

Judges Chapter 14 Part 2

We started Judges chapter 14 last week. But there are some background notes that I need to give you. Robby Dean has some good ones, so I will just quote him. In some places, I edited the transcript based upon the audio of the mp3 file.

To start with, there is a general statement of God's love.

“One of the most difficult things for some people to ever learn is that God really, truly loves them as they are. Part of that is just because that people so often today grow up in such horrible homes and horrible situations that they never experience anything close to real love from their parents, from their fathers, from their mothers, and everything that they face is conditional, and so when they come to face the love of God they just extrapolate from human love to divine love and they never can quite understand that God truly does love them. For whatever reason—sometimes it is guilt—sometimes they think they have committed some horrible atrocities in their lives such unforgivable sins they think that “God can love other people but He certainly can't love me.” Some act weighs so heavily on that person that they can't get past that to understand the love of God and they can't ever quite believe that God loves them as much as He loves everybody else. This is a real problem for some folks. Others who have grown up in a denomination where they have had legalism beat into them day in and day out, or they have been taught that you can lose your salvation, that you can commit some unforgivable sin and that you weren't ever really saved, like the lordship crowd says, or that you have now lost your salvation, like most Arminians teach, somehow they never can understand that God's grace is based on who God is and not on who they are.”

And as Herman has stressed, how you benefit from that love depends on your orientation to God's grace. Will you walk by faith and trust Him?

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Faith dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is key.

Now concerning when the narratives of Samson took place:

“The time frame here is also important to understand because it is a picture of God's grace from the period of the judges to the time of Samuel at the beginning of 1st Samuel. Jephthah and Samson overlap. They are alive basically, at the end of the twelfth century BC. Samson is born approximately in 1123 BC, dies in 1084. Samuel comes along and is born when Samson is about 7 years of age. So they are contemporaries. Their lives overlap. Samuel is just seven years younger. So when we look at the major events in Israel, for example at the battle of Aphek which is important as background to the episode in 1 Samuel 16 (I think he meant Judges chapter 16) Everyone should be familiar where Samson is captured, blinded, he is put in the temple of Dagon, and when he comes out for the big drunken banquet and orgy-fest, he leans up against the pillars, prays to God and knocks the pillars down, and everything falls down and kills the Philistines. Well, that is at the temple of Dagon. It is also an indication that the Philistines have not learned a whole lot because it was at the battle of Aphek in 1104 BC, this was 20 years before Samson dies. Samson was a judge for only 20 years, so this happens at the beginning of his judgeship when he was stirring up all this trouble, at the battle of Aphek the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines and taken to the temple of Dagon and placed before this enormous idol of Dagon. And every morning the Philistines would come into the temple and Dagon would be down on his face bowing in obedience to the ark of the covenant. So they would set the idol up the next morning and they would come in the next day and Dagon would be down and then the third time they came in the arms and feet are cut off. God is demonstrating that the gods of the Philistines are impotent before the God of Israel. Even though they have defeated them (Israel) in battle He wants to make sure they understand that that doesn't mean their gods

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are superior. But they don't learn. So they are going to stick Samson in the temple of Dagon once again and have more trouble.”

Before we get started on the text I want to take you on a sight seeing tour of the Samson narrative. Let us read the last three chapters of the Samson narrative so you will understand some things before we study them in detail. I want you to pay attention to the three women in Samson’s life. Now, there may have been additional women, but these three are documented in the word of God because God and the author, perhaps Samuel, want us to pick up on some spiritual lessons from them.

Read Judges chapters 14-16.

Samson's Three Women

Woman	Relationship	Attraction	Blindness/Unclean	Vengeance/Strategic Objective
Unnamed Philistine 14:1-15:20	Wife, Not Consummated, Given to Another	Looks (Right in his own eyes)	Ritual/Ceremonial Unclean/Blind Ambush using wife	Destroys grain harvest, vineyards & olive groves ECONOMIC Destruction
Prostitute 16:1-3	Prostitute	Sex	Morally/Spiritually Blind Ambush using prostitute	Destroys city gate DEFENSE Destruction
Delilah Delicate, Dainty, Petite or perhaps “brought low” 16:4-31	“Mistress”	Love	Physically Blind Ambush using mistress	Destroys Temple RELIGIOUS Destruction
The narrative starts with Samson doing what was right in his own eyes. He was “brought low” by Delilah. God wanted him to learn that he should have done what was right in God’s eyes. He finally learned that lesson after he lost his physical eyes and gained spiritual vision. He learned that his strength came from God and not from his hair.				

Judges 14:5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him.

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It is obvious from the narrative that Samson and his parents got separated. The text does not say how or why. Maybe his folks were slow walkers and Samson had the heebie-jeebies and had to run ahead and then stop and wait. Perhaps something like the tortoise and the hare.

Vineyards. He stopped at or near a vineyard. Uh Oh! Grapes. A Nazirite was not supposed to eat grapes or grape products. He is pushing the envelope here.

Behold. Look! I have ranted before about “behold.” It doesn’t communicate much in today’s English. But “Look!” does.

Came roaring toward him.

Chisholm sees a link between this narrative and a later narrative when Samson has “victories over the Philistines at Ashkelon and Lehi, where the Lord’s spirit also “rushes upon” him and enables him to kill his enemies with supernatural ease (see 14:19; 15:14). In both 14:5-6 and 15:14 the phrase “to meet him” (with hostile intent) follows a verb for roaring/shouting (the human equivalent of a lion’s roar) and precedes the reference to the Lord’s spirit rushing upon Samson.” He suggests a literal translation of the word as, “to meet him (with hostile intent).” Let us put these two references side by side for comparison:

Judges 14:5b-6a and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily

Judges 15:14a the Philistines shouted (TDOT: “war cry”) as they met (same word as in 14:5, came toward) him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily (same phrase as in 14:6)

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Lion Narrative	Philistines Narrative
Came toward him	Met him Came toward him
Roaring (like a war cry)	Shouted (war cry)
The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily	The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily

So in these parallels, the Philistines are parallel to the young lion. Samson deals with both the same way.

Another commentator (Emmrich) takes this further. He shows that this is like king Saul. Another of those threads of the fabric of Scripture.

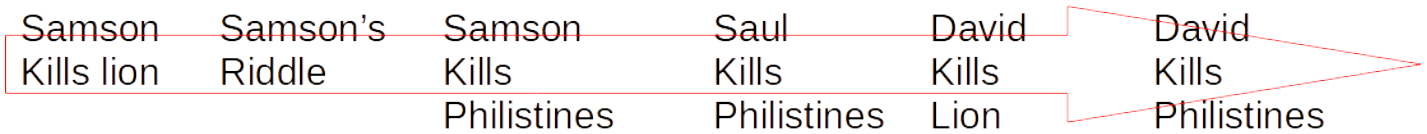
“The first two kings of Israel would finish what Samson had begun. That Saul should be understood as replicating and continuing Samson’s struggles against the Philistines is quite evident from the correspondences between the portrayals of both leaders. In both cases, the main national enemy were the Philistines. The unique phrase [mightily came upon him the spirit of the Lord] followed by the name of the Spirit’s recipient is employed almost exclusively for these two characters (cf. Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6). Again, both are subjected to the Philistines’ ridicule in the house of their idols (Judg 16:25; 1 Sam 31:4, 9–10) and terminate their lives by way of suicide (Judg 16:30; 1 Sam 31:4).

Keep in mind that the book of Judges is anticipating the establishment of kings. Some of the wording elicits the actions of David against Goliath in

1 Samuel 17:36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them,

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The Samson narrative could have used a similar phrase when killing the uncircumcised Philistines, but we are left to draw the parallels ourselves with the aid of the Holy Spirit.



Judges 14:6 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

The Spirit of the Lord. Samson's strength is from the Lord. Later on, it would seem that Samson takes his strength for granted. But it is from the Lord. Eventually, at the end, he will recognize this.

Once we become believers in Christ and children of God, our lives are not ours. We belong to God because we are "in Christ" positionally. Our lives can in some respects be looked upon as preparation for the Millennium and eternity. There are many personal lessons we must learn. One of the most difficult is humility, grace orientation. That is one that Samson eventually learns, at great cost.

Another perspective on this was given by Herman last Sunday. Part of our "preparation" is serving God "in good works." As the title said, "Created in Christ for Good Works." Our lives are not our own but God's. When we live according to His plan in faith dependence on the Holy Spirit, we are blessed "mightily."

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Here are some pertinent comments from Gary Kukis on the two levels of the text, something I have talked about repeatedly:

“You have to realize that there are portions of the Bible which function on two levels—first of all, there was a literal Samson and he had two parents who went with him to Timnah. This was a young lion possibly on its first hunt for food. However, this is all representative of what is to come. Samson, as we have seen, represents both Christ and Israel. As Christ, he will meet and defeat this lion, just as our Lord broke the back of Satan on the cross. As Israel, he will meet and defeat this lion, as Israel will meet the Philistines and destroy them.”

Judges 14:7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.

Talked to the woman. Uh Oh! From our present day perspective two people need to engage in courtship before deciding on getting married. What Samson said previously is that he saw a woman. So now he wants to marry her so he talks to her.

Are we perhaps judging Samson too quickly? When it says “she looked good,” was that strictly visual or is this assessment of his future bride based in part upon the conversation?

She looked good to Samson. Here is a repetition of the word from verse 3. Remember? She was right in his own eye. Just like what almost everyone in the book of Judges was doing – what was right in their own eyes. It is a repetition to remind us of these facts. It was right in his own eye.

Judges 14:8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of

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the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

Swarm of bees.

I am going to paraphrase partly and quote partly from a quotation from Block. The word for “swarm” of bees is not the normal word for “swarm” but elsewhere “always refers to a company of people, usually the Israelites as a faith community, called to be agents of grace and light in the decadent world.”

Robby Dean says essentially the same thing but adds an interpretation:

“Later on in verse 8, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. There is a lot going on here because the word "swarm" isn't the normal (word for) swarm. It is the Hebrew word which means a congregation, an assembly, a people. It is talking about honey coming out of a dead carcass. Is a beehive normally found in a carcass? No. Why not? Because they are wet, gaseous, decomposing, and not valid sites for a beehive. So once again we realize God is doing something here, this is not normal to find a beehive in a carcass. But this is an assembly. The writer is making a point here. What is found there is honey. What does honey have to do with in the Old Testament? In Exodus 3:8, "And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites." The Canaanites are spiritually dead; they are the carcass. Out of the carcass God is going to give honey and life to Israel. Once again it is another symbol of grace. God brings life where there is death. He is going to bring blessing where there is death and depravity. Also in Deuteronomy 8 is described as "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey." All of

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that is going to belong to Israel, but it is not theirs now. They are not experiencing the blessing of God because they are assimilated with the Philistines. So the symbolism here is simply to remind us of what God is going to do with Israel, bringing blessing where there is death.”

Judges 14:9 So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.

The author makes a point to say that Samson did not tell his parents 1) that he killed a lion with his bare hands and 2) that he obtained the honey out of the dead carcass of that lion. There are various reasons for this given by the commentators. But, if Samson told no one, he could be sure that when the riddle was solved, it was not the result of his parents having told on him.

Judges 14:10 Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this.

Feast. Typically at such a feast, there would be drinking of alcohol/wine. Again, here is temptation which would cause a Nazirite vow to be broken. The text never says he drank. So whatever happened, it was not pertinent to the purpose of the author.

Judges 14:11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

When they saw him. There is a difference between the Hebrew Text and the Greek Translation, the LXX. In the Hebrew, “they saw him.” In the

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Greek text, “they feared him.” The two words in the Hebrew are not very different and might have been misread or copied incorrectly. If the word is saw him, apparently with his father and without friends accompanying him, they may have decided to not let him be embarrassed and provide a retinue for him. On the other hand, if the correct word is that they feared him, they may have provided a “body guard” to protect the Philistines from him in case he got out of hand.

Why thirty?

Judges 14:12 Then Samson said to them, “Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.

Propound a riddle. Literally, let me riddle you a riddle. There is the verb plus a noun from the root. Adds a little emphasis to what he is saying.

Thirty. Why

Judges 14:13 But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.” And they said to him, “Propound your riddle, that we may hear it.”

Why thirty? Well, there were thirty young men companions at the feast (verse 11). What is the meaning of “30?” Biblestudy.org as well as other websites suggest, “Part of the meaning of the number 30 comes from it symbolizing dedication to a particular task or calling.”