

Judges 13–16

Day 1

Samson's Birth. Read Judges 13

1. What was the status of the Philistines in Judges 13:1–2?
2. In Judges 13:2–5:
 - Who appeared to Manoah's wife and what news did He bring (13:3)? How do you think this made her feel about the messenger and the message? (For other occurrences of "the angel of the Lord," see Judges 2:1–5 and 6:11–24.)
 - What instructions did He give her (13:4–5a)? (See Numbers 6:1–6*ff* for laws about Nazarite vows.)
 - What did the angel of the Lord prophesy about Samson's leadership (13:5b)? What does "begin" indicate about his battle with Philistine domination?

FYI: "Because Israel had not repented [13:1], the Lord was not yet ready to break the yoke of the Philistines. But neither would He abandon Israel. In grace, He raised up Samson to begin the process of liberation. In that, Samson was unique. The other judges had known military victory; but Samson would not. He would prevent complete defeat, but he would accomplish only partial victory. In fact, throughout his life Samson acted all alone. He never recruited any followers of fighting companions. He never rallied his nations. He never brought about a major battle between armies. All of his conflicts were personal ones, as he engaged the Philistines in acts of revenge and retaliation."
– Gary Inrig (235)

3. How did Manoah's wife describe the angel to her husband (13:6)? What didn't she know about the angel?
4. Why did Manoah ask the Lord for the angel to appear again? 13:8 What faith did he show about the angel's announcement of his son's birth?
5. What more did Manoah want to know about the boy to be born (13:12)?
 - What was the only information the angel would give (13:13–14)? Why do you think he didn't tell Manoah any more about his future?

5. How did Manoah want to honor the visitor (13:15)? Whom did the angel say to honor (13:16)?
6. How did the angel respond to being asked His name? 13:17–18 What do you think that indicates? See Isaiah 9:6.

| **FYI: wonderful / beyond understanding / secret** – Strong's OT 6383; *pilliy*; remarkable:

7. How did the angel reveal His identity (13:19–20)?
 - How did Manoah and his wife react (3:20b–22)? See Exodus 33:20.
8. With what assurances about God did Manoah's wife calm her husband (13:23)?
9. How did God begin to work in Samson's life (13:24b–25)? What do you think that means?

| **FYI: move/stir** – Strong's OT:6470 *pa'am*; to tap, i.e. beat regularly; hence (generally) to impel or agitate:

☞ **Applying the Word:** What thoughts about God calm you in the midst of fears? Do you have any favorite scriptures that you like to set your mind on?

Day 2

Samson's Philistine Wife. Read Judges 14

10. How did Samson's parents react to their son's desire to marry a Philistine? 14:3 What had God said about this? See Exodus 34:15–16.
 - What does this say about the compromising and assimilation of the nation of Israel with Canaanite nations?

FYI: "The great danger posed by the Philistines was assimilation, and in contrast to that Samson was a living embodiment of separation, a lifelong Nazirite...He was a man separated from certain things, but most of all, he was a man separated unto the Lord.

It is right there that the tragedy of Samson lies, because Samson's separation turned out to be purely negative...The point of the Nazirite vow was not separation from, it was separation to...[Samson] lack a warmhearted love for God...In his heart, he was not dedicated to the God whose will it was."
– Gary Inrig (236)

11. What reason did Samson give them for wanting to marry the Philistine woman? 14:3b See also 14:7. (This is the same expression as Judges 17:6 “right in his own eyes.” Can you think of a modern day expression equivalent to this?)

12. What divine perspective is given about this event? 14:4

- What was the relationship between the Philistines and Israel? 14:4b
- Gary Inrig points out that unlike other nations that went to war, the Philistines used the weapons of trade and intermarriage to conquer Israel. Because the Philistines knew how to smelt iron, what control did they have? 1 Samuel 13:19–21

FYI: “In accomplishing this purpose, God did not *make* a reluctant Samson pursue the Philistine woman for marriage. God allowed Samson to do what he wanted to do, though the act itself was sinful. God allowed it for reasons in both Samson’s life and for reasons on a larger scale... even though God used Samson’s marriage to a Philistine woman, it all came at a great personal cost to Samson.”
– David Guzik

13. What unusual event occurred on the way to Timnah (14:5–6)?

- What happened on a return trip to Timnah (14:8–9)? How did this go against his Nazirite vow? 14:9 (Cross–reference Numbers 6:6)

FYI: “Samson’s incredible strength was more than the natural strength that the strongest of men could develop in their own bodies. The “Spirit of the LORD” came on him “at times,” giving him supernatural strength, enabling him gradually to deliver Israel practically single-handedly from the Philistines. Three times scripture records the Lord’s spirit coming upon Samson (Judges 14:6; 14:19; 15:14), but it is implied for his other exploits as well.”
– The Defender’s Study Bible

14. At the wedding feast, how did Samson use his experiences with the lion to challenge the 30 companions? 14:12–14

15. How did the men try to find out the answer (14:15)? What does this say about the character of these men?

- What do you think might have happened if Samson’s wife had told Samson about the threats?

16. What made Samson give his wife the answer to the riddle? 14:16,17 How do you think her manipulations made Samson feel? How do you think they made her feel?

17. What did Samson understand about the tactics the men had used to solve the riddle? 14:18b
How respectful are both the men and Samson of this woman?

FYI: “When a man gives in to his wife’s manipulations so as to keep peace, it almost always builds anger and resentment in the man – and guilt in the woman for what she did. The way of manipulation is tempting (because it works), but always brings real destruction.” – David Guzik

18. How did Samson pay his debt (14:19)? Why do you think God’s spirit would allow this?
19. What did the Philistines do in response (14:20)?

FYI: Samson “was not reluctant to engage his enemies in battle. But it was always about him, about revenge for his perceived mistreatment at their hands. Although his calling was to ‘begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines’ (13:5), he never put the cause of his nation or his God first. He was the only one of the judges to enlist no allies and to fight every one of his battles on his own.

Samson was a man with many flaws but with one great virtue. He was a man with a passion for freedom in the middle of a society committed to compromise. With all his failures, he was the only man of his day to recognize that there could be no compromise with the enemy. His fellow Israelites were committed to appeasement, but Samson was committed to be God’s freedom fighter. But the way he carried out that battle missed the point. His wasn’t to be a personal vendetta but a God-given mission.”
– Gary Inrig (253)

- ✂ **Applying the Word:** In Philippians 2:15–16, what are we encouraged to do? How can we be separate from the world while living and participating in the world? (See Jesus’s prayer in John 17:15–19.)

Day 3

Samson and the Philistines. Judges 15

20. What happened to Samson’s wife (4:20)? What reason did her father give (15:1–2)?

21. What was Samson’s response to losing his wife? 15:3–6

- How did the Philistines respond?

Digging Deeper

How had David handled a similar situation? Compare 1 Samuel 25:44 and 2 Samuel 3:13–15

FYI: “Some object that Samson could not have captured 300 foxes. Yet the word translated **foxes** probably refers to a jackal, not a fox, and jackals are known to run in large packs, sometimes up to 200. Second, there is nothing that says Samson did this all by himself. Third, there is nothing that says he did it all in one day.”
– David Guzik

22. What happened next between Samson and the Philistines (15:7–10)? To where did Samson flee (15:11)?
23. What does the conversation with the Philistines in 15:10 and then with Samson in 15:11 indicate about Israel's relationship with the Philistines and their dominance over them? Compare the reasons given for this feud by both sides (15:10b, 15:11b).
- How did the men from Judah view Samson's fight against their enemy? How prepared and willing were they to turn Samson over to the enemy?
24. What do you think motivated the people's actions against one of their own who was fighting for them instead of against the enemy (15:11–13)? What opportunity did they miss?

FYI: "The people were slowly but surely losing their identity, but they were so ignorant of what was going on that when God did send Samson, they were ready to hand him over to death rather than to upset the Philistines...The other major judges...led a repentant people against the enemy. Samson, by contrast, fought alone. There are not major battles but only personal conflicts between Samson and the enemy. Not once was he joined in battle by so much as one man...He was the one man of his day who realized that a person or nation could not compromise and remain free to serve God. The nation as a whole [was] deeply committed to peaceful coexistence, even at the cost of its own identity."
– Gary Inrig (228)

"The fact that soldiers from the tribe of Judah gave up Samson to the Philistines shows just how much they were under the oppression of the Philistines. They would rather *please their oppressors* than *support their deliverer*. This is a strangely common phenomenon. Often, when someone stands up to evil, people are angrier at the one who stood up to the evil than they are angry at the evil itself."
– David Guzik

25. From the account in 15:14–15, how would you describe the strength that Samson possessed?
- Compare Samson's praise (15:16) with Deborah's song of praise in 5:1–5.
 - Compare Judges 15:17 with Exodus 17:15.
26. What did Samson's only recorded prayer (15:18) show about his trust and focus? What should this weakness on his part have caused him to recognize about God? How could he have worded his prayer to be God honoring?

27. How gracious was God's response (15:19)? What event was similar to this? See Exodus 17:6.

- For how long did Samson rule after this battle?

✎ Applying the Word: How do you think parents can best exert a godly influence on their grown children, especially when their lifestyles or choices don't agree?

What are some of your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses? Name a way that God has been able to use one or the other.

Day 4

Samson and Delilah. Judges 16

28. What does 16:1 say about Samson's character and the path he was on? Note the verbs.

- Compare this to Lot's choice in Genesis 13:12–13.

Digging Deeper

What reasons did Samuel give in 1 Samuel 15:22–23 for rejecting Saul as King and how does that parallel Samson's life?

29. From the description in 16:3 (also 15:8,15), what would you say about Samson's strength? (How do you picture Samson: bodybuilder/superhero or average looking? Why?)

30. To what temptation did Samson again succumb? Contrast Genesis 39:12.

31. How did the way the Philistines enlisted Delilah's help (16:5) compare to the way they enlisted Samson's wife (14:15)? (Compare "1100 shekels" to Judges 8:26.)

- Apparently, how readily did she agree? What does this say about her character?
- What does the fact that Samson lied to her (16:7) say about his estimate of her character?

32. Why do you think Samson succumbed to Delilah's pleas and didn't leave after the first attempt to revelation of the men's attempt to capture him? In what was he trusting?

33. From 16:6–21, record Delilah’s pleas, Samson’s responses, and the results.

| Delilah’s plea | Samson’s response | Result |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Vs. 6 | Vs. 7 | Vs. 8–9 |
| Vs. 10 | Vs. 11 | Vs. 12 |
| Vs. 13a | Vs. 13b | Vs. 14 |
| Vs. 15–16 | Vs. 17 | Vs. 18–21 |

34. Underline things are we told to flee or avoid.

- 1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. NIV
- Proverbs 4:14–15 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. NIV
- 1 Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. NIV
- James 4:7–8a Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. NIV
- Romans 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. NIV
- 1 Timothy 6:9–11 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. NIV
- 2 Timothy 2:22–23 Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. NIV

35. What does 16:22 indicate about the length of time that passed? What does it say about God’s grace? Although the strength was not in Samson’s hair, what did his hair represent?

FYI: “Even in the midst of the worst kind of failure, God was present, working to restore Samson. In my mind, there is no doubt that Samson genuinely repented of his sin, and God refused to give up on him.”
– Gary Inrig (277)

36. Instead of bringing honor to God, what had Samson brought about (16:23,24)?

- What kind of “entertainment” do you think they had with Samson (6:25)? Compare Luke 22:64.

FYI: “Dagon has been called the “fish-god” ever since the days of Jerome, who so identified him (evidently because the Hebrew word for “fish” is *dag*). However, archaeologists have found references to Dagon, who was seemingly a very important deity in all the ancient nations of the Middle East. He is now believed to have been the “god of grain” (the Hebrew word for “grain” is *dagan*).”
– The Defenders Study Bible

37. How many were present at the temple (16:25)?

- What did Samson ask of the Lord and why (16:28)?
- What was the result (16:29–30)?

38. How was Samson honored (16:31)?

- What did God say about Samson in Hebrews 11:32–34?

✂ Applying the Word: Is there any area of your life where you are treading too close to temptation? Where do you picture that going? Whose strength are you trusting in to resist it? How and what would it take to flee that temptation?

What do the lives of the Judges say to you about God’s view of faith in spite of human weakness? What do you think God wants to honor most in your life?