are compared with a wild ass's colt.

But there is much more to this:

"That thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem" (Exod. 13:12,13). There is a *spiritual* meaning to this: that *Christ* is the Lamb who has redeemed His elect "asses" among men! By nature the elect are like a wild ass's colt, just like all men; but the Lamb has redeemed them. And as for the rest – those whom the Lamb has not redeemed (the reprobate) – they (as it were) have their

necks broken; meaning, all their false presumption about belonging to Christ when they do not belong to Him, will be *broken off*. And they themselves will be *destroyed*.

The ass is a beast of burden; and sin is a heavy burden for men to bear. Yet Christ the Lord delivers His people from this terrible burden! As it says in Job 39:5: "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?" Spiritually, only Christ does this! Only He can! In Matt. 21:1-3 Jesus told His disciples to loose the ass and the colt, and to tell the owners they were doing so because the Lord had need of them. And spiritually, this is what He does for His chosen people! They are loosed – set free – from bondage to sin, Satan, and death; and it is God the Son who makes them free indeed (Jn. 8:32). And then, having loosed them, He puts them to work in His service. He "hath need of them" (Matt. 21:3)! He sends them forth as His servants.

Thus we see that an ass set free typifies a person set free by Christ from bondage to sin and the devil, and made a servant of the living God!

And just as many great men of old preferred the ass to the horse (e.g. Abraham, Gen. 22:3-5; and others, e.g. Judg. 5:10), so the Lord Jesus Himself, the King of kings, rode into Jerusalem on an ass. It was prophesied of Him, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9); and the prophecy was fulfilled by Him (Jn. 12:14,15). He chose to ride on an ass, because the Bible says that He chooses the weak, foolish and base things of the world to confound the mighty, wise, and noble (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

And yet further instruction we can discern from what the Scriptures tell us about the ass:

Although asses can represent converted sinners in general, in a very specific way they represent *Gospel ministers*. Isa. 32:20 says,

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." In 2 Pet. 2:15,16 we read of the false prophet Balaam, who "was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." The history of this we have in Numbers 22. Only two animals ever spoke in Scripture: the serpent and the ass. It was Satan who opened the serpent's mouth, but it was God who opened the mouth of the ass. The serpent in Eden, under the devil's influence, spoke so as to *destroy* man; the ass, under the Lord's direction, spoke so as to *save* a man. The serpent spoke lies, but all that the ass spoke was truth. And from this we learn that the ass can symbolise a *Gospel minister*, who by nature is like a dumb donkey, but to whom the Lord gives a mouth to preach His Gospel:

In Num. 22:21-25, the ass turned Balaam out of the wrong way, and in this way *saved* Balaam from the angel's drawn sword, even though it meant Balaam's foot was crushed against the wall; and for this Balaam smote her. Likewise, faithful Gospel preachers seek to turn men out of the wrong way, the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13,14), which leads a man to the sword of divine justice and eternal death, which would "cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites" (Matt. 24:51). And the faithful and true ministers of the Lord do this, *even if* the one whom they are trying to help has to suffer some pain in the process! Hearing the truth of the Gospel can be very painful to a sinful heart, until the Lord changes it. There is a divine "crushing" that takes place, a breaking, as Jesus said: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone [meaning Himself] shall be broken" (Matt. 21:44).

This is the work of faithful preachers; but the people of the world *hate* the preachers of truth, and seek to smite them for doing them good, just as Balaam hated the ass, and smote the poor creature which did him such a good service and saved his life!

Let us return to what Samson did. The ass, as we have seen, represents a faithful servant of the Lord, a faithful preacher of His

Word. And Samson slew these men with a *dead ass's jawbone*. Oh this contains such instruction for us!

It was a *jawbone*, because true Gospel ministers *preach* the Gospel to the lost with their mouths. Paul wrote of himself and of all Gospel ministers as follows: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:15,16). Samson slew a thousand men with the ass's jawbone; but on the day of Pentecost the Lord "slew" three thousand, as it were, with *Peter's* jawbone (Acts 2:14-41)! And that "slaying" was far greater, for it was not a physical slaying, but a spiritual one. And by the jawbones of human "donkeys" (if I may so speak), the sovereign Lord continues through the years to "slay" His elect!

But note: a *dead* ass's jawbone! Nothing is by coincidence in Scripture. The reason is that only a spiritual donkey who is "*dead*" is of use to the Lord! Think of what the Scriptures say: Rom. 7:9, "the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"; Gal. 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ"; Gal. 6:14, "the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"; Rom. 6:8, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him"; Rom. 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." *Only these* are the asses who are fit to "carry" Christ into the world! Dead ones! The only servants the Lord wants are those who are dead to sin, dead to self, dead to the world – but alive unto God!

And what about the spiritual meaning of Samson's words, "heaps upon heaps"?

Well, Christ the Lord has conquered and subdued the hearts of those who were once His enemies, so that they have fallen in heaps at His feet, and obtained everlasting salvation there! The Gospel is, to the world, a weak and contemptible means of bringing men to salvation (1 Cor. 1:21-25); just as the jawbone of an ass was a

weak, contemptible instrument. The Gospel is foolishness to the world. And yet "by the foolishness of preaching" Christ subdues and conquers multitudes to Himself (1 Cor. 1:18-29).

And lastly: just as Samson sung (or chanted) to himself on that field of battle, it must make us ponder this: that our great Samson, the Lord Jesus Christ, should by rights have volumes of loud hosannas and halleluiahs and hymns of praise ascending up to Him from all the earth; and yet His great work of redemption, His mighty deeds to secure the salvation of human beings, are praised in song by only a comparative few, who know His worth and lift their voices in worship to Him

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi." (verse 17)

The name Samson gave that place of his great victory means "The lifting up of the jawbone", or "The casting away of the jawbone." It was appropriate in either sense, for Samson had both lifted up the jawbone to fight, and cast it away afterwards. And he threw it away, because he would create no relic out of that jawbone! The false religion of Popery was still centuries in the future, but we can be sure that if Popery had existed then, the Papists would have kept that jawbone stashed away in some altar somewhere, as a "holy" relic to be adored and worshipped. In fact, we would not be surprised if Popery does indeed claim to possess the "genuine" donkey's jawbone used by Samson!

But Samson cast it away. It had served its purpose, and he would not keep it, thereby preventing any superstitious reverence from being given to it in later times, as happened with the brazen serpent on the pole. Originally, this had been made by Moses, by divine direction (Num. 21:6-9), so that those who had been bitten by serpents could

look to it, and live – a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the poor sinner, if he looks by faith, will live eternally: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:14,15). But in time the people began to worship that brazen serpent, and so godly King Hezekiah had it destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). It was only, after all, as Hezekiah called it, "Nehushtan" – "a piece of brass"; the healing of those bitten was not done by the brazen serpent, but by the Lord. And likewise, the jawbone of the ass was only, after all, a piece of bone; Samson's victory on the battlefield was not the work of that jawbone, but of the Lord!

Evil men will attribute power to a created object rather than to the Lord, and make relics out of things which are nothing in themselves.

"And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" (verse 18)

Notice, first, how Samson attributed his great victory to the LORD, and not to himself! "*Thou* hast given this great deliverance". Oh let us always be as Samson in this!

But now he was "sore athirst". It is not to be wondered at, after such a great battle! And the Lord permitted this thirst to come upon him, so that he would not be lifted up with pride after such a victory, and being flushed with the success of it, attribute it to his own might and power! True, he had killed a thousand men; but now God showed him that he was but a man after all, and thirsted as all other men do. His thirst, which brought him to the point of death itself, reminded him of his own impotency without the Lord.

There was no water in the place, so what did he do? *He prayed to the Lord*. This is what believers must always do, in any time of extremity; whenever we find ourselves in any dire straits. Samson

trusted in the Lord, walked by faith, and committed his needs to the Lord his God

And the words of his prayer show that he pleaded with the Lord to finish what He had begun, by preserving his life so that he did not drop dead in the midst of the Philistines he had killed. That would be to undo all that had been accomplished, and to lessen the mighty miracle that had been performed by divine power. And he pleaded this fact with the Lord in his prayer, saying in effect: "If, after Thou hast given me such a victory, I die of thirst, and the uncircumcised Philistines have my body in their hands, then this will not bring glory to Thee, O Lord!"

And in this, the typology is clear: Samson was very, very thirsty after spoiling the enemies of the Lord and his people; and we are reminded by this how the Lord Jesus, as He hung on the cross, "spoiling principalities and powers" (see Col. 2:15), cried out in the midst of His great sufferings and in the midst of His great battle, "I thirst!" (Jn. 19:28). Even in this little matter, Samson typified the Messiah!

Of the Lord Christ it is written: "He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head" (Psa. 110:6,7). He drank deeply of the cup of suffering which the Father gave Him (Matt. 20:22; Matt. 26:39,42); He drank of the wrath of God, and indeed that divine wrath against sin was like a brook in His way, which He had to pass through. He drank deeply of it: drank of it when He was made a curse for His people; and this drinking of, and passing through or over, the waters of God's wrath, was also illustrated by Him going over the brook Kidron, or Cedron, on His way to the garden and to His sufferings and death (Jn. 18:1). He drank of this terrible brook, so that His elect would not have to drink it. He drank it, and thus took it out of the way of His people's redemption and salvation! And then, having

suffered and died, He lifted up His head! He had "bowed His head" in death (Jn. 19:30), but He *lifted* it up again at His resurrection, and then He ascended to His Father in heaven, where His head is lifted up in exaltation over all His enemies for evermore (Phil. 2:9).

"But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day." (verse 19)

Another divine miracle! Water gushed out of the ass's jawbone! And Samson was refreshed. It probably came out of the hollow place where one of the donkey's teeth had once been in its socket.

Just as the Lord had once miraculously provided water out of a rock for the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod. 17:1-6), so now He produced water out of a dry bone! He has said, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jer. 32:27). Truly, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). The name given by Samson means "The well of him that called, or cried"; and in this way he glorified the Lord, who produced a well of fresh water from a dry jawbone when Samson called upon Him! Thus Samson praised the Lord, and by the name he gave he established a memorial of the mercy of the Lord to him, one which was remembered long afterwards; a place which spoke to passing travellers of the Lord's goodness and lovingkindness to His servant. We should always remember what the Lord has done for us! We should never forget anything. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psa. 103:2).

And again this would typify true preachers, who preach the Gospel, which is as rivers of living water, bringing life to those who drink. "Let him that is athirst come" is the cry of the Gospel minister to the lost (Rev. 22:17).

It is also possible that when it says, "God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw", it did not mean the jawbone itself, but the place – Lehi, as it was called by Samson – for that name *means* "the jaw", as the marginal note in the King James Version says: "the jaw, or *Lehi*"; and refers the reader to verses 9, 14 and 17. This was seen at v.9. Now if the *place* was meant, which was named after the jawbone, rather than the jawbone itself being meant, then the water came out of the ground, or the rock, which was no less a miracle than out of the jawbone itself.

And what did the *quenching* of Samson's thirst typify? Surely not the giving of vinegar to the Lord as He hung on the cross! No; the quenching of Samson's thirst, his refreshing and reviving, typified something else. The Lord Jesus Christ, having been victorious in His great work on the cross, was refreshed by the river of God's pleasure, when His Father showed Him the path of life, and raised Him from the dead, glorifying Him and seating Him at His own right hand in heaven (Psa. 16:11).

"And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years." (verse 20)

Although the Philistines had suffered a huge defeat at Samson's hands, they were still ruling over the Israelites; but during this time of their rule, Samson was Israel's judge. He *began* to deliver Israel, as was noted in Judg. 13:5; but it was not a *complete* deliverance. That complete and full deliverance from Philistine oppression would occur only under David. Jesus, the Scripture says, is both "the author *and* finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2); but Samson only imperfectly typified Him, being the author of deliverance from the Philistines, but not the finisher of it.

Nevertheless, Israel had him as their leader, and this prevented even greater suffering at the hands of the cruel Philistines. They may have still ruled the Israelites, but their power was greatly weakened as a result of Samson's mighty exploits. Also, as their judge during this time, he administered justice, solved disputes, guided the people, preserved them from total idolatry and apostacy, etc.

Thus, although the Israelites originally rejected him as their judge, they now submitted to him. And even in this, he typified our Lord! For, "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Matt. 21:42). He was rejected, but became the chief cornerstone; just as his type, Samson, was rejected, but became their judge.

# **Chapter Fifteen**

# "The Lust of the Eyes": A Tragic Fall

Judges 16:1

1. Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

"Then went Samson to Gaza".

The Philistines had five principal cities, and Gaza was one of them. Now what exactly Samson was doing in such a place, we are not told. It was certainly very bold of him to even go there, considering the fact that he had twice slaughtered Philistines; although this was probably long after that battle at Lehi. But no doubt Samson went there at this time to see how he could once again fight them, and do great damage to them. And this is what makes this account so important, and so sad as well.

"And saw there an harlot, and went in unto her."

Samson was now accepted as Israel's judge (Judg.15:20). He was a man of God. He loved the Lord his God, served Him mightily, was led by the Holy Spirit to do great exploits for the Lord; *but despite all this*, Samson was still by nature a man, a sinful man as all men are, a man "of like passions" with other men (Acts 14:15); and although he was a regenerated man, having a new nature, he still had the old nature as well (see Rom. 7), and thus, like all true believers, he still sinned. And here we have an instance of when this good and godly man sinned very greatly indeed. We could wish that he had not done so; oh how much we could wish that! But the fact remains, he did.

It was bad enough that years before he had sought a Philistine woman as his wife, and married her; but at least he had *married* her! This time, however, he fell into sin with a prostitute! And in doing so he disgraced his calling as a Nazarite, a man separated unto God, the Lord's servant. "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick" (Lam. 4:7,8). What is said here of Israel's Nazarites in a physical sense during a famine, was true of Samson in a spiritual sense: he who had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, ruddy and resplendent, had now committed a sin that made him appear as blacker than coal! This sin would be forgiven, of course, for Christ died for Samson's sins. He was one of the Lord's elect. But it would stain his reputation for all time.

Paul, in writing 1 Cor. 6:15-20 by divine inspiration, seems perhaps to have had Samson in mind: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Although Christ had not come in the flesh when Samson lived on earth, and would not so come till centuries had passed, yet the benefits of His atoning death were applied even to the Old Testament elect who lived before Him; and Samson was one of them. He had been saved by grace through faith in the Christ who was to come. And yet he took his body, that "member of Christ", and joined it to an harlot. He became "one flesh" with her. He did not "flee fornication", as young Joseph did (Gen. 39:7-13), but gave in to the temptation, and sinned against the Lord and against his own body, that very body which was the temple of the Holy Spirit; that body in which he should have glorified God. For he was "bought with a price", even the price of the blood of God's dear Son: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18,19).

But of course, the very fact that Paul wrote these words to believers, and that Samson, a believer, sinned in this way, shows us that it *is* possible, when believers are not on their guard, to fall into great sin – yes, even such a sin as this. Over and over in Scripture we have sad examples of men of God who fell into sin. We just have to think of David with Bathsheba, Solomon with his many heathen wives, and so many others. These were all men who were regenerated; men who were justified and sanctified; men who belonged, heart and soul, to the Lord. But what we must never forget is that *all* believers have two natures within them: the old nature and the new. And sometimes, sadly, tragically, terribly, the old nature can so overcome a person that he falls into some great sin (as shown by Paul in Rom. 7).

When one becomes a Christian, one does not cease to have the old nature. Only when one is finally glorified in heaven will that be totally removed. Until then, every believer knows only too well, often by very painful experience, the truth of what Paul wrote in Gal. 5:16,17: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." And how plainly this truth is amplified for us in Rom. 7:14-25: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I..... For I

know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

Truly, Samson could have said Amen to this passage of Holy Scripture! And so can every single true Christian. Truly, truly, not one believer can boast that he is without sin (1 Jn. 1:8). Rather, he would have to confess, with deep sorrow, that but for the grace of God which prevents and restrains, he could so very easily fall into any number of terrible sins! And as all His people well know, there are times when indeed they *have* so fallen!

Every Christian sins every day, in all kinds of ways. But there are particularly notorious sins, like Samson's. And each one knows a little of what his sinful heart is capable of, by nature, and how he needs to cling to Christ, and never let down his guard; for, truly, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

Many people, including professing Christians, make sexual sins out to be the unforgivable sins. But there is only one unforgivable sin, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and no sexual sin is unforgivable, if truly repented of. The examples we have in Scripture, of men such as David, Samson and Solomon, show that sexual sins have often tripped up even the choicest of God's saints.

Joseph, when his master's wife tried to tempt him, fled away from her; and this is what every believer should always do, as Paul wrote to Timothy: "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Many times the Christian may indeed have fled from whatever sin he was being tempted to commit; but every single believer knows that there have been times when, although he *should* have fled, he did not.

So, while we feel shame that a man like Samson could sin so greatly, let us always remember the injunction of the Holy Scriptures: "Neither let us commit fornication.... Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [margin: types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:8,11,12). As we ponder this sad fall of Samson, let us always bear in mind that none of us in this life is sinlessly perfect. It is easy to point fingers, to stand by self-righteously and say, "If it had been me, *I* would not have fallen for that woman!" Perhaps; perhaps not. But can we honestly hold our heads up high and say that we have never committed some great sin? No; we cannot.

It is a strange irony that in our modern world, where on the one hand living together before marriage, fornication, adultery, etc., are committed freely and openly with no sense of shame by huge numbers of people, on the other hand there are those who view these sins as far worse than any others. Yes, there are sins which the Bible categorises as particularly terrible – what are often referred to as the grosser iniquities: for example, those found listed in 1 Cor. 5:9-11. Fornication is a terrible sin, but it is not the *only* terrible sin, and it is not the *unforgivable* sin; yet men categorise these things in their minds, and view one of them as shocking, but the others as somehow *less* evil. This is wrong! A man may not be a fornicator; but if he is covetous, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, or an extortioner, he is guilty of sins that are listed *with* fornication as among the worst of all! And this is not the only such list in God's Word: see Gal. 5:19-21.

We must *never* minimise the seriousness and the evil of sexual sins, of course; but the man who stands by and self-righteously says

he would never fall for such a temptation, is the same man who at that very moment may be stealing from his employer every single day and excusing it as just a small thing. The woman who says she does not covet her neighbour's husband, is at that very moment coveting her neighbour's jewellery, or house, or car!

Human nature is such that, even in this degenerate age, people tend to classify sins in their own minds according to what they perceive to be the seriousness of each. These days they think, for example, that there is nothing wrong with having multiple sexual partners before marriage; and yet the moment that playboy marries, he is expected to remain faithful. Many still see unfaithfulness in *marriage* as a great sin, but fornication *before* marriage is dismissed as just a case of "boys will be boys." And yet the Bible says in 1 Cor. 6 that he that is joined to a harlot is "one flesh" with her – the very term that is used of a *husband and wife* being joined together!

Others may appear to view marriage as sacred; but they also view divorce as a very important option if things turn sour in the marriage. It was not that long ago in western society that divorce was viewed (and rightly so) as a terrible sin; but today, people do not even think of divorce as a sin – merely as a solution if things are not working out in the marriage.

So we must be very careful here. Samson fell, and fell greatly; but he also was restored, and did not continue on with this harlot.

The Bible says that David walked on the rooftop and saw Bathsheba bathing; and in a moment of weakness he fell into sin with her (2 Sam. 11:1-4). And here in Judg. 16:1 we see Samson going to Gaza, a Philistine city, and seeing a harlot there; and in a moment of weakness he gave in to lust, and went in unto her. He did not go there with the *intention* of seeking this woman out, or any woman; but when he saw her, he lusted, and fell for her charms in a moment. In this sin he fulfilled the words of Solomon, written at a later time but true of all ages and places, in Prov. 6:23-35 and Prov. 7:4-26.

Consider just a few of these verses:

"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life" (Prov. 6:23-26).

The adulteress will hunt for the precious life! Samson went to Gaza, no doubt, with the intention of seeking another fight with the Philistines; and yet this woman led him astray from his purpose! This is how Satan works: believers go on a mission for the Lord, they go about their Father's business; but the devil throws up temptations in their way, to lead them astray. He seeks always to deflect God's people from their true work and calling! And he will use whatever their weaknesses are. This is why Christians must be so very careful! The Scripture says the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8)! The devil's kingdom of darkness would have come under attack from the Lord's servant, Samson; so to prevent this, Satan deflected this man from his work for the Lord. This adulteress hunted for that precious life, the life of one of the Lord's servants. Satan gets an advantage over us when we are ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

1 Jn. 2:16 speaks of "the lust of the eyes". *This* is where Samson's sin started. He lusted with his eyes. He should have been like godly Job, who said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). Job made a covenant with his eyes, so as not to sin with them by looking lustfully at a maid. All believers must do the same. This covenant, or agreement with ourselves, must be that we will keep our eyes from looking at that which it is forbidden for us to look at. So many sins start with our eyes!

This fall by this great man of God is on record in God's Word for all time, as a warning to all: be on guard! "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). *Many* strong men have been slain by a woman's beauty. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Prov. 31:30); but that vain thing called beauty "hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men [not just Samson] have been slain by her", through all the ages (Prov. 7:26). Be on guard! Make a covenant with your eyes!

But now to turn from the type to the antitype. Yes, even this verse contains a type! When Samson sought out and married a Philistine woman, this was typical, as we saw, of the Lord Jesus Christ taking to Himself a Gentile bride. And now, in this matter of seeking out a harlot, Samson again typified our Saviour. Not that our Lord ever sinned! But although what Samson did was very sinful, it still typified a great spiritual truth about the Lord Jesus: that He came to save the worst of sinners! "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Lk. 15:1,2). Jesus welcomed *physical* harlots to Himself, if they came repenting (Lk. 7:37-50); they were taken into spiritual union with Him, their spiritual Deliverer; and they still are. And He welcomes spiritual harlots too, if they repent – by which I mean idolaters; for idolatry is shown in the Scriptures, over and over, to be spiritual adultery: it is forsaking the Lord in favour of other gods as lovers. But when such turn from those lovers, those images and idols, and receive Christ by faith, He takes them into union with Himself, as their Deliverer



"Samson Carrying Away the Gates of Gaza" by Gustave Doré

Jdg 16:3 And Samson ... arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, ... and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron.

Samson Carrying Away the Gates of Gaza by Gustave Doré. In public domain.

## **Chapter Sixteen**

# **Carrying Off the Gates**

### Judges 16:2,3

- 2. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.
- 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.

"And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither." (verse 2a)

It was told the city's leaders, the magistrates and city council. Who told them? We do not know. Perhaps someone saw him and recognised him; perhaps the harlot herself sent word to them that she had Samson in her room.

"And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him." (verse 2b)

They did not even attempt to burst into the bedroom and capture him there, which shows that they were still very afraid of him. But they "compassed him in", surrounded him, by blocking off all exits from the city, and lay in wait at the city gate (the cities of those times were walled, with entrance gates). Their plan was not just to catch him, but to kill him when they ambushed him. But they well knew how powerful he was, so they lay quietly, waiting for daylight when they could better recognise him and kill him.

They probably thought that if they rushed the house where he was, then by his great strength he would cause terror and confusion in the city and many Philistines would be killed; whereas by lying in wait for him they could kill him more easily. It is hard to be certain; who knows how an evil Philistine mind worked? Who knows, to this very day, how evil men's minds work? Only the Lord knows.

But for Christians, reading this account, the lesson is clear: when we are weak, when we have fallen into some sin, we do not always realise just what danger we are in. There are many enemies encompassing us, just waiting for an opportunity. We must *stay strong*, be on our *guard* at all times, *watch and pray!* "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13); "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10); "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2); "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41).

We also have a somewhat similar incident in the life of Paul (when he was still called Saul): "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket" (Acts 9:23-25). Paul was not given superhuman strength like Samson, and had to escape by stealth; but in both cases the enemies of the Lord lay in wait at the city gates with the intention of killing.

This incident in the life of Paul shows believers that when their lives are in danger, they can take whatever lawful steps are necessary to avoid the enemies of the Lord and of His people. As the Lord Jesus said in Matt. 10:23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."

And from this verse, we see in the type that which wonderfully points to the antitype. For this is what the enemies of the Lord Jesus tried to do to Him as well! They compassed Him about, they laid wait for Him, they sought to kill Him – most especially, on the night of His betrayal. On that night, the hour of the power of darkness (Lk. 22:53), Jesus' enemies surrounded Him in Gethsemane, planning to kill Him in the morning; and in fact they did put Him to death.

"And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron." (verse 3)

The Philistines, lying in wait, thought Samson would leave the city in the early morning, but instead he left at midnight, so they were caught off guard and were not ready for him. This is why he could leave the city through the gate, and not get challenged or attacked by any Philistines waiting there. The gate was shut, but we do not read anything of the men posted there as guards. It seems they did not challenge him, and thus he was able to get out of the city safely, with no fight at all. One would think that the noise of ripping the gate out of its foundations and fastenings would surely have awakened the men! And of course it is possible that they did in fact challenge Samson, and he killed them, even though it does not say so. It is more likely, however, that the Lord sent such a deep sleep upon them that they heard nothing

He performed a great miracle! He took the massive doors of the gate, and the two posts. He did not break them down, he simply uprooted the side posts from their foundations in the ground, with the doors, or gates, attached to them, as well as the bar – the bolt which went across the doors to keep them fastened tightly shut.

In those times, this was something that was at times done by a conquering general: the gate of a defeated city would be carried away

in triumph, and then put into the temple of the conqueror's god, as a thank offering to the deity for the victory. And thus Samson was showing his triumphant victory over the Philistines, that they could not conquer him but that he would always conquer them!

Think, too, about how he did this. He did not *flee* from the city in haste, full of fear! Not at all. He had no fear of them, he did not run away; in fact he *stopped and took the time* to rip the gate of the city out of its foundations and fastenings, lay it on his shoulders, and proceed to carry it away!

And he carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. The actual city of Hebron was a long way off, many miles in fact; so Samson carried the gates all the way to a hill in front of that city, a feat once again of superhuman strength.

Now Samson had just committed a great sin; and yet here we see him being strengthened by the Holy Spirit to perform this mighty miracle. Usually, when believers sin, they feel weak, not strong; far from the Lord, not close to Him. But Samson, waking at midnight, may have already repented of his sin. Perhaps indeed the very reason he woke at midnight was because the pangs of his conscience were troubling him, and he immediately cried out to the Lord in repentance; and the Lord forgave him.

Also, his great strength was a gift of God the Holy Spirit. The Lord has sometimes given gifts of the Spirit even to men who are *un*regenerate. We just have to think of King Saul, who prophesied (1 Sam. 10:10-13); Balaam, who prophesied (Num. 22); and Judas, who performed gifts of healing and miracles (Matt 10:1-8). None of these men were regenerated. Now if the Lord has sometimes given gifts even to *graceless* men, then certainly Samson's gift was still with him, even though he had just sinned a terrible sin; for he was not a graceless man, but a regenerated one.

And in all this we see Samson typifying the Lord Jesus, this time in His mighty *resurrection* from the dead! This is the second time we

have seen him typifying Christ rising from the dead. Let us see how he did so here:

When Jesus died, He was buried in the tomb, so that it could truly be said that He was encompassed by it; and Pontius Pilate set a watch (a guard) over the tomb, so that Jesus' disciples could not steal His body away (Matt. 27:62-66). Those Roman soldiers encompassed Him as He lay in the tomb, just as these Philistine soldiers encompassed Samson as he lay in that house.

But then a wonderful miracle happened! Again, in the words of the hymn:

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes!
He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign!
He arose! He arose!
Halleluiah. Christ arose!

Death and the grave are bars; but Christ *broke through* those bars, and carried away those doors triumphantly! He burst through the gates of death and the grave, which were locked upon Him, rising victoriously from the tomb and from the state of death!

And by carrying away on His shoulders, as it were, the gates of death, all His chosen people will escape its clutches as well, in due time (1 Cor. 15:54,55,57)!

And not only that, but just as Samson carried them up to the top of a hill before Hebron, so Jesus ascended up to heaven from a hill! "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.... Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet" (Acts 1:9,12).

He ascended up to heaven. And as Samson carried the gates of the city away with him, so the Lord Jesus, when He rose and ascended,

led captivity captive! "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8; Psa. 68:18). The Lord Christ had conquered His enemies – sin, Satan, the world, death, hell, the grave – and this shows His conquest and triumph over them. Satan, who leads people captive at his will (2 Tim. 2:26), was conquered by Christ, which is why it says He led captivity (the devil) captive: the one who had taken others captive was now taken captive himself. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). Christ spoiled demonic principalities and powers! Here the allusion is to what the Roman emperors used to do, when they conquered a nation: they would hold a public triumphal procession through the streets of Rome, with Caesar in his chariot at the front of the procession, and behind him all the captives led in chains, exposed to the view and the ridicule of the public, who would line the streets and laugh and mock at them.

All this is what Christ did, by His resurrection and ascension; and this is what Samson typified, as he placed the gates of that city on his mighty shoulders and carried them off up that hill. Samson triumphantly carried off the gates of the city; but Christ has carried off, as it were, the very *gates of hell* – He has spoiled them, and made an open, public show of them! And we who are His people can rejoice in His victory, and sing His praises!



The Sorek Valley, looking east. Delilah lived in the Sorek Valley, and the cave thought to be the one where Samson took refuge is located just beyond the hill in the centre of the photo.

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## **Chapter Seventeen**

## The Strong Man Wounded: A Second Tragic Fall

Judges 16:4

4. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

"And it came to pass afterward".

After he went to Gaza, visited the harlot, and then carried the city gates away with him.

"That he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah."

The Sorek Valley was not far from the cave of Etam, where Samson stayed when the Philistines were looking for him.

It is evident that she was a Philistine woman, considering how familiar the lords of the Philistines were with her (as shall be seen). And although it does not directly say so, it seems clear that she was a harlot, though not the same harlot as Samson went to in the city of Gaza, in v.1. Let us see why we can come to this conclusion.

Firstly, there is not a word said about him *marrying* Delilah. She may not be *called* a harlot directly, but she is also never called his wife either. We are told that he loved her, but he did not do as he had done years before when he courted that other Philistine woman, and married her. He did not arrange a wedding, and he did not take her to his house, as men used to do with their wives, but instead *he* went to *her* house and stayed there.

Secondly, the fact that the Philistine lords had such power over her, and also the fact that she herself treated Samson so badly, all point to the same conclusion.

And thirdly, Samson suffered terrible chastisement from the Lord for this sin; which he would not have suffered, if Delilah had been his lawful wife. The Lord did not chastise him the first time he went to a harlot; but this second time, the chastisement was very severe: his capture, the loss of his eyes, and even ultimately, his death.

All these things suggest strongly that the love he had for her was impure and unlawful. It says that he "loved" her. This could mean that he *really* loved her; but then he should have married her, and she would have stopped her sinful lifestyle. But sometimes the word is used just to mean lust, or affection, even sinful affection (2 Sam. 13:1,15). Samson was certainly infatuated with her, and lusted after her

Samson sinned when he courted a Philistine woman in his youth, and married her; he sinned when he went to the harlot in Gaza; and he sinned when he went to Delilah. Nothing we can say can excuse his sins with these women, or in any way lessen the sadness we should feel. He fell, and he fell very badly; he backslid from the Lord his God, to whom he was dedicated and separated. He who was joined to the Lord, being one spirit with Him, joined his body to a harlot – again; becoming one flesh with her (1 Cor. 6:16,17).

And his sin with Delilah was in fact *worse* than his sin with that other harlot. For with the first one, he fell for her in a moment of weakness; but as we shall see from the account of Delilah, he kept returning to her, again and again. This was a longer-term relationship which he was cultivating.

"The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein" (Prov. 22:14); "For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men" (Prov. 23:27,28).

Samson was not abhorred of the Lord, of course; he was beloved of the Lord. But at this point he was *behaving* as one abhorred of the Lord, and into that deep pit, that deep ditch, he fell headlong. The harlot has indeed "cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her" (Prov. 7:26). Here, the physically strongest man of all men who have ever lived fell, and it was a fall for which he would pay dearly, with the price of his eyes, and eventually his life.

Of course, as we see from Samson as well as from so many other examples in Scripture, the sovereign Lord overruled this sin for His own purposes and indeed for good (for another example, see Gen. 50:20); but the sin was all Samson's own, and it was very real. Here was a man of God, a minister of the Lord, but a man who was led astray, not once but three times, by women with whom he should have had nothing to do.

Samson was a man of superhuman bodily strength; but when it came to "the lust of the eyes" (1 Jn. 2:16), and the sin of fornication (1 Cor. 6:18), he was utterly weak. Tragically, he had not learned a lasting lesson from his previous sinful dealings with wicked women, and here his great weakness manifested itself again. This time the price he paid for it was indeed terrible. Samson was one of the Lord's precious ones, but "the adulteress will hunt for the precious life" (Prov. 6:26); for behind the adulteress is the serpent's hatred for the saints of God

And can any of us say that we are beyond falling into temptation? Oh it may not be the same temptation to sin that Samson fell into. But have we not embraced our own particular Delilahs? It may not be a woman; but *any* besetting sin, which we secretly love and treasure, is our own "Delilah". It is that which we are reluctant, often extremely so, to let go. We hold it close to our hearts, and keep returning to it. Oh how we need to heed that word in Heb. 12:1: "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith". Before we speak too harshly of

Samson, let us make certain that we are not hugging our own Delilahs to ourselves in some secret place where none but the eye of God sees.

But in his love for Delilah, Samson typified our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved His chosen people from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3,4; 5:25); loved them with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3); though all the elect are fallen sinners, sunk in sins of all kinds. Even though they are such, Christ loved them, and came into this world to save them (1 Tim. 1:15). We are all, by nature, Philistine harlots, so to speak; people of the world, loving the world and the things in it; committing spiritual prostitution with other gods, sinful desires, the lusts of the flesh. But Christ loved His chosen people, and came to save them; and *has* saved them.



"Samson and Delilah" by Gustave Doré

Jdg 16:17 ...There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God ... if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

Samson and Delilah by Gustave Doré. In public domain.

## **Chapter Eighteen**

### The Secret of His Strength Revealed

#### Judges 16:5-18

- 5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.
- 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.
- 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.
- 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.
- 9. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.
- 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.
- 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.
- 12. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.
- 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked

me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

- 14. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.
- 15. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.
- 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;
- 17. That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.
- 18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

"And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver." (verse 5)

There were in fact "five lords of the Philistines" (Judg. 3:3), for their land was divided into five principalities. And once they got wind of the fact that Samson was at Delilah's house on a regular basis, they saw a chance to capture him, to torture him and then to put him to death. They were so serious about this plan that although she was probably just a common harlot, these powerful men actually

visited her personally to put their plan before her. And this was their proposition: if she would use her feminine wiles to entice him to tell her the secret of his great strength, and pass this information on to them so they could capture him, they would pay her a huge sum of money. And she agreed to do it, as the subsequent verses show.

It sounds so similar to that other time, years before, when the Philistines had gone to Samson's wife and told her to find out the answer to his riddle (Judg. 14:15)!

"Entice him," they said to her: persuade him to tell you, at a moment when you think best; he is infatuated with you; make use of that, and find out wherein his great strength lies. Perhaps their superstitious minds thought his strength came from some magic potion, or magic talisman, that they thought he might carry about with him. We do not know. What is clear is that they had no idea.

The amount they offered her was a huge sum of money in those times, a fortune for a woman like Delilah. It was so tempting an offer that she fell for it, and was prepared to carry out their plan. For although it says Samson loved her, nowhere does it say that she loved him. There is every reason to believe she was a harlot, after all; she had no emotional attachment or affection for her clients; they were used by her simply to make money. 1 Tim. 6:10 says the love of money is the root of all evil; and the truth of this verse was demonstrated here, for Delilah loved money rather than Samson, and was more than willing to betray him for such a sum.

And truly, that Delilah was a type is plain as well: she typified the traitor Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver betrayed Jesus to His enemies! He, one of Jesus' own disciples, betrayed Him with a kiss (Lk. 22:47,48), fulfilling the antitype, for Delilah, in whose lap Samson had lain, betrayed him after using her kisses to entice him to reveal his secret. She was the adulteress who hunted for the precious life; she was the traitor who betrayed him for money. In this she was a true type of that arch-traitor, Judas Iscariot.

"And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee." (verse 6)

She probably played her part very well and asked this in such a way that it sounded as if she had nothing more than an idle curiosity about it. Very probably she first flattered him, urging him to tell her about his exploits, "oohing and aahing" at the appropriate moments; and then, having puffed him up, and, as she hoped, put him off his guard, she asked him to tell her his secret.

"And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man." (verse 7)

A "with" refers to twigs twisted to make a rope, or band. And green withs would be strong and supple, not brittle like dry ones. The marginal note says that "green withs" can be rendered as "new" or "moist" cords.

Now this of course was a lie on Samson's part; unless it can be excused as being said in jest by him, with a smile, not to be taken seriously, even though she did so take it. If he lied, we should not be surprised: he was already sinning in one way, so it was not surprising that he sinned in another way too.

One thing it does show: Samson did not want to let his guard down and reveal the secret of his strength to this heathen woman. Despite the fact that he "loved" her, he did not fully trust her; he had not fallen so far into sin and error that he was ready to trust one of the Lord's enemies. However, very cautious though he was, he was also very foolish, because he should have nipped this in the bud and stopped her from any further questions about this matter. He should not, in fact, have been there at all. At the very best, he let the joke continue; at worst, he just lied. But he had sinned and turned from the Lord,

and at this point the Lord had withdrawn His felt presence from him. He was in a very dangerous place.

When we forsake the Lord, the Lord may teach us a painful lesson. The Bible says, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart" (Hos. 4:11). Samson's heart had been taken away from the Lord by his committing fornication with this woman. He was far from the Lord. He was backslidden. He was now so spiritually weak that he was prepared to joke with her about so serious a matter, when he must have known very well that if she ever discovered the secret of his strength, his life could be in extreme danger – especially after he was almost captured by them the first time, as we are about to see. Surely, we think to ourselves, he realised that something was going on, as she kept at him! Well, if he did, he was so sunk in sin, in such a backslidden state, that he was blind to the reality of what was happening.

When they finally caught him they put out his eyes (Judg. 16:21). But the tragedy of this man's latter end is that he was *already blind* before they did so! Not physically, but sin had blinded him spiritually. Not totally, of course, for as a child of God his spiritual sight had been opened to behold the coming Christ by faith; but partially and for a time, he was spiritually blind. He was no longer looking to the Lord with the eye of faith, but was blinded by his lust for this woman Delilah. If he had not been so blind *before* they took him and put his eyes out, he would have seen the danger signs, and saved himself.

Let us ask ourselves: are we blind, at times, to great sin? Do we allow our lusts to blind us? If we are backslidden, walking after the lusts of the eyes and of this world, then to that extent we are blind, and are not living as those whose eyes have been opened to behold the Lord Jesus Christ. What a terribly dangerous place for us to be in!

"Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them." (verse 8)

She obviously told the Philistine lords what he had said, and they brought her the very things he had mentioned.

We are not told that he was asleep when she tied him up, but this seems most likely (as in v.14). And note that they did not try to tie him up themselves. If by some chance Samson had woken to find Delilah doing it, she could pretend that she was just curious, to see whether what he had said would work. But if he had woken while the Philistines themselves were doing it, they would have been killed. And they knew it.

"Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known." (verse 9)

Again, they were not prepared to try to tie him up themselves, but they hid in the bedroom, waiting until she herself had done it. It was evidently agreed between her and them that when she had tied him up securely, she would shout out, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" And if he woke up and could not break the withs, *then* they would rush upon him, and take him. They were being *very* cautious.

But he broke the withs as easily as a thread of tow is broken when it touches fire. So his strength was not known – not yet, at any rate.

This certainly shows that Delilah was a wicked woman, and had no true love for Samson. This was a woman who could lay his head in her lap (as it says in v.19), and yet betray him to certain death at the hands of his enemies for a sum of money!

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound." (verse 10)

How similar these words sound to those of his own wife, years before (Judg. 14:16). Two age-old tactics, employed by many women, have been their use of tears, and questioning a man's love. Delilah did not as yet use the same tactics, but she was working her way up to it, and very soon would use at least one of them: "How canst thou say, I love thee?" (see v.15). For now, however, she accused him of mocking her, and lying to her.

Samson should have at this point *left her*; and never returned! But he was so besotted with her, and so far from the Lord, that he could not see what was really going on here.

"And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man." (verse 11)

Another lie; or another foolish jest. Samson should have been deeply suspicious of her by now, but no – he carried on the game as if there was no danger to him; as if it was nothing serious at all. This is what happens when a man departs from the Lord. Sometimes his own common sense seems to leave him. Whoredom takes away the heart, and the intelligence too.

"Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread." (verse 12)

A repetition of what happened the first time. Again, we can only wonder at the stupidity of Samson in his backslidden state, that he did not realise what was going on. And yet are we any better than he, by nature? Not in the least. What a powerful warning to us all! Forsake the Lord, even for a time, and often reason and common sense and intelligence will depart from you as well.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web." (verse 13)

A third time she asked him, begged him even, and a third time he played with her. It was good that he would not tell her; but he should not have been there in the first place. But there he was. Instead of seeing the devil's hand in this, he went blithely on with the game.

Samson, a Nazarite, never cut his hair. It was therefore extremely long, and he used to tie it into seven locks. And by the "web" is meant the thread that was woven around a weaver's loom. He said that if his hair was fastened around a weaver's beam, or interwoven with weaver's threads, then he would be weak as other men.

"And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web." (verse14)

Again, when he was asleep she did this. And when her shout awoke him, he leaped up and left.

This is the first time we read that he actually left. What a tragedy that he had not done so immediately, and for good, when she had first begun to try to find out his strength's secret. This time he left; and yet he was still in such a backslidden state that he returned yet again! He just could not keep away from her.

"And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth." (verse 15)

Now she began to question his love, that tactic used by his wife

long before. Thus far she had only accused him of mocking her and lying to her; but now comes the accusation: "How can you say you love me? Your heart isn't with me!" Actually, his heart was with her too much; it was her heart which was not with him. She was after money, nothing else.

"And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." (verses 16,17)

How similar to the way his wife had behaved, as recorded in Judg. 14:17: "And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him". A nagging woman can be very, very vexatious to a man. Delilah went on and on and on, and she wore Samson down. Day by day she pressed him to tell her, urged him to tell her, and it became so exhausting to him, so wearisome, so irksome, that his very soul was vexed unto death. Imagine it! He was so tired of hearing her nagging at him, that he wished he could die rather than hear her go on and on and on!

He had another option, of course: he could have simply left her. He should never have been with her anyway; and he could have, and should have, walked away. But he was besotted with her, and he chose not to do that. His lust enchained him to her, so that although he wished he could die rather than hear her go on, he never actually just left her. Such was the power of his lust over him. And this shows us what a very, very powerful thing sin can be. Let us never underestimate it.

Samson had sinned against the Lord; and the Lord now left him to himself. This is why he acted so foolishly. It is only by God's grace that we stand. Sometimes the Lord withholds His grace, the grace that alone would prevent us from falling, so that we can see and realise more of the sinfulness, stupidity and hardness of our own hearts. This is what happened to Samson here. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Samson was self-confident, and he fell; and fell grievously.

Instead of leaving her, as he should have done, he foolishly, stupidly, "told her all his heart." Imagine telling an enemy of the Lord's people all your heart! Imagine spilling the beans to such a wicked woman – not just a little but the whole story, opening up your heart to her. Godly King Hezekiah foolishly showed the Lord's enemies all his treasures, everything in his house and in his dominion, and was severely chastised for it (2 Kings 20:12-19). And backslidden Samson behaved in a similar way. He finally told Delilah the truth: that if a razor came upon his head; if the long locks of his head were cut off; then his strength would depart from him, and he would be the same as other men.

But again, how important it is that this is properly understood. It was not that Samson's strength was *in* his hair! That would be absurd, and yet it is astounding how many people believe it. His great strength was not in his hair, it was in his *consecration, and obedience, to the Lord;* and the *badge* of that was that no razor had come on his head. The Lord had forbidden him to cut his hair. There were, of course, other conditions placed upon him, as a Nazarite, and we have seen what those were. But it seems that of all those things, this was the most important, perhaps because it was the most visible sign of being a Nazarite. To cut it off would be an act of rebellion against the Lord, and God would remove his strength from him. For then Samson would have violated the condition of his Nazarite vow, and God would be just in removing his strength.

And now for the type in all of this.

Just as Samson revealed all his heart, all His secrets, to the harlot Delilah, so the Lord Jesus Christ takes even harlots into spiritual union with Himself, when they repent of their sins, and *reveals the secrets and mysteries of the Gospel to them,* the very "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" which are "hid from the wise and prudent" and "revealed unto babes" (Matt. 13:11; 11:25). Those who enter into the kingdom of God, even if they were previously harlots, have the mysteries of the kingdom revealed to them; and yet those who are wise in their own eyes, even though externally moral and self-righteous, do not know these divine mysteries!

And even the very hair of Samson typified something! Or rather, it typified persons. Samson himself was a type of the Lord Jesus, as we know; and Christ is the *Head* of His people, the Church, which is called His body (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). If Samson, then, typified Christ the Head, Samson's hair typified the *elect of God;* for hair grows on the head, and Christ is the Head of the Church. And all true Christians are *joined* to Christ their Head, *fed* from their Head, and "rooted... in him" (Col. 2:7).

This is taught, very picturesquely and beautifully, in the Song of Solomon 4:1: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead." A flock symbolises the Church, the flock of the Lord, with each strand of hair symbolising each believer, all the hairs together being like a flock of goats.

"And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand." (verse 18)

This time, she knew. She could see, by the words he used, and by the serious expression on his face, and also doubtless from the fact that he told her this time that he was a Nazarite unto God – the first

time he had mentioned his God, and his particular calling; and this would have made an impression on her, because despite how deeply into sin he had sunk, he loved the Lord his God, and spoke with reverence of Him.

And what is more, this time what he said had the ring of truth about it, because this explained his extremely long hair, which must have always puzzled her. Contrary to artists' pictures and paintings which we so often see of Old Testament characters, very long hair on Israelite men was *not* a common thing in those times. A Nazarite stood out, *precisely because* other men did *not* wear their hair long. This is seen from David's son Absalom, who, because of his very long hair, stood out from other men precisely because they did not wear their hair that way (2 Sam. 14:25,26).

She knew, therefore, that this time he really had told her the truth; he had told her all that was in his heart. And so she called for the Philistines one last time, confident that there would be no mistake. It seems they had gone home, thinking that she could not get Samson to tell his secret to her. But she urged them to come back. She really wanted that money. And they could hear from her voice that she had no doubt this time, which is why they brought the money they had promised her.

Matthew Henry rightly wrote of this incident, "It would have grieved one's heart to have seen one of the bravest men then in the world sold and bought, as a sheep for the slaughter; how does this instance sully all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength!" <sup>8</sup> Indeed this entire episode in Samson's life fills us with sadness as we read it. What God had wrought through this mighty champion! There was never his like upon the earth. But great bodily strength is one thing; great *spiritual* strength is another. And sadly, Samson had the one but not the other – not at this time in his life, at any rate. When God withheld His grace, Samson saw (and

<sup>8</sup> *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. II, on Judg. 16:18.

all believers have been enabled to see the same thing of themselves, many times) that he was just a man like all men, with fallen man's sinful desires.

The New Testament says of the Old Testament events: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [margin: types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). And the very next verse says, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12)! This is the lesson for all true Christians from these things in Samson's life! "For whatsoever things were written aforetime [in the Old Testament] were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). These events in Samson's life were written for our admonition and learning. Although true believers cannot fall away totally from Christ, and be lost again, they can fall into temptations and sins; and when they do, their fall disgraces the Gospel they profess, brings reproach upon the name of the Lord, causes the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, causes weak believers to stumble, grieves the Holy Spirit, and wounds their own souls. They must therefore be constantly on their guard, and take heed lest they fall – especially when they start to have confidence in themselves, and to think that they are standing firmly, and all is well. This is the most dangerous time of all: the time of boastful and vain self-confidence.

Samson thought he stood; but that was precisely when he fell. Let us learn from his sad fall, take heed to our ways, "ponder the path of life" (Prov. 5:6), and keep our feet from turning off the narrow way! Be very aware of the devil's tactics, and of the corruption of your own heart; and cleave to Christ!

# **Chapter Nineteen**

## **Capture and Humiliation**

### Judges 16:19-25

- 19. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.
- 20. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.
- 21. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.
- 22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.
- 23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.
- 24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.
- 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

<sup>&</sup>quot;And she made him sleep upon her knees". (verse 19a)

This was what she had probably done all the times when she had tried to bind him. In this posture he felt loved by her; whereas she had no love for him, and was perfectly willing to see him captured by his enemies, tortured and killed.

"And she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head". (verse 19b)

Samson was sleeping so soundly that he did not wake up, not even when this man shaved all his hair off. It is entirely possible, of course, that when it says Delilah "made him sleep upon her knees", she had given him some kind of potion, a drug of some sort, that made him very drowsy.

"And she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him." (verse 19c)

It possibly refers to what the next verse says she did, when she shouted, as before, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" This was her affliction of him. And when she did this and he awoke, he found that his strength had gone from him. The Lord had withdrawn it, because the badge of his Nazariteship had been removed from him.

Or it refers to the fact that even though he was asleep, as his hair was being cut off there was a decided change occurring within him, a weakening, that was in some way felt by him, and even perhaps noticed by her.

The lesson for us is this: the devil likes to have us lulled into sleep, into a false sense of security, for then he can work his mischief. When Satan makes men feel at ease, full of self-confidence, they are in the greatest danger of all! Again let the warning of God's Word be remembered: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Samson was asleep on Delilah's lap, because he

felt secure in his own strength, and because he felt secure with her. He trusted her.

1 Pet. 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". If we want to resist the devil (1 Pet. 5:9; Jas. 4:7), we have to be sober and vigilant, and not sleep! Samson was neither soberminded nor vigilant – he had possibly been drugged unknowingly, and definitely he had let his guard down and was not being vigilant, and now he slept. Vigilance and sobriety: how vital these are to our spiritual wellbeing! Believers who would lay their heads, as it were, on the laps of the wicked will find themselves shorn of their spiritual strength in due time.

The problem with the professing "church" today is that so many who *claim* to be its members are no different from other men! They do what other men do, are entertained by what entertains the men of the world, laugh at the same jokes, attend the same revelries, dress like the worldlings, act like them! Truly their locks have been shorn and they have become weak, as other men. There is no difference between them and the world. And as a consequence they have no spiritual power. They have no true Gospel to preach, and no power from on high with which to preach it even if they had it. Their lives do not display the glory of Christ. They appear just the same as all other men.

"And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." (verse 20a)

She gave her usual cry; and as usual, he awoke. Perhaps, in his groggy state of mind, he did not at first realise that his hair was all shaved off. He felt drowsy, and thought that if he could just go outside for a moment, where the air was fresh, he would feel better, and shake himself so as to properly wake up.

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." (verse 20b)

Oh what awful words these are! What a terrible state he was in! How sad! How utterly tragic! The strongest man on earth, the strongest man who had ever lived, was now as weak as any other man; and all because the Lord had departed from him. And he did not know it!

This shows us, as plain as day, that his strength was not in his hair, but it came from the Lord. And the Lord departed from him the moment his hair was shaved off, because this was the breaking of his vow, and the Lord was no longer under any obligation to keep His part.

Oh to be in such a terrible position, where the Lord has departed from us! Samson was a true believer; and as such, the Lord never departed from him totally. He never finally nor completely departs from any of His saints. This is the blessed doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints: that once a man is in Christ, he is in Him forever. But the Lord can and does at times depart from His people in the sense of *withdrawing His felt presence;* His Holy Spirit is grieved, and quenched; His power is withdrawn; the smile of His countenance is no longer experienced; etc. This is what happened to Samson at this point.

The worst of it all is that many times, when the Lord withdraws His felt presence from the believer because of his sins, he does not know it! He is unaware of it, at least at first. He thinks all is as before, all is well with his soul, but it is not. The Lord has departed. But he soon finds out his mistake, as Samson did.

As we have seen, Samson's hairs typified the elect of the Lord, His chosen ones, united to Christ their Head, rooted in Him, fed by Him. Samson's hairs, as is true of all of us, were among the *weakest* members of his body; and yet despite that, by them (so to speak) the Lord displayed His *power*. When we are joined to our great Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, we are able to display the Lord's power in and through us.

And now we come to the saddest part of all this man's history. We are now entering into the final stages of his amazing life; and as we read it, our hearts break. This beloved of the Lord, a man devoted from birth to God, a judge of Israel, whose love for His people and love for his God saw him burn with zeal in the Lord's work; this deliverer, this man who worked alone, who gave God the glory and saw the Lord's enemies fall in heaps around him – now we see him weak, helpless, mocked, and all because he fell into this terrible sin and trusted in himself instead of the Lord.

"But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes". (verse 21a)

They had told Delilah they would afflict him if they could catch him (v.5); and what a terrible affliction it was. Imagine the intense searing pain of having his eyes put out, and then the misery that followed – the realisation that he would never see again!

The marginal note says that the meaning of the words "put out his eyes" is that they "bored out" his eyes! His eyes were gouged out by these wicked, cruel men, these servants of Satan. How exactly they did this, we are not told. Whatever they did, Samson must have suffered unimaginable, excruciating pain. They of course did this so that he would never again be able to harm them.

Tragically, however, Samson was already blind, as it were, before his eyes were put out. A true believer, of course, is never again completely blind, spiritually; but when he falls into sin and continues in it for a time, he is blind to some extent. Samson was so backslidden that he was no longer beholding the Lord with the eye of faith, nor could he see what his sin was doing. And now his physical eyes were taken from him. And he appears in the sacred history at this point as a tragic figure, still alone, more alone in fact than ever before in his life. Israel's glory had become the Philistines' laughing-stock. The one who had sung in triumph over Philistine heaps had now become the subject of the songs of Philistine drunkards. How it makes the heart weep to read it.

He was their prisoner, his strength was gone, he was as other men now, and they fully intended to make the most of it and to punish him in terrible ways for all the misery he had brought upon them. And although they put out his eyes so that he could never see to harm them again (as they thought), this was in God's providence, which overruled it all, and it was his chastisement for his sin. For his great sins had been "the lust of the eyes" and "the lust of the flesh" (1 Jn. 2:16): he had loved "the things that are in the world" (1 Jn. 2:15); in particular he had loved sinful women, and lusted after them with his eyes, instead of making a covenant with his eyes to not look (in a lustful way) upon a maid, as godly Job did (Job 31:1; cf. Matt. 5:28)). This lust of the eyes and flesh was "not of the Father" (1 Jn. 2:16); and now the Father was chastising him.

"God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7)! Samson had sinned with his eyes, and now he had lost them. The Lord chastises His people for their sins; and in Samson's case this chastisement was terrible indeed. Terrible, yes; but not undeserved.

"And brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass". (verse 21b)

He was their captive at last; and they brought him to one of the chief principalities of the Philistines; one of their capitals. But they also brought him here because it was a long way from his own people, the Danites, which made them feel safer imprisoning him here. Little did they consider that his people had never helped him before, and were not about to start now. We read nothing of any Israelites planning to try to rescue their great judge and champion! No; they would rather just leave him to his fate, and attempt no rescue at all.

Also, the reason they brought him to Gaza was because Samson had torn the very gates of that city from their foundations and carried them away, making the Gazites look like fools (Judg. 16:1-3). But now they had him, and would make him pay. The very people who

had once been terrified of him now laughed at him and tortured him.

And we can also see the hand of the Lord in this, that in the place where he first sinned by going to a harlot, there he suffered his chastisement from the Lord. Doubtless, as he stood fettered and blinded in that city of Gaza, his mind often went back to the sin he had committed there. And this kind of reflection would have caused him to feel deep sorrow for his sin, and would have led him to true repentance. For truly, as we see from the sequel to these events, Samson *did indeed* repent, from the depths of his heart. He sorrowed after a godly manner, and godly sorrow works true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9,10).

"And he did grind in the prison house." (verse 21c)

Not only was he a prisoner, in fetters, and blinded, but he was forced to work for them in the prison, grinding corn at the millstone, endlessly going round and round it, like a dumb ox, the creature usually used for such a task (Deut. 25:4).

The man who had once destroyed their corn fields so that they had nothing to eat, now ground the corn they ate. To them, it must have seemed like very poetic justice. And he himself could surely not have failed to see it too: Samson had made himself a foolish slave to a harlot; and now the Lord made him a slave to the harlot's people. Truly, truly, God is not mocked!

And Christians must never forget this – that they are spiritual Nazarites! They are separated unto the Lord, holiness unto the Lord, and are to live as consecrated to God and separated from the world. Christian: take careful heed not to sin against the Lord, but to be pure, and holy, as the Lord's saint!

But see the type: Samson's persecution at the hands of the Philistines typified the Lord Christ's persecution at the hands of the Romans. And Samson being *blinded* by his enemies typified Jesus being *blindfolded* by *His* enemies (Lk. 22:64)!

Also, Samson ground at the mill in the prison house; but remember that the antitype is greater than the type. Christ was the One "greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42), and He was the One greater than Samson as well. Samson ground at the mill to produce that which was necessary for physical bread; but Christ the Lord was *ground Himself*, the spiritual Bread of life for His people! "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (Jn. 6:35); "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn. 6:51). The sufferings the Lord Jesus Christ went through were like passing under the great millstone of the wrath of God, suffering in the place of His chosen people. His bruised and broken body was bruised and broken for His people (Isa. 53:5,10; 1 Cor. 11:24).

Thus once again, *in Samson we see Jesus!* In the one deliverer we see another and greater Deliverer; in the one's sufferings we see foreshadowed the sufferings of Another – the sufferings of One who would suffer, *not* for His own sins as Samson did, but for the sins of others.

"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven." (verse 22)

Of course it would start to grow again; that is only natural. But there is more to it than the obvious: the marginal note says it can be rendered like this: "the hair of his head began to grow again as when he was shaven" — in other words, it grew back to the length it was before it had been cut off. This means that the Lord saw to it that it grew very rapidly, extraordinarily so; nothing less than a miracle. The Lord blessed him with extremely rapid growth of hair so as to

be ready for what he had to do: his final great and heroic act. After all, it had taken a lifetime to reach this length before; but now it returned to its great length in a short while. We know this, because the Philistines would not have delayed putting Samson to death for years and years, which is how long it would have taken his hair to grow back at the normal speed.

And the fact that this is mentioned so particularly is to indicate to us that Samson *had repented*, and the Lord had forgiven him, and was blessing him once again. The speed with which his hair now grew was the token that the Lord had forgiven him. Upon his repentance, his Nazariteship was renewed; and the Lord renewed his strength for him. And Samson knew it, although he kept quiet about it. Usually, as Num. 6 shows us, there were proper ceremonies which a man had to undergo to restore his Nazariteship if it had been lost or defiled in any way; but of course, Samson being now a prisoner, these could not be carried out. Therefore, by making his hair grow very rapidly, the Lord showed that He had accepted Samson and restored him, even without the usual ceremonies, given his special circumstances now.

The growth of his hair was not in any way the *cause* of his great strength, but it was the badge of his consecration as a Nazarite to God. And it was a token of the fact that the Lord had forgiven him, received him into favour again, and renewed his strength.

Now the Philistines, knowing that if his hair was cut he would lose his strength, must have realised that if it grew again, his strength might return. This is no doubt why they put out his eyes – because they knew that even though his hair could grow back, his eyes never would; so that even if his strength returned, he would never again be able to see so as to do them harm.

Why, then, did they not watch him more carefully, and immediately shave his hair off again the moment they saw it starting to grow? Perhaps because they were so distracted by their joy and jubilation at having him in their hands, that they just failed to take note of it. Or

even perhaps because, now that his eyes were taken out, they did not care if his strength returned. They no longer feared what he could do. They may have thought that he was now a blind man and his great strength would not harm them.

"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand." (verse 23)

This was obviously some time afterwards. Samson's hair grew fast, but in all likelihood this was at least some months later, when they had time to gather together on a suitable occasion. These Philistine lords may have made use of one of their usual religious festivals; or more likely, they appointed a special one, for the purpose of praising their god for the capture of Samson after all these years. These were heathens; idolaters. The great god worshipped by the Philistines was called Dagon. Dagon was the fish-god. The word dag in Hebrew signifies a fish. And the Philistines lived near the sea, and also near Egypt, where there were gods worshipped in the form of fish. This idol of Dagon was shaped so that the upper part was like a man and the lower part like a fish. This is why, in 1 Sam. 5:4, its hands are mentioned, but not its feet. This is the abomination, the vile image, which these people worshipped, and gave it glory for the capture of Samson. Like idolaters the world over and in all ages, they attributed their success to this idol. Such was their blindness and superstition. They offered sacrifices to their god, they no doubt sang songs in praise of it, and perhaps there were religious dances in honour of it.

Of course, behind every idol is a demon, ready to receive the worship given to the idol: "What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:19,20).

Here we see how the very heathen are at times far more forward to worship their false gods than professing Christians are to worship the true and living God, or to attribute all good things to Him. How the very heathen often shame the professing Christians by their zeal and devotion! These things ought not to be; but sadly, they often are.

The very honour of the true God, the God of Israel, was now at stake! And God would act, and act mightily, showing these heathen that their god was nothing but a devilish idol, and that *He*, the LORD, Jehovah, was the true God.

As an interesting aside here, the priests of Dagon used to wear mitres on their heads, shaped like fish with open mouths; and this was carried over into Roman Catholicism, so that the cardinals and popes of Rome wear just such a mitre, shaped like a fish's head! <sup>9</sup> Such is the heathenish nature of the Romish religion, which adopted such elements of heathenism as suited it. There is nothing Christian about it.

"And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us." (verse 24)

They praised their god for the victory they had over this one man. In truth, of course, it was Delilah who had delivered Samson into their hands, and she had done it for filthy lucre; and on a higher level still, the Lord of heaven and earth had *permitted* it to happen. But they could not see this, and gave the glory to their heathen idol.

They composed hymns of praise to Dagon, and sang them in the very words given here in the verse! Thus did the one who had sung a hymn of victory to the Lord when Philistine heaps lay all around him, become the subject of the hymns of Philistine worshippers in

<sup>9</sup> The Two Babylons, pgs. 215-216.

the temple of Dagon. What a tragedy! What a fall! But – as we are already beginning to see, and will see yet more as we proceed – what a mighty restoration and ultimate victory, to the glory of the Lord God of Israel!

"And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport." (verse 25a)

This is what happens to men when they are drunk! They become lower than beasts. Their hearts were merry because they were having a great celebration, they had eaten well and had drunk plenty; there was doubtless music and dancing; and, merry with wine, they now wanted to mock Samson, to be amused by watching him, to see his sufferings and to make him suffer even more, all for their entertainment.

"And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport". (verse 25b)

This means he entertained them in some way. Not willingly, we can be sure; but they derived a lot of amusement from seeing this blind man in front of them. We are not told exactly what they did, but it would have involved mocking him, probably beating him, spitting on him. Perhaps they made him slave for them in some way. As he stumbled along in chains, blind, one would have pushed him, another would have hit him, another would have spat on him; all would have laughed at him. It would have been humiliating and painful, and would have greatly increased his sufferings.

And it showed the barbarity of this Philistine nation. Not long before this they would have been filled with fear and trembling at the mere mention of his name. Now they were filled with mad laughter to see his sufferings. Such is human nature, and the depths to which

it will sink, without the grace of God to restrain it! Man's cruelty and inhumanity to man shows his depravity very starkly. How quickly men can descend lower than the beasts, because of their fallen and depraved natures. Sunk in sin's depths, and under Satan's direction, they delight in the pain inflicted on another human being. How foolish are psychologists and others today, "professing themselves to be wise" (Rom. 1:22) and to be able to understand the human soul (impossible for any human being!), who try to tell us that man is basically good! No, he is not; he is nothing but a slave to sin.

Samson must have suffered much at this time. And yet, having repented before the Lord (evidenced by what was to follow), he bore it meekly now, and waited patiently for the Lord to provide him with an opportunity against them.

He also could not help but know that the Lord was just and righteous in all His dealings with him. He knew that he had sported himself with a Philistine harlot for his own pleasure, and now the Philistines sported with him for their pleasure. God is not mocked.

And in all this, we see Samson as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. For when Jesus was taken by His enemies, this is *precisely* how they treated Him: the chief priests, the Jews, and the Romans, made sport of Him. Samson in his sufferings was called forth to make sport for the people; and Christ in His sufferings was buffeted, smitten, spat upon, mocked, etc. (Matt. 26:67,68; 27:26-31,39-44). In Samson's great sufferings we see shadowed forth the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, who bore it all for His chosen and beloved people.

"And they set him between the pillars." (verse 25c)

Meaning, the pillars of the "house" where the Philistines had gathered (v.26). This "house" was the house of their god, their idolatrous temple, for they had gathered to worship Dagon. But it

was in this very temple that Samson would perform his mightiest act of all.



"Death of Samson" by Gustave Doré

Jdg 16:30 ....And he bowed himself with  $all\,his$  might; and the house fell upon the Lords, .... So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

Death of Samson by Gustave Doré. In public domain.

# **Chapter Twenty**

# In Death, His Greatest Victory

### Judges 16:26-31

- 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.
- 27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.
- 28. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.
- 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.
- 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.
- 31. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

<sup>&</sup>quot;And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them." (verse 26)

This young boy would have been the one who was appointed to lead the blind Samson about. Samson asked him to direct his hands to the two pillars of the building. He had a plan, doubtless one which he had formulated during those long weary hours grinding corn. Probably the boy thought he just wanted to rest against the pillars, and so he helped him.

"Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport." (verse 27)

Philistines were everywhere in this temple. There were men and women; the high ranking lords and ladies of the Philistines; the five chief Philistine lords would have been there; and many common people as well. Roofs of buildings in those times were flat, and people used to sit or walk there, or store things on them (Deut. 22:8; Jos. 2:6-8; 2 Sam. 11:2; Neh. 8:16; Matt. 24:17; Mk. 2:4). And on the roof of this temple there were three thousand people! A truly immense number.

Liberal, Bible-denying scholars reject the entire account of Samson, saying it never happened. And one of the reasons they do so is because of this account of Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple. They have argued that an edifice that could support three thousand people on its roof, supported by two central pillars just an arm's length apart, never existed in the land of the Philistines.

But they just do not know this for certain! They were not there to see exactly what existed or what did not; and the fact that archaeologists have not as yet found a building of this size proves nothing. They may still do so. Who knows what may yet be dug out of the ground of the land where the Bible events happened? The truth is, as much as we already know about the life and customs of the people of those times, there is much we still do not know. And because we do not

understand exactly how something was done, does not mean it was not, or could not, have been done! That is sheer arrogance.

It is known that at least two Roman theatres built by Curio, during the time of Julius Caesar, held many more people than this temple in Gaza did, and yet they were supported only by a single pin or hinge, according to the ancient writer Pliny, in his book of Natural History. And in England the Westminster hall, built by William Rufus, with a roof that was the largest in Europe, was supported without any pillars at all. <sup>10</sup> It is therefore very foolish of those critics of the Bible to latch onto the size of this building and try to use this to attack the Bible's authenticity.

Furthermore, the writer of the book of Judges would have been a fool indeed to invent a thing like this – a roof capable of holding three thousand people – when this would have overturned the accuracy and reliability of the entire book he wrote, if it was not true! After all, as it was written so close in time to the events it describes, it would have been an easy thing for people alive at the time to disprove him. Yet they never did.

How foolish for any man to reject the God of the Bible, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, simply because (for example) he cannot see how it was possible for such a building to have existed!

And thanks to the wonderful work done in the field of biblical archaeology, we do have an excavated Philistine temple to give us at least some idea of what this particular temple may have looked like. <sup>11</sup> In 1972 excavations uncovered the first Philistine temple ever found, at a place called Tell Qasile, on the north side of Tell Aviv, in Israel. The actual Gaza temple of Dagon, where Samson died, cannot be

<sup>10</sup> Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, Vol. 2, by John Gill, on Judg. 16:29.

<sup>11</sup> *Bible and Spade*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Winter 2005, art. "Between the Pillars: Revisiting 'the House of Dagon'", pg.14ff. Associates for Biblical Research, Akron, Pennsylvania, USA.

excavated because it is now underneath a modern city, but this other one has been excavated. What was this temple like?

It was a much smaller structure than the Gaza temple. This one would not have been able to support so many people on its roof, as it was 26 ft (8m) in width and 47 ft (14.5 m) in length. But even so, that temple in Gaza would almost certainly have been very *similar in design* to the one at Tell Qasile. For v.24 says there were two pillars supporting the roof; and this is exactly the case with the excavated temple.

This excavated temple was comprised of an antechamber and a main hall. The main hall measured 18½ ft by 23½ ft inside; but its roof was originally supported by two wooden pillars set on round stone bases, placed along a centre axis. And these pillar bases are about 7ft (2m) apart, which puts them within the reach of a tall man. This demonstrates the absolute accuracy of the biblical account. The one who wrote this knew very well what Philistine temples looked like.

And another thing: although v.26 speaks of "the pillars whereupon the house standeth", it does not say those two pillars were the *only* ones holding the structure up. They would have been the two *principal* ones. And in fact, v.29 speaks of them as "the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up"; so we know they were the middle pillars, the principal ones, but not the only ones. Thus when Samson dislodged them from their bases, the entire structure collapsed, because these were the principal pillars, and also because the vast weight of so many thousands on the roof just added to the building's complete collapse once those two pillars were dislodged.

And in v.27 we again see Samson the type of Jesus. For Samson was placed between the two pillars, with his arms stretched between them, while the Philistines looked on and mocked; and the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, with his arms stretched out in precisely the

same position as Samson, while the Jews and Romans looked on and mocked Him. Samson stretched his arms between two pillars of wood in full view of the crowds; and Jesus was stretched upon a cross of wood in full view of the crowds as well.

How plain the parallel! And we will see it continuing, as we proceed.

"And Samson called unto the Lord". (verse 28a)

Here we have Samson's final and deeply moving prayer to the Lord his God; the Lord he loved and had so faithfully served in the past; the Lord who had so severely chastised him for his sin, but before whom he had so evidently repented, and who had truly forgiven him, and restored his great strength because he had restored his Nazariteship. In his distress, in this moment of his greatest need, he cried unto the Lord his God in prayer! This is what all Christians must do, in times of distress. Of course, we should pray at *all* times; but so often, in moments of great distress and trial, we are so busy doing other things, trying to get out of difficulties in our own strength, that we fail to turn to the Lord in prayer, and to cast our burdens upon him. This should not be! "I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me" (Psa. 118:5); "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me" (Psa. 120:1). This is what Samson did.

"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee". (verse 28b)

How moving this part of his prayer is! "Remember me." The Lord can never forget His people! Nevertheless this is how we speak: "Lord, remember me." Behold me; see me; remember me. Especially is this so when we have sinned, and feel as if the Lord has been far from us as a consequence.

"Remember me," Samson prayed. Remember the position I hold

as the judge of Israel; remember what Thine enemies, O Lord, have done to me, Thy servant; remember that the reproaches that have fallen upon me have fallen upon *Thee*, O Lord, and upon Thy people Israel, and upon the Lord's cause; remember, also, O Lord, how Thou hast loved me, preserved me, used me in the past; remember all this, O Lord!

When the thief on the cross repented of his sin and was converted, he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Lk. 23:42); and here Samson, typifying Christ on the cross, cries in prayer, "Lord, remember me."

"And strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God". (verse 28c)

Samson knew that it was now his time to die. He knew there was no escape. His work was finished. His mission was over. He only had one thing more to do, and to do it he needed that superhuman strength with which the Lord had endowed him in days gone by; that astounding strength which had made him the terror of the Philistine nation. And so he prayed to the Lord for it. Once more, O Lord! Only once more. I sinned; I fell; Thou didst take my great strength from me, and justly so; but now I ask Thee to restore it for one final victory against Thine enemies. Strengthen me once more, only once, O my Lord! That is all I ask.

It was a prayer of faith, from a broken heart; and the Lord accepted it, as He always will accept all such prayers, and answered it in a most spectacular way.

Let us pray for strength to resist the devil, to strive against sin, and to turn our backs on the world! Our strength lies in the Lord, "the Strength of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:29); to Him we must go by prayer if we would be strong. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).

"That I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." (verse 28d)

He acted against the Philistines, not as a private person but as Israel's judge. Thus he did not pray this prayer out of a desire for personal revenge; for that, as we have seen, is sinful (Rom. 12:19-21). But he prayed for this victory as the judge of Israel, whose *duty* it was to take vengeance on the Philistines for what they had done to the people of God. "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he [the ruler] beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a *revenger* to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). Samson had in mind the honour of the Lord God of Israel, whom he served. God had been mocked by these heathen, and therefore he called upon God to take vengeance on them.

But if this is so, why then did he mention the personal injury done to him, of the loss of his eyes?

Well, he suffered the loss of his eyes, his imprisonment, his humiliation, and everything else, as a *public person*, the judge of Israel. Although *he* was the one who suffered these things, yet he did so as the *head* of the nation of Israel. And thus *his* sufferings were *their* sufferings: what they did to him, they in a sense did to all Israel, for he acted on their behalf, as a leader always does.

As judge, also, he was as it were the eyes of the nation; and thus he mentioned in particular the loss of his eyes, as emblematic of the loss of Israel's leader and judge, the one who had the *oversight* of them, so that they were now without his guidance and direction.

Furthermore, we may see a further meaning in these words of Samson, praying to be avenged for his two eyes: the true Church is called, in the Bible, the Lord's elect, the apple of His eye, in Zech. 2:8; which says of Zion, "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of [God's] eye." And for the sake of His Church, Christ (typified by Samson) will be avenged on His enemies, and on those that hate Him and Zion.

And in all this he typified Christ, who was and is the federal Head and Representative of His people, the Church, the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16); and who suffered all that He suffered *in the place of* His people. All that He endured, He endured for *their* sakes. Their sins were heaped upon Him, and for them He suffered and died.

Samson died praying, and in this also he was like the Lord Jesus; for He too died praying. Oh how we must pray always (Lk. 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17)! The difference between the type and the antitype, however, is that Samson, as the judge of the nation, died praying for vengeance on the wicked; but Jesus died praying for the forgiveness of the wicked! *His* prayer was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). The antitype does not answer to the type in every single detail; but Christ is far above Samson, as He is above all men

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left." (verse 29)

This shows that this great building had two *main* pillars in the middle, which were its main support. It was "borne up" by these two chiefly.

Samson's arms were stretched out, taking hold of these wooden pillars. And in this he typified Jesus, whose arms were stretched out on the cross of wood, so that the type and the antitype were in very similar physical positions. In this Samson typified Christ crucified! And in much more than this as well, as we shall still see.

"And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines." (verse 30a)

A question in people's minds has often been: did Samson commit suicide? Suicide is a great sin. It is self-murder. But Samson did not

commit it. He did *not want* to take his own life! He was not looking for an opportunity to kill himself. His desire, rather, was to destroy the Lord's and Israel's enemies; and to bring *that* about, he willingly laid down his own life. In order to bring about the destruction of the Philistines, he knew that he had to die as well. He had no alternative. He would not have wanted to die this way, if he could have achieved his objective in any other way. But it just was not possible, given the circumstances

Truly, although he lived long before it was written, Samson fulfilled, as an Old Testament minister of the Lord, what Paul said of himself as a New Testament minister of the Lord: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord" (Acts 20:24). And this is what all true Christians must be prepared to do! Christians are not to count their lives dear to themselves, but be willing to lay them down, and lose them, in the service of their Lord and Master: "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). This is what Samson did. He did not count his life dear to himself, so that he could finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord!

And so his words, "Let me die with the Philistines", mean that he was *content* to die as well, if by doing so he could at the same time destroy so many of the Lord's and Israel's enemies, and bring glory to God. These wicked men were praising their heathen idol, but in this way Samson would show them that their idol was a vain thing, and that the Lord God of Israel was the true and living God. What glory this final mighty deed of his brought to the God of heaven and earth!

As he acted as a public person, Israel's judge and representative, he did not commit murder either, when he brought about the death of those thousands of Philistines. They were warring against him, in a very cruel manner, and therefore he had every right to make war against them in return, and destroy them in any way he could. This was war, not murder. "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13) means thou shalt not murder; it does *not* forbid killing the enemy in time of war. Brave soldiers, in time of war, often go into battle knowing that they will die. Yet they do it anyway, to bring about the defeat and destruction of the enemy. Samson did what brave men have so often done, for the sake of their country and their loved ones.

He died *with* them; but his death was not *like* theirs. The souls of those three thousand Philistines went immediately to hell; but the soul of Samson went immediately to heaven, there to spend eternity with the Lord he loved and had served.

And yet again we see Jesus typified in this! For our Saviour *voluntarily* laid down His own life so as to destroy the devil, sin, and death! He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (Jn. 10:17,18). Christ Jesus died *with* a spiritual "Philistine": one of the thieves on the cross next to him, who had not repented. And He died so as to destroy Satan and his works *by* His death! "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8).

## "And he bowed himself with all his might". (verse 30b)

The Hebrew word for "bowed" here contains connotations of bending under a force or effort, as when Isacchar is said to bow his shoulder to bear the burden (Gen. 49:14,15). And the Hebrew word that is used in conjunction with the term "bowed" – "might" – means literally "in strength". It is usually intended to denote physical strength.

But the interesting and very significant thing about this is that, often the emphasis of the root of this term is on the lack or insufficiency of human strength in comparison to God. Samson had just prayed to the Lord for strength. This shows, then, that he was relying not on his natural strength, but on *divine power* to act.

Putting the two Hebrew terms together, it "denotes a powerful movement on the part of Samson. Such a surge of power would be consistent with the effort needed to dislodge the pillars from their bases, as they were held in place by the weight of the temple. Once the pillars were in motion Samson would have to continue dragging them off their bases." <sup>12</sup>

How perfectly the words applied to the antitype tie in with those applied to the type as well: Jesus "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (Jn. 19:30)!

"And the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein." (verse 30c)

The Hebrew word for "fell" has also the meaning of "collapsed". Samson dragged the pillars off their bases, and thus the building *collapsed* onto the Philistines. And once the main hall of the temple collapsed, the rest of the structure would have collapsed as well. This all fits in perfectly with what was excavated at Tell Qasile.

What a miracle this was! It was not done by his natural strength; in fact, having been in prison for some time, no doubt he was much weaker than he once had been, naturally. But this was done by the *mighty power of God the Holy Spirit*, working through His servant Samson

And as we read it, our hearts tremble with excitement, amazement and awe! Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised! That a single man could bring down this vast building is something impossible for

<sup>12</sup> *Bible and Spade*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Winter 2005, pg.17.

the men of the world to accept or believe. It must be accepted by faith, and those who believe in an Almighty God can easily accept this amazing account. The hardness of heart of the rest will keep them from ever accepting it.

"So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." (verse 30d)

Verse 27 says there were three thousand people on the roof; and this is in addition to those who were *inside* the building as well. There were, therefore, many more than three thousand people slain in this one final mighty act. During his lifetime he had slain a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass; thirty men at Ascalon; and an unknown number whom he smote hip and thigh. Plainly, then, Samson killed many more people at his death than the many he killed during his lifetime!

And his great antitype, the Lord Jesus, by *His* death "slew" (as it were) far more than ever He had in His life, in this sense: that during His earthly ministry He cast out many devils from many people, but by His death He *pulled down the devil's kingdom!* He bound the strong man who kept his palace and spoiled him of his goods (Lk. 11:21,22)! He bruised the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15) and set the captives of the serpent free (Isa. 61:1; Lk. 4:18)!

Not only did He, in that sense, "slay" Satan and his works, but also, the Lord Jesus by His death has "slain" multitudes of people, all His elect! For by His death, He has set multitudes free from bondage to Satan and sin. Through the centuries, millions of the human race have been regenerated and converted to Christ, delivered from Satan's yoke, set free from sin's bondage. And all because of what Jesus accomplished for them on the cross!

And too, when the Lord saves His chosen, they *die* to sin and self, and live unto Him (Rom. 6:4-11). And only the Lord Himself knows

how many millions have been, and how many more people will be, snatched from Satan's palace, because Christ died for them, shed His blood for them, and by His atoning death made reconciliation for them unto God!

In this verse, then, we see the crucifixion of the Lord and Saviour typified: Samson bowed with all his might upon the two pillars, and the great idol's temple fell; he triumphed over those Philistine principalities and powers. Christ, the greater Judge of Israel than Samson, "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost"; and by His death He cast down the two great pillars of Satan's kingdom, which are sin and death. And in doing so He triumphed over satanic "principalities and powers" (Col. 2:15), pulled down the devil's kingdom, and overcame the world.

"Then when [Christ's] arms were stretched out upon the cross, as Samson's to the two pillars, He gave a fatal shake to the gates of hell, and *through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* (Heb. 2:14,15), and herein exceeded Samson, that he not only died with the Philistines, but rose again to triumph over them"!<sup>13</sup>

Those wicked Philistines were praising their god Dagon, instead of praising and worshipping the true and living God, Jehovah. They were rebels against the true God, and their destruction came upon them very justly. And it was *while* they were praising their idol, full of vain self-confidence and a sense of safety and security, that sudden destruction came upon them, just as will occur at the end of the world: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:3). At the moment they least expected it, it happened! We see this at another time as well, when the great King Belshazzar was praising his gods. *While* he was actually doing so, destruction came (Dan. 5:4,5,22,23,30).

Think what a blow this was to the Philistine nation! It had been a

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. II, on Judg. 16:30.

terrible enough blow to them when Samson had destroyed their crops by means of the foxes with their firebrands, but this was even worse. In this destruction their lords perished – the men who ruled the nation. They were now leaderless. And not only that, but thousands of their people, many of them being from the high and influential classes of their society, had now perished. This was such a blow as would take years to recover from. And if the nation of Israel had not been so hopeless at this time, so weak and afraid and far from the Lord, what a tremendous advantage the Israelites could have gained over their oppressors! They could have risen up and thrown off the Philistine yoke! This was the moment of the Philistines' greatest weakness. But sadly, Israel was in no position to do that; and although a huge blow had been struck, and Philistine power immensely weakened, Israel was not to be free of Philistine rule as yet.

It is believed that the wonderful story of Samson and his mighty exploits was in time carried to Greece by the Phoenicians, and that the Greeks in turn transferred certain events from Samson's life to their hero and supposed demigod, Hercules. Ovid stated that the custom of tying a burning torch between two foxes in the circus was done in memory of the damage that had once been done in a harvest by a fox with burning straw; but it is obvious that this was merely a corruption of the true biblical account. In Greek mythology, Hercules died at the hands of his wife – a corruption again of the true biblical narrative of Samson and Delilah, who certainly did all in her power to have him killed. Even the jovial and buffoon-like character of the Greek Hercules carries an echo of that tragic time when Samson was brought out to make sport for the Philistines. And in Egypt, Hercules was known as "son of the sun", which was a name very similar to that of "Samson" in meaning.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Bible Cyclopaedia*, by A.R. Fausset, art. "Samson", pg. 623. The S.S. Scranton Company, Hartford, Connecticut, USA, 1902.

"Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years." (verse 31)

Up until this time, his brethren had wanted nothing to do with him! They had not helped him in the least. But now, as tidings of this last and greatest victory of Samson reached their ears, they were moved to come and find their hero and champion amidst the rubble and the thousands of corpses in Dagon's destroyed temple; and then they took him to where his father Manoah had been buried, and laid him to rest there

The Philistines did not try to stop them. For one thing, they were in total disarray. Their leaders were all dead, and they probably thought that now was not a good time to be belligerent with the Israelites, as the Israelites, if they had had the heart to do it, could have risen up against them at this time and totally annihilated them. For another thing, his brethren had not done any injury to them; in fact, the Israelites had been so cowardly that they had meekly submitted to the Philistines at all times, even when Samson was working so hard on their behalf. The Philistines therefore did not fear them, nor did they have any reason to harm them.

Manoah his father had come from Zorah (Judg. 13:2), and between there and Eshtaol, he had been buried; and now his son was buried with him. But there was more to it than that: it was precisely "between Zorah and Eshtaol" that the Holy Spirit of God had first begun to move Samson (Judg. 13:25); and so it was for this reason, too, that he was buried here.

And lastly, we are reminded of what it says in Judg.15:20, that Samson judged Israel for twenty years. It has been accurately calculated that he died in the year 1117 BC;<sup>15</sup> which, as he was born in 1155 BC, made him 38 years old at the time of his death.

<sup>15</sup> The Annals of the World, pg. 57.

## **Conclusion**

Samson's is a story like no other: the true account of a man whose like was never seen before, and would never be seen again. God raised up this man to be utterly unique in the world's history, and to do what no other has ever done. He was Israel's judge and Israel's champion; Israel's hero and deliverer; a man of faith, yet a man subject to like passions as other men (Acts 14:15); a man who fell at times into terrible sin, but who fought "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). A man, in fact, who was in so many ways just like us! I am of course referring to those who are true Christians. We, too, find that we have within us the old nature and the new, the flesh and the spirit. And we fall, yet we rise; we are weak at times, and strong at other times.

His life teaches us that where sin abounds, God's grace abounds much more towards His elect (Rom. 5:20); that though a man falls far and deeply, he can rise to even greater heights than before. It teaches us that though our old nature is sometimes very strong, and overcomes us, yet when we truly repent and call upon the Lord, we are forgiven and restored.

We see this in Samson, as we see it in Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, Peter, and others, whose lives are on record in Holy Writ for our learning.

Samson belonged to the Lord, not to the devil! And though the devil tried to have him, and at times influenced him, yet he always belonged to the Lord, and the Lord loved him, and used him mightily. And so He can do with each and every true believer, despite our many sins, failings and weaknesses. Christians are spiritual Nazarites, separated unto God; but this being so, we must *live* as such, and not be overcome of the wicked one.

Samson performed mighty exploits. And like Samson, by faith we too can do exploits! What was prophesied of believers long ago

ought to be true of us as well: "the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan. 11:32). We, too, by God's blessing upon us, can storm and pillage Satan's kingdom; we can work righteousness; obtain the promises of God; stop the mouth of Satan, that roaring lion; escape our spiritual enemies; be made strong out of weakness; do valiantly when fighting the good fight of faith; and cause Satan's legions to flee.

And if we are persecuted, as Samson was, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we can endure, and overcome! Sometimes even professing Christians may not understand us, and we may have to endure much anguish at their hands, in addition to enduring much at the hands of the open enemies of the Gospel; sometimes we may have to suffer the loss of all things, and wander about the earth; but through it all let us never forget that Samson and the other heroes of faith in Heb. 11 were those "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38). And the world is not worthy of the Lord's saints today either! Not because we are great in ourselves, or sinlessly perfect, for we certainly are not; but because we are the LORD'S people, and He has taken the world out of our hearts and our hearts out of the world, and caused us to be "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (2 Pet. 2:7,8), and to "desire to depart, and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23); and it should be our constant prayer that the Lord would make us ever stronger, ever more separated from the world, loving not the things in the world, loving and following Christ Jesus alone!

And also, in the life of Samson we see a feeble, but nevertheless very real, type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is greater than Samson, and who brought about a greater deliverance for His people than Samson ever did! *Jesus* is here, in this account in the book of Judges! He is shadowed forth by these events in the Old Testament.

To God be all the glory for this great man, Samson. To God be all the glory for saving him, working through him, and again setting

his feet on Christ the Rock after he fell. To God be all the glory, above all, for the Lord Jesus Christ, His most precious and almighty Son, who can *never* fail and who never has, and who by His own great strength, without any assistance, has pulled down the pillars of Satan's kingdom, crushed the serpent's head, and set the captives free for evermore!

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### THE JESUITS: THE SECRET ARMY OF THE PAPACY

The New Testament abounds with warnings of wolves in sheep's clothing: men pretending to be part of the flock of Christ, but in reality wolves disguised as sheep, ministers of Satan pretending to be ministers of righteousness.

For centuries a ruthless, cunning, secret army has served the global conquest objectives of the Papacy. The Jesuit Order is the most diabolical of all Roman Catholic orders; the most fanatical and dangerous. It stops at nothing in the relentless pursuit of its goal: to destroy all enemies of the Papacy. Against Protestantism, in particular, the Jesuits have always directed their energies, by infiltration of Protestant churches, posing as Protestant ministers, sowing discord and heresy, etc. The shocking state of professing "Christendom" today is ample testimony that they have been all too successful.

This is a time when so little is known of the Jesuits, and yet so much needs to be known. And this is the purpose of this book.

### THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

Are Christians to observe the first day of the week as the "Christian Sabbath"?

In accordance with the fourth commandment of the decalogue, the Jews observed the seventh day as the Sabbath. Yet those who claim they keep Sunday as a day of rest in obedience to the fourth commandment have: 1) changed the *day*; 2) changed the *manner* of observing it; and 3) changed the *reason* for observing it. For they observe the first day instead of the seventh, without the restrictions of the seventh day Sabbath, and because Christ rose form the dead on

that day. Thus it has to be asked: is this really observing the fourth commandment when a different day is observed, in a different way, and for a different reason?

This book demonstrates that the first day of the week, the Lord's day, is the day for corporate worship, but that *no* day is a *Sabbath* for New testament Christians. The seventh day Sabbath was abrogated along with the Old Covenant, and no other day was set up in its place; for the Sabbath typified Gospel rest in Christ, and with the institution of the New Covenant the Sabbath shadow gave way to the glorious reality.

### THE PAGAN FESTIVALS OF CHRISTMAS AND EASTER

Multitudes worldwide celebrate the festivals of Christmas and Easter every year. For many, these festivals are simply holidays, times for merriment and revelry. For the majority of those who profess to be Christians, however, they supposedly commemorate the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what is the *truth* about these two festivals? Were they appointed by the Lord, to be kept by His Church? And if not, *where did* they originate?

This book is an in-depth examination of these festivals, in the light of God's Word. They are shown to be of Babylonian and Roman Catholic origin, and furthermore, to be perversions of what the Bible really teaches about the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. No true Christian should have anything to do with them. Fully documented.