



Warren Wiersbe writes this... “It is a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.” In a speech broadcast October 1, 1939 that’s how Sir Winston Churchill described the actions of the Russians in his day. But what he said about Russian actions could be applied to Samson, the last of the judges, for his behavior is “a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.”

- Samson was unpredictable and undependable because he was double-minded, and “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).
- It has well been said that “the greatest ability is dependability,” and you could depend on Samson to be undependable.

***Samson is the last and most famous of all the judges***

- His life stretches over 4 chapters
- We know more about Samson than any other judge
- The irony is Samson is the one judge who did not deliver Israel
- In spite of His miraculous beginnings
- He was ensnared by his own weakness
- He was strong in body and weak in character
- The story of Samson is one of wasted opportunities and disappointed hopes

***In a greater sense, Samson represents Israel***

- The lessons of his life are the lessons God’s people, as a whole, should be learning
- I’ve said that a nation deserves the government it chooses
- A truer comment would be a nation elects or accepts the government that most closely reflects it’s own mood and values
- This is true for story of Samson
- As Israel’s spiritual decline deepens, so each deliverer is seen to be more flawed than the last
- The cycle of grace is rejected and man chooses condemnation and judgment under the law
- We see in the case of Israel a nation who has allowed themselves to deteriorate to the point of political disintegration and spiritual assimilation by pagan religions



- In many ways, it's similar to what is happening in places like Stockton where the city has become so morally bankrupt that the city is financially going under and the lack of resources for law enforcement has resulted in a growing social meltdown where residences live like animals caged in their home behind protective bars

***In Judges 21:25 we read the basic problem of Israel***

Judges 21:25 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

- This is not a statement of truth, but a statement of agreement
- Israel had a king – God Himself
- But they rejected God as King and this statement affirms the choice that Israel made

***And yet we read of Samson in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11***

Hebrews 11:30–35 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

<sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: <sup>33</sup> who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. <sup>35</sup> Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

- As we study Samson, the question we must ask ourselves is what did God see in Samson that He would include him in the hall of faith
- What we will discover is in spite of Samson's apparent failure, God looked past his short comings and saw a man who was ultimately faithful

Judges 13:1 (NKJV)



**13** Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

- The Philistines were sea-faring people who originally came from the island of Crete
- They settled in the southern coastal region of Israel and built 5 cities which dominated the area for several hundred years – Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron
- They were technologically advanced in warfare, experts in smelting iron and therefore their weapons were superior to the Israelites and the Canaanites
- Notice, they are under Philistine control for 40 years and yet there is no mention that Israel cried to God for help... there was no consciousness of God in the land

Judges 13:2–5 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. <sup>3</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. <sup>4</sup> Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean. <sup>5</sup> For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

- The land between Israel’s hills country and the coastal plain was called the “Shephelah” which means “low country”
- It separated Philistia from Israel
- Samson was born in Zorah, a city in Dan near the Philistine border, he would often cross that border either to serve God or to satisfy his appetites
- In Numbers 6 we see the law of the Nazirite given, but Samson is the first Nazirite mentioned
- The Hebrew word Nazar means “separated one”
- Nazirites were men who took a vow to separate themselves from the world in order to be fully consecrated to God for a period of time – usually 6 months to a year



- But in Samson's case it was a vow that was to last a lifetime.

***We know from Numbers 6 Nazirites were to serve God in 3 specific ways***

- He was to touch no wine, not even grapes – wine was a symbol of earthly joy
- He was to let his hair grow – an identifiable outward sign of his consecration
- He was to stay away from anything that had died – he was to keep himself pure from decay and death symbolizing his commitment to stay away from the dead things of the world

***When God wants to do something great in His world, He doesn't send an army, He sends an angel***

- The angel ofens visits a couple and promises a baby
- When God wanted to deliver Egypt, He sent baby Moses
- God gave baby Samuel to Hannah
- When the fullness of time arrived, God gave baby Jesus to Mary
- Jesus delivered the world from sin and death
- Here we see God giving baby Samson to Manoah and his wife
- Babies are fragile – and God uses the weak things of the world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1:26-28)
- Babies take time to grow up – but God is patient and is never late in accomplishing His will
- Each baby brings with it the promise of a new beginning and tremendous potential
- Manoah's wife has a supernatural encounter with an angel and she tells her husband
- But he wants to see for himself, so he prays... if this is really you God, then send the angel back
- The angel appears to his wife again and she gets her husband and Manoah asks the angel to instruct them on how to raise Samson
- The angel instructs Manoah's wife on how to eat during her pregnancy
- I think it's interesting that they did not have the scientific research to understand that what you eat affects your child in utero, but God knows and instructs them on how to eat
- Manoah then wants to fix the Angel of the Lord a meal
- The Angel says... I won't eat your food, but you can offer it to the Lord as a burnt offering



- He offers a burnt offering and it says the Lord did a wondrous thing as this flame consumes the offering and ascends to heaven
- Then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord – Jesus Christ Himself – and now they think they’re going to die, but they don’t

Judges 13:24–25 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

***Samson’s name means “Shining as the sun” or “Sunny”***

- No doubt that was the desire of his parents that he would be a light in the darkness for his people
- Vs. 25 we read that the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon Samuel
- When you think about Samuel – you often picture a big muscle bound brute like the Guvenator Arnold or Hulk Hogan
- But the secret of Samuel strength wasn’t his great bod, it was his Great God
- The Spirit of the Lord was with him and Samson was known as a man of faith, but he certainly wasn’t a faithful man

***There were flaws in his character***

Judges 14:1–4 (NKJV)

**14** Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup> So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.”

<sup>3</sup> Then his father and mother said to him, “*Is there* no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?”

And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”

<sup>4</sup> But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

***The first flaw that we see is how he treated his parents – he lost respect for them, wouldn’t listen to them***



- He marries a Philistine woman, something Jews were forbidden to do
- But Samson didn't care about pleasing his parents or the Lord, he was only living for himself

***The second flaw that we see is how he treated his vow – he lost his Nazirite separation***

- (Vs. 5-9) On the way to Timnah to get his wife, Samson takes a detour through the vineyards and is attacked by a lion
- A vineyard is no place for a guy who is not supposed to be near grapes
- The Holy Spirit gives Samson power to kill the lion with his bare hands
- Something that I've often questioned is why God continues to anoint men even when they are doing things they shouldn't do...
- God is far more gracious than I think we realize
- Some weeks later, when Samson returns to claim his bride he cuts through the vineyard again...
- Perhaps to look at his trophy and gloat in his victory – I killed this lion with my bare hands
- Samson discovers honey inside the lions carcass and eats it
- When he eats the honey, he was defiled by a dead body
- His Nazirite Vow is broken

***Interesting to note the progression of sin...***

1. First, he was tempted with the lust of the flesh... he wanted a woman
2. Then he was tempted by the lust of the eyes... I want that woman
3. Now he is tempted by the pride of life... look at what I've done

***The third flaw that we see is how he treated others – he lost control of his tongue***

- (Vs. 10-18) Samson didn't bring any friends with him to serve as groomsmen... perhaps no one would come because it was forbidden
- The Philistines rounded up thirty men to do the job
- Most likely the atmosphere was tense, so Samson comes up with a riddle that is based on his sin...
- Out of the eater came something to eat
- Out of the strong came something sweet
- It's one thing to sin, it's another thing to make a joke out of your sin
- Samson exercised a lack of spiritual sensitivity with his tongue
- Samson promises them 2 sets of garments each if they guess the riddle and gives them seven days to do it



- If they don't guess it, they owe Samson 2 sets of clothes each
- Knowing they will lose, they go to Samson's young bride, threaten to kill her and burn her father's house down if she doesn't find out
- Samson refuses to tell her, but on the seventh day he gives in... probably because the seventh day was when the marriage was to be consummated – his need for pleasure loosened his tongue
- If momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy
- She passes on the information to the Philistines

***The fourth flaw that we see is how he controlled his emotions – he lost his temper***

- (Vs. 19-20) Samson gets angry after he realizes he's been ripped off
- He goes 20 miles away to Ashkelon and kills 30 men and takes their garments to give to the 30 men who ripped him off
- He was so angry at his wife that he didn't consummate their marriage and his wife's dad gives her to his best man and Samson returns to live with his parents
- The Lord used this turn of events to motivate Samson to fight the Philistines and to keep him from marrying a Philistine woman

***Warren Wiersbe writes...***

The life of Samson illustrates the ancient truth that a good beginning doesn't guarantee a good ending. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, "Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending."

- Samson's betrayal by his wife and her family sets him over the edge
- He catches 300 foxes and put a torch on their tails, lit it on fire and released them into the standing grain of the Philistines
- Basically he wipes out their food supply
- The Philistines find out Samson did this and they kill his wife and her dad

**Judges 15:7–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease."<sup>8</sup> So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.



<sup>9</sup> Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. <sup>10</sup> And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?”

So they answered, “We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.”

<sup>11</sup> Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?”

And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

- Samson’s motto – As they did to me, so I have done to them
- That is a heart that is under condemnation, not grace – Tit for Tat
- Now, Israel is so afraid of the Philistines that they cave in, get Samuel, arrest him, tie him up and bring him to the Philistines to hand him over

Judges 15:14–15 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. <sup>15</sup> He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.

- Samuel names the place Jawbone Heights – Ramath Lehi
- Now, Samuel is thirsty and he cries out to God...
- God I’m going to die of thirst if I don’t get some water
- God splits the hollow place in Lehi and water came out
- Then Samuel changes the name to The Well of Him Who Cried – En Hakkore
- So often we want to remember our life based on the things we did
- Better to remember our life based on the things God did for us
- And we’re told that Samson judged 20 years in the days of the Philistines... meaning he didn’t defeat them, they were still around

Judges 16:1–3 (NKJV)

**16** Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. <sup>2</sup> When the Gazites *were told*, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded *the place* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.” <sup>3</sup>



And Samson lay *low* till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put *them* on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

- Gaza was an important seaport village about 40 miles from Samson's hometown of Zorah
- What was Samson doing 40 miles away in a place known for prostitutes?
- It seems incredible that a servant of God who did great works in the power of the Spirit would visit a prostitute – yet here it is for all to see
- When I read of the recent scandals of preachers who were mightily used of God – Jimmy Swaggert, Ted Haggard and others
- I am reminded that God doesn't use super heroes, he uses men
- It's one thing to be tempted by the world or the devil
- It's another thing when we tempt ourselves by going places where we shouldn't be
- Jesus taught us to pray – Lead us not into temptation
- That doesn't mean that God may tempt us – God doesn't tempt us (James 1:12-15 tells us)
- Rather we are to pray that we would not put ourselves into such a position that we would tempt God by forcing Him to intervene and rescue us or by daring Him to stop us
- It's possible that a person's character can deteriorate so much that they are no longer tempted to sin
- They just need the opportunity to sin and they'll tempt themselves
- Samson the man has now become lowered to the animal state, just following his desires
- It's in this state that he meets Delilah and falls in love with her
- We don't know who Delilah is... some believe she was a temple prostitute herself...
- Her name means to weaken or impoverish which she did...
- The Philistines lords hire her to discover the source of his strength
- Three times she tries to trick him and three times he tells her a lie which results in Philistines being killed
- You would have thought that he would have figured it out, but that is the deceitfulness of sin... you're blinded by it...
- Delilah uses her emotional pull to eventually gets him to admit that his strength is tied to his Nazirite vow symbolized by his uncut hair



- That is the difference between The Spirit and The Flesh
  - The flesh operates out of emotion and perception
  - The Spirit operates out of faith and trust
- Delilah cuts Samson's hair and he becomes powerless
- He is captured, his eyes are gouged out and he is placed in chains
- But while he is in chains his hair grows back
- (Vs. 23-31) we read of Samson's eventual victory
- The Philistines gather together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon – the main God of the Philistines
- They are celebrating Dagon's victory over Samson who killed many Philistines in battle

Judges 16:25–30 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. <sup>26</sup> Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." <sup>27</sup> Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

<sup>28</sup> Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" <sup>29</sup> And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. <sup>30</sup> Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

- We read that his brothers and his father's household brought him home and buried him in the tomb of his father Manoah
- Samson judged Israel 20 years
- This is the reason that Samson was written in the Hall of faith
- He was a man ruled by his desire and emotions, but ultimately when it counted most – he surrendered himself to God
- He sacrificed his own life in order to defeat the enemy – just like Jesus