

Introduction

A. Samson visits Gaza (1-3)

1. Samson sets eyes on another woman (1): **“Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.”**
 - a. The text states that the woman was a harlot/prostitute
 - b. The Hebrew phrase **“and went into her”** is often (though not exclusively) used as a euphemism for sex
 - c. Why did Samson visit a prostitute?
 - 1) Some argue that his purpose was the same as the spies in Joshua 2 when they stayed with Rahab
 - 2) However, while the Joshua 2 passage clearly spells out their purpose, this Samson passage does not
 - 3) Based on what we know of Samson (i.e. driven by the flesh), and the immediate context, it is likely he was there to satisfy his carnal desires, though that is not explicitly stated in the passage
2. The men of Gaza make plans to kill Samson (2): **“When it was told to the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here,” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, “Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him.”**
 - a. When the men of Gaza learn of Samson’s visit, they surround the place and lay near the city gates in wait to kill him
 - b. On an interesting note, the text says they planned on waiting until day-break to kill Samson, but the text doesn’t say why—wouldn’t one normally want to attack at night when Samson is sleeping?
3. Samson foils their plans (3): **“Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron.”**
 - a. When Samson learns of their plans (apparently before midnight), he removes the city gates
 - b. The text says he not only pulled off the doors, but the posts and the bars
 - c. It also says that he threw them on his shoulders and carried them to a mountain near Hebron—which was 40 miles away!
 - d. This incredible and supernatural feat of strength certainly thwarted the plans of the Gazites who likely watched in stunned amazement and then scurried away in the dark
4. What is the purpose of this small 3 verse episode?
 - a. It’s not all that clear what purpose this story fulfills
 - b. It may serve simply as another look into the flawed character of Samson
 - c. It may also serve as another example of his mighty strength (much like the story of the lion)

- d. It certainly left an impression, not just on the Gazites, but on the Lords of the Philistines (see v. 5)

B. Samson betrayed and captured (4-22)

1. Samson once again falls for a woman of questionable character (4): **“After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”**
 - a. The Valley of Sorek is essentially what separated Israel (the tribe of Dan) to the Philistine area to the west
 - b. The text doesn’t say specifically that Delilah was a Philistine, but that is the general consensus
2. The Lord’s of the Philistines bribe Delilah into betraying Samson (4-5): **“The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, ‘Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.’”**
 - a. Her job was to discover the source of his strength and how they might overpower Samson
 - b. They weren’t interested in killing him, however, but rather to humble or humiliate him: **“that we might bind him [in order] to afflict him [bring him low, humble, humiliate]”**—we will see this later
 - c. Their offer? They would each pay her 1100 shekels of silver
 - 1) According to Judges 3:3 there were five Philistine lords, so that would make it 5500 shekels—or about 128 pounds in weight
 - 2) It’s extremely difficult to convert Biblical currency to today’s terms but this was a LOT of money—in Judges 17:10 Micah paid his personal priest a salary of only 10 shekel per YEAR plus food and clothes
3. Delilah convinces Samson to give up his secret (6-22):
 - a. Her FIRST attempt failed (6-9)—binding him with **“seven fresh cords that have not been dried”** (basically bow string made from the intestines of animals)
 - b. Her SECOND attempt failed (10-12)—binding him with **“new ropes that have not been used”**
 - c. Her THIRD attempt failed: (13-14)—weaving his hair into the web of a loom
 - d. Finally, her FOURTH attempt succeeds and Samson is captured by the Philistines (15-22):
 - 1) Where asking (v. 6), pleading (v. 10, 13) and accusations of not loving her (v. 15) did not work, nagging apparently did (16): **“It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.”**
 - 2) Samson reveals the source of his strength—his hair (or so he thinks)
 - 3) Realizing that she finally has her answer, Delilah finalizes her plans and fulfills her part of the bargain (17-20):
 - a) She summons the Philistine lords and accepts their payment
 - b) She then lulls Samson to sleep and has his head shaved
 - c) When she startles him to wake him up, Samson discovers that his strength is gone:
 - We learn in this passage that it wasn’t Samson’s hair, but the presence of the LORD, that gave Samson his strength: **“that the LORD had departed from him”** (20)

- We see in Samson a number of instances where he seemingly doesn't value his calling as a Nazarite (i.e. stopping at the vineyards, cavorting with Canaanite women, touching dead animals, throwing a drinking party, etc.)—allowing his head to be shaved indicates a complete abandonment of his role as Nazarite
- 4) The Philistines capture Samson and humiliate him as predicted (21-25):
 - a) They gouge out his eyes
 - b) They bind him with chains
 - c) They make him serve as a grinder in the prison (reserved for slaves and women)
 - d) In verse 25 (later) we find they humiliated him further by bringing him out to entertain them at their celebration to Dagon their God

C. Samson destroys his enemies (23-31)
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1. To celebrate their victory over Samson, the Philistine lords gathered together to offer a sacrifice to their god, Dagon—the text indicates there were at least 3000 people on the rooftop alone (27) which means there were likely another 3 to 5000 on the main level of the temple grounds
2. They praise Dagon for delivering Samson into their hands (23-24)
3. When they are in “high spirits” they called for Samson to be brought up from the dungeon and forced him to “entertain” and “amuse” them (25, 27; comes from the Hebrew word for laugh)
4. He leans against the two pillars that support the roof (archeological evidence from other pagan temples in the land indicate these would have been in the center of the building)
5. Samson then calls on God to avenge him (28-30a):
 - a. He addresses God as “**Lord Yahweh**”:
 - 1) This is the first time we see Samson refer to God by his covenant name, Yahweh (previously he only called him Elohim, the more generic term that even the Canaanites used)
 - 2) The addition of “**Lord**” may indicate a recognition by Samson that Yahweh was indeed Lord and Master over all, including his own life (quite the contrast to how Samson lived his self-centered, lust driven life)
 - 3) “**Please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God**”:
 - a) For the first time, we see Samson genuinely ask for both God's favor and strength in what he is about to do
 - b) “**Remember me**” generally refers to asking for God's divine favor, attention or presence in one's life, not merely remembrance
 - c) “**please strengthen me**”: Samson finally appears to recognize that his strength is dependent upon his standing with God and yielding to Him
 - 4) Some see in Samson's call to be avenged a selfish, self-serving motive, claiming that his motive should have been for the sake of Israel: “**that I may be at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes**”
 - a) It shouldn't shock us here that Samson's motives were to kill the Philistines and be avenged—after all, they were his life-long enemies and they gouged out his eyes!
 - b) The lack of any reference to Israel or the greater good shouldn't weigh to heavily upon us since it's been lacking in the entire story of Samson
 - c) He was raised up simply to “begin to deliver Israel” from the Philistines

6. Samson destroys the temple and kills thousands of Philistines (29-30)

Conclusion

1. There are primarily two things I would like to highlight in closing
2. The first is that Samson is a type of Christ:
 - a. Each of the judges is a type of Christ, but in most of the instances they represented Christ simply as the conquering hero or deliverer
 - b. In Samson, however, we get the most vivid picture of the New Testament suffering Messiah:
 - 1) **In His miraculous birth:**
 - Samson was born to a barren woman after the announcement the Angel of the LORD
 - Jesus was born to a virgin after the announcement by an angel of the LORD
 - 2) **In his calling:**
 - Samson was sent by God to be Israel's deliverer (Hebrew "savior") and was a Nazarite, which means he was consecrated to God for his plan and purpose
 - Jesus was sent by God to be the Savior of the world and came to do the will of the Father
 - 3) **In his betrayal:**
 - Samson was betrayed by his lover, Delilah, for a fortune in silver and then arrested and then tortured by his captors (i.e. had his eyes gouged out)
 - Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of his own disciples, for 30 coins of silver and then arrested and tortured by his captors (i.e. whipped, beaten, crown of thorns)
 - 4) **In his humiliation:**
 - Samson was humbled and humiliated before his enemies, even made sport of by the Philistines Lords at their party
 - Jesus was humbled and humiliated before his enemies and also made sport of by the guards
 - 5) **In his victorious death:**
 - Samson sacrificed his life in his final act of deliverance and destroyed his enemies
 - Jesus gave up His own life in his final act of deliverance and not only destroyed sin and death, but ultimately overcame every enemy
3. The second is that Samson is a type of Israel:
 - a. Like Samson, Israel had a miraculous beginning: From the calling of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan and the beginnings of the nation Israel
 - b. Like Samson, Israel was set apart by God for his purpose and plan, to be His holy people and ultimately bless the nations of the world
 - c. Like Samson, however, Israel often struggled/struggles with rebelling against God's commands, and living by their flesh
 - d. And because of that, like Samson Israel was brought low and humiliated at many times in their history by their enemies

- e. Just like God departed from Samson when he abandoned his Nazarite vow (i.e. cut his hair), in many ways God has departed from Israel...but only for a time
- f. Finally, Samson's submission to God at the end of his life is also a reminder to us that all Israel will one day return to the Lord and recognize that He is their strength and salvation