

Judges 15:1-20
Samson – Part 3

Introduction

1. For the past few weeks we have been learning about Samson, the last and final judge in the book of Judges (there are two more—Eli and Samuel—yet to come in the book of 1 Samuel)
2. We are introduced to him in chapter 13 when the Angel of the Lord announces to his barren mother that she will bear a son who will live as a Nazarite and begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines
3. We made some assumptions about why God began with Samson’s birth, rather than selecting an existing Israelite to serve as a deliverer like He had done with all the prior judges—in essence that Israel was in such a state of apostasy that God had to “bake his own”
4. We learned that unlike prior deliverers who rescued Israel from the immediate oppression, Samson would only “begin” to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines
5. Almost immediately, we learned about Samson’s propensity to live by the flesh
 - a. Marriage to a Philistine woman—chapter 14
 - b. Killing of the 30 Philistines when he loses a bet

A. Samson gets revenge on the Philistines (15:1-8)

1. After killing the 30 men of Ashkelon, Samson was so filled with rage that he returned to his father’s house without his new wife (14:19c)
2. As a result, his father-in-law gave his wife to one of Samson’s companions (14:20)
3. When Samson learns of it, he takes revenge on the Philistines (15:1-8):
 - a. Samson learns his wife has been given to another man (1-2)
 - b. He destroys the Philistines’ crops (3-5):
 - 1) He gathers up 300 foxes, ties them tail to tail with torches between them and burns down not just the standing grain, but what’s already been cut, and even the vineyards and groves—essentially, he hits them economically
 - 2) The Philistines respond by killing his wife and his father-in-law by burning them to death (6)
 - c. In response, Samson kills more Philistines (7-8):

B. Israel hands Samson over to the Philistines (15:9-13)

1. The Philistines camp against Judah looking for Samson (9)
2. The men of Judah then send 3000 men to capture Samson and hand him over to the Philistines (10-13)—the tragedy in this is multi-faceted:
 - a. While previous generations of Israelites rose up and stood behind their deliverer, this generation is easily and quickly willing to give up Samson—one of their own—to their enemies
 - b. There were more concerned about how Samson’s actions affected their own well-being, than about the Philistinian oppression of Israel

- c. Unlike previous generations of Israelites who fought alongside their deliverer, this generation was more interested in appeasing their enemies, than in defeating them by rising up with their deliverer

Munich Pact—see last page

C. Samson kills 1000 Philistines (15:14-20)

1. The Lord's Spirit enables Samson to kill the Philistines (14-15):
 - a. This is now the third time we are told that the Holy Spirit "**rushed**" upon Samson, resulting in super-human strength (in 14:19 when he killed the lion and in 14:19 when he killed the 30 men of Ashkelon)
 - b. Like the two previous times, Samson gains super-human/supernatural strength
 - c. He uses the jaw bone of a donkey as a weapon:
 - 1) About 9 inches long and shaped like a "Y"
 - 2) It was "**fresh**" which is important because it would have still be flexible rather than dried out and brittle
 - 3) It would have also been heavier fresh than dry
 - 4) While a fresh donkey jaw would have still been a formidable weapon in the hands of Samson there is a bit of irony (intended) in the use of a jawbone—it was a mocking of the Philistines, just as having their crops wiped out by 300 foxes
2. Samson takes credit for the victory (16-17):
 - a. Immediately after the fight Samson sings a song (or speaks a poem) gloating over the victory
 - b. The Hebrew word for "**heaps**" is almost identical to the word for "**donkey**"
 - c. There's even a sense of pride or arrogance in naming the place "**Ramath-lehi**" ("Jawbone Hill")
3. Samson humbled by thirst (18-19):
 - a. At no time in Samson's life up to this point has he so much as mentioned or referred to God
 - b. This is the first time, and it comes when he is desperate
 - c. It's ironic that the man who just killed 1000 men with nothing more than a bone would be done in by thirst
 - d. We finally see Samson give God credit:
 - 1) "**You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant...**"
 - 2) He named the place "**En-hakkore**" (lit. "**the spring of Him who called**")
 - e. This may have served as preparation for Samson as the next and final event in his life is the most humbling:
 - 1) He is betrayed by Delilah
 - 2) Capture and imprisoned by the Philistines
 - 3) Has his eyes gouged out
 - 4) He was made a grinder in the prison
 - 5) He was brought before the Philistine lords where they made sport of him
 - 6) It is there that we see a much more humble Samson depend fully upon God to exact revenge on the Philistines

Conclusion

1. There is an interesting picture and life-lesson here in the escalation that takes place between Samson and his enemies when they react in the flesh (i.e. it simply leads to further tension and violence):
 - a. Samson leaves his wife
 - b. So his father-in-law gives his wife away
 - c. So Samson destroys the Philistines crops
 - d. So they kill his wife and father-in-law
 - e. So he kills more Philistines
 - f. So the men of Judah give him up to the Philistines
 - g. So Samson kills more Philistines

2. We also see in this passage something that sometimes reflects our own behavior when we face opposition or difficulties: **appeasement**
 - a. To appease means to pacify or placate someone by giving into their demands or doing something to please them
 - b. This passage contains a pretty egregious example: the men of Judah attempting to hand over Samson to the Philistines
 - c. Another fairly well known historical example was when Pope Pius XII signed an agreement with Hitler in 1939 to not protest Nazi policies in exchange for Hitler's promise to not interfere with the Catholic Church (he reasoned it was his job to protect Catholics)
 - d. What about us, the modern Church?
 - Do we avoid saying things, or addressing certain topics, because they are offensive to the unsaved or because we may get ridiculed for our beliefs?
 - Do we avoid using the Bible when speaking, teaching or preaching because it makes us look like Bible thumpers or because not everyone accepts it as historical truth?
 - Do we ever do or not do things simply so that we "fit in" rather than "stand out"?

3. Finally, we see a progression in Samson's character from prideful and flesh-driven, to the beginnings of humility and reliance upon God:
 - a. Everything Samson has done up to this point has been done out of the flesh, anger or revenge
 - b. That continues through this chapter
 - c. However, we finally see him humbled, and finally recognize God's rule in his victory(ies) in 15:18-19
 - d. Is this not a reminder of what God can do even to the hardest of hearts?
 - e. Think of the Apostle Paul:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:9: **"For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain..."**
 - 2) 1 Timothy 1:15: **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."**
 - f. No one is beyond redemption when they accept the one who can save them

Munich Pack of 1938 An Attempt to Appease Hitler

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he began to re-arm the country in defiance of the restrictions placed upon it after World War 1. In 1936 he moved troops into the Rhineland and then captured Austria. At the time (1938) there were over three million Germans living in a part of Czechoslovakia named the Sudetenland. Hitler wanted to reunite all Germans under one country, so his next goal was to capture Czechoslovakia. After inciting Sudeten German Nazis to protest and revolt, he amassed troops along the Czech border in preparation for an invasion. In an effort to help resolve the conflict, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met Hitler in his private mountain retreat in Berchtesgaden, then again in Godesberg and finally in Munich. These talks ultimately led to the creation of the Munich Pact which gave Hitler possession of the Sudetenland in exchange for his promise not to invade the rest of Europe. The agreement was signed by Chamberlain, French Premier Daladier, Benito Mussolini of Italy and Hitler. When Chamberlain returned to Great Britain, he declared that this attempt at appeasement would led to “peace in our time.” Six months later German troops took over all of Czechoslovakia. Another six months later he invaded Poland.