

Judges 14

Introduction – Samson is one of the strangest stories in the book of Judges. He is surprising in his actions and in his strength. At first it doesn't seem that Samson is acting as a judge. Rather, it seems as though he is just doing his own thing. But we are told that the Lord raised up Samson to begin to deliver Israel (13:5) and that the Spirit of the Lord had begun to move upon him (13:25). To understand the stories of Samson we should keep in mind three things.

First – Samson's association with Philistine women.

Second – Samson's Nazirite vow.

Third – Samson's ministry of stirring up a sleeping Israel and his work of beginning a deliverance from the Philistines.

And, as with each judge, we look for the typology of Christ and the story of our Greater Judge in many of the details of these stories.

An Overview – of Chapter 14.

Samson's Desires (vv1-4) – Instead of getting ready for war, Samson is in the mood for a wedding. Against his parent's desires, he finds a woman among the Philistines. We find ourselves easily siding with the parents on this one. We must note, however, that we then find ourselves siding against the Lord, who is intending to do something about the dominion of the Philistines over Israel.

Samson knows what his parents do not know - that his desires are the Lord's desires.

Samson's Surprising Might (vv5-9) – The Nazirite finds himself in the vineyards of Timnah, where the fruit of the vine is to be enjoyed in this glorious land given to Israel by the Lord. But it has been taken from them. A lion (an unclean beast) attacks Samson, but the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon him and he tears the lion apart with his bare hands. Later, Samson comes back and finds honey in the carcass, scrapes some out and eats it, and then gives some to his parents. But he keeps these strange events to himself.

Samson's Riddle (vv10-18a) – His father provides a wedding for the son and a seven-day feast ensues. During this time, the occasion comes to move against the Philistines – with a riddle. Samson really wins because the Philistines have to coerce his wife through fear to squeeze the information out of Samson. The point is not Samson's weakness, but his wife's unfaithfulness.

Samson's Vengeance (vv18b-20) – *"If you hadn't plowed with my heifer"*, that is, if you hadn't stolen my wife, you would not have solved the riddle. Like the lion, they have attacked Samson in the contest of the riddle, and the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon Samson again. This isn't a fit of rage – this is the Lord's administration of justice upon the Philistines. Afterwards, Samson's anger is roused (towards his wife) and he leaves her, going back up to his father's house.

Typology – We cannot look at Samson's life as a pattern for our behavior (i.e. seeking an unbelieving wife). As we view the life of Samson as a type of our Savior, other things come into focus.

Courting Pagans – Samson courts an alliance with the Philistines as Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" in order to "condemn sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3, 2 Cor 5:21). Jesus said that He did not come to court the righteous, but sinners (Mark 2:17).

Samson's Marriage – This marriage was "of the Lord" regardless of how strange it seems to us. And how strange is the marriage of Christ to His Bride (Ps 40:7-8, Gal 1:4, Eph 5:25-27, 32)?

Association With Vineyards – As a Nazirite, unable to enjoy the fruit of rest, so Israel could not enjoy the fruit of these vineyards. Our greater Nazirite has completed His deliverance and we are able now to enjoy the fruit of His finished work (Heb 4).

Defeating the Roaring Lion – David would later encounter a lion before taking on the strong Philistine giant (1 Sam 17:34-37). Christ began by defeating the lion who prowls as an earnest of His final crushing (Matt 4:10-11).

Touching the Unclean – As a Nazirite, Samson should not have touched the unclean carcass. But he enjoyed and shared a token of what was promised by his deliverance in that the land would again be a land of milk and honey for God's people. Jesus also reverses the curse. Rather than becoming unclean when He touched lepers, Jesus makes those things unclean become clean (Matt 8:3).

The Unfaithful Bride – The bride was to forget her own people (Ps 45:10), come out and be made one with her husband. How often Christ's bride, the church, forgets or betrays her husband?

Who Are We in the Story? – Putting all of this together for the church today, we can see that we are to learn to identify ourselves with Samson, and with the bride of the judge.

We are Christ's Body – At Pentecost, the Spirit of the Lord came upon the body of Christ. And we see the Spirit at work being poured out upon the church in times of refreshment, reformation and revival. When God's Spirit comes mightily upon the church, there is no foe that can stop her. As Samson was able, so God empowers us to be a people of strength, seeking to bring the Light of Christ to this dark world.

We are Christ's Bride – The world often tempts us, threatens us, tries to woo us back, or makes us afraid. A faithful bride runs to her husband for protection, security, and calling. We must not fear those who can only kill us (Matt 10:28). We are to remain in the simplicity that is in Christ, not moved by worldliness, nor the devil himself (2 Cor 11:2-3).