

Samson Part 2

Samson goes off the rails. Judges 14. Please bear in mind, last week we were looking at Nazirites, set aside for dedication to the service of God.

Samson is incredibly strong, he's Arnold Schwarzenegger on steroids or even a Marvel super hero.

He wants to marry a Philistine girl; why? Why not a nice Hebrew girl? Maybe Philistines are sexier, dress provocatively? Is it a power thing or rebellion against parents or God? Look at Deuteronomy 7:3-4 Marrying into the 7 nations that formed Canaan is forbidden. Numbers 25:1-9. Manoah disapproves but doesn't forbid the marriage. In fact he's persuaded to facilitate it. But look at verse 4

'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.'

Is this what Jesus was talking about, lead us not into temptation? Maybe God was using Samson's 'weakness' to provoke events leading to Samson's warring against the Philistines

On route to his future bride Samson is attacked by a lion but he kills it with his bare hands. He has a lovely time with his new girlfriend and on the way home he sneaks off on a detour to look at the lion's corpse and finds a bees' nest. He scoops up the honey and takes some to his mum and dad but knowing they wouldn't approve, he doesn't tell them where he got the honey from. Why? Leviticus 11:24-27.

Reflect - so far Samson's dating a forbidden girl and killed an unclean animal without going through the rituals to cleanse himself, then eating that unclean honey and giving it to his parents.

Then there's a wedding feast. There are 30 male guests including his best man verse 15, they were all Philistines, it seems he had no Jewish friends. Samson was fraternising with the enemy. He poses a riddle for them to solve; and makes it a bet.

The guests threaten the bride and she elicits the answer from him and passes it back to the guests. The red mist descends and Samson blows his stack. He goes on a Spirit induced killing spree, killing 30 men, strips their corpses, robs their clothes and gives them to the guests. That's another rule broken Numbers 6:6-8. Even if accidental, if he touches a corpse he's unclean and there's a ritual to go through Numbers 6:9-11.

So, after one of the most violent wedding receptions in history, in a strop, Samson goes back home to mummy and daddy. Father in law assumes the marriage is over and gives his daughter to the best man.

Chapter 15. Weeks later Samson decides he wants a bit of nooky and takes a goat for her in the same way that we might take a bunch of flowers. But FIL breaks the news that his marriage was annulled following his tantrum and she's now married to his best man but offers him her sister, but Samson declines and goes off on another strop.

We can see now the emerging nature of his character. Long story short, Samson sets a

load of fields and vineyards on fire. The owners find out that the arsonist was Samson and what provoked him and so they burn Samson's wife and FIL at the stake. Samson then takes revenge at the murder of his wife and FIL by going on another killing spree. Unknown number of Philistines killed.

The Philistines send an army to the district of Judah to arrest Samson. The men of Judah put together a posse to arrest Samson and hand him over to the Philistines. Now this is Samson who's supposed to be judging or leading them. He agrees to being tied up and getting handed over to the Philistines. Just before handover, Samson snaps the ropes, finds a donkey's skull and goes on another killing rampage using it's jawbone as a weapon. 1,000 is the number of Philistines dead.

This was thirsty work and Samson thought he was going to die of thirst and demands God to give him water which God does by opening up a spring. Note that this is the first time that Samson even speaks to God. Hitherto, he's focused on his sexual urges and killing rampages when things go wrong.

Next (chapter 16) we read that Samson hires a prostitute and stays the night with her. She's almost certainly a Philistine, Gaza was just inside the borders of Judah as detailed in Joshua 15 verses 1 & 47 but it remained a Philistine stronghold and one of 5 City strongholds. The Philistines find out and send an army to kill him at first light. Halfway through the night Samson gets wind of it and makes an early exit and takes the city gates with him.

I've looked at what the Bible says about prostitution and to my great surprise I found very little, especially in the Old Testament. According to God's law there are certain restrictions -

Deuteronomy 23:17-18. Temple prostitutes are banned and all prostitutes were banned from bringing their wages into the collection bags. Described as detestable to the Lord. Leviticus 21:9 A priest's daughter is not allowed to become a prostitute and if she does she's to be burned. Verse 14 a priest mustn't marry an ex-prostitute. Leviticus 19:29 Don't force your children into prostitution.

That's about it in the Torah (the law).

Later Solomon in his writings strongly advised against using a prostitute.

Hosea was instructed by God to marry a prostitute to demonstrate to him (and us) how God felt Israel and Judah abandoned Him to worship other gods.

Ezekiel chapter 23, his vivid description of the 2 prostitutes, a narrative of Israel and Judah. This chapter really should have a 15 certificate!

Now the New Testament is more forthcoming-

I Corinthians 6:15-16. It doesn't get any clearer than that what God thinks of Christians who go with prostitutes. In a way, that also applies to Samson because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was only given to specific people in the Bible for specific purposes, and Samson was one.

So whilst Samson may not have been breaking any particular law here, he was still in error. Back to Numbers 6:21. A vow to separate yourself to the service of the Lord.

Lessons so far -

Judges 14:4. Samson was almost unusable by God. God had to feed Samson's sexual appetite to provoke his anger to war against the Philistines rather than marry, party and have sex with them.

Remember that lion? He was sent by God to fight Samson. It looks like a detail but no, it was God putting a stumbling block in the way of Samson's attempts to cosy up and fit in with Philistine society. It all went wrong because of that lion. There are events and details in my life that I reflect back on and its clear that that was God's intervention. Without this becoming a confessional, can you reflect upon seemingly random events in your recent history that you can look back upon and see how that particular event prevented you from going too far down a tangent away from your faith?

Doing God's will and working for God was pretty low on Samson's priority list. His imperative was getting into intimate relations with Philistine women. That's the definition of addiction. He made no attempt to beat his addiction, rather his energies were spent on feeding it and when things got in the way Samson blew a gasket! Can you see how God used Samson's addiction to bring about the mutual antipathy between Samson and the Philistines, especially male Philistines?

Addiction can take many forms, alcohol, drugs (prescription and illegal), gambling, food (obesity and eating disorders), porn. All these involve sin, what the devil uses to drive a wedge between a man or woman and God.

Spot the similarities and differences between Samson and Jesus.

How can weaknesses be exploited by our enemy?