

Studies in the book of Judges Samson (Judges 13-16)

Read Judges 13:1-7

1. In verse 1, what is missing from the usual cycle we have seen develop throughout this book? What do you make of that?
2. Samson is to be a Nazirite. To understand what this means, read Numbers 6:1-8. What similarities and differences do you see between this account and the angel's words to Manoah's wife?
3. Read Luke 1:26-38. What similarities and differences do you see between the birth of Samson and that of Jesus? What do you make of this?

Read Judges 14:1-20

4. What do you think of Samson's desire for a Philistine wife (14:1-4)? How does this fit with what the Israelites had been told in Deuteronomy 7:1-6 (see also 1 Kings 11:1-2; Nehemiah 13:23-27)? What was the concern, according to Deuteronomy 7:4? [*Bonus question: Can you think of people in the Old Testament who did marry outside Israel and were not condemned for it?*]
5. What do you make of God's involvement in this, and his reasons (verse 4)?
6. What do we learn about Samson from the incident with the lion and the honey, with regard to:
 - a. His commitment to his Nazirite vows?
 - b. The source of his strength?
7. What do we learn about Samson from the way the Philistines learn the answer to his riddle?

Read Judges 15:9-16

8. What do you make of Judah's attitude, as shown in their complaint to Samson in verse 11 (in comparison to 1:1-5)? What does that suggest about how Israel has progressed in the years covered by Judges?
9. What is different to the way Samson wages war against Israel's enemies, as opposed to Gideon for example (see 6:34-35)? What do you make of this?

Read Judges 16:1-31

10. For all his great strength, what weakness keeps tripping Samson up? Is he alone in this? What other weaknesses commonly trip God's people up?
11. What is driving Samson in his dealings with Delilah (see verses 4, 16-17)? What insight does that give to his character?
12. Who is responsible for Samson's downfall, according to verses 20 and 24? What does this say about the forces at work behind the scenes in Samson's war with the Philistines? In what ways is this true for us (see Ephesians 6:14)?

13. Samson prays one last time, in 16:28. What does this prayer tell us about:
 - a. Samson's relationship with God?
 - b. What motivates him?
14. It's been suggested that there are many parallels between Samson and Jesus. From the miraculous birth and the angel's announcement, through to the man of God alone and forsaken, mocked by the crowd, stretching out his arms and defeating the enemy through his own death. What other similarities or differences do you note? And what might we learn from this?

Reflection

15. What do we learn from Samson about God's plans for his people, and how he works to achieve them?
16. What do we learn from Samson about how we, as flawed and often broken people, can be used in God's service?
17. In what ways are we like Samson?
18. In what ways should we not be like Samson?