

Lessons From the Life and Death of Samson

Rick Railston

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There are many interesting stories in the Bible and they are there because we know our Father does everything for a reason. Absolutely everything for a reason. We are told in the Bible itself that these stories are there for an example for us, they are written for our admonition. We find that in 1 Corinthians 10:11, we won't turn there, but they are examples for us and are there for our admonition and learning. In the book of Judges, there are four chapters dedicated to just one man. Those are the same number of chapters in the book of Genesis that were dedicated to Noah. In the book of Judges, this one man has more chapters dealing with him than Deborah and Barak or with Gideon, so the thought occurs:

"If God Almighty is going to dedicate four chapters to this one man and his life, there must be something there for us to learn."

So that's what we're going to look into today, but before we do let's go to Hebrews 11 verse 13. Prior to verse 13, Hebrews mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Moses; all luminaries of the Old Testament. Then in verse 13, it's referring to them.

Hebrews 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (KJV)*

Now look at verse 32.

32) And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: (KJV)

This is all good company.

Continuing in Verse 39).

*39) And these all [including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Isaac], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:
40) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (KJV)*

We see that all of these will be in the Kingdom of God, including Samson. We don't normally think of Samson as a paragon of virtue. But we're told that he will be in the Kingdom of God. At the outset, that very fact should be encouraging to all of us because if Samson could make it, then we could make it—right? Given what's going on in the world today and it just seems more mind-blowing day by day, whether it's here in the

United States or anywhere around the world. It might benefit us if we looked into the life and death of Samson to see what we could learn. So, the title of the sermon is:

Lessons from the Life and Death of Samson

We're going to cover the subject in five points. But first we are going to go through the four chapters that are dedicated to the life of Samson, in detail, to see what we can glean from the account. So, let's go to chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 of Judges which encompasses the life of Samson. Let's start in the first chapter dedicated to Samson, Judges 13:1. We begin with a familiar refrain regarding the nation of Israel.

Judges 13:1 *And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. (KJV)*

They've been suffering for forty years when Samson comes on the scene.

2) And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites [the tribe of Dan], whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. (KJV)

I like to look at things geographically, as it helps me place the story. The town of Zorah was on the border between Judah and Dan. Zorah was about sixteen miles west of Jerusalem about half way to the ocean. You come down in altitude from Jerusalem as you go to the Mediterranean Sea. The Philistines had their cities—their five principal cities, along the coast to the southwest of Jerusalem and of Zorah.

3) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. (KJV)

You think about this—could it be that Yehovah picked this specific couple to get exactly the characteristics of the man that He wanted? Personality characteristics, strengths, weaknesses—did He do that? My guess is, probably He did.

4) Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: (KJV)

Being a good Israelite, they would not normally be doing that, but are told to pay attention to that.

5) For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall [notice this, this is why he is being singled out and being born] begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6) Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: (KJV)

So, we see that this angel is telling her to take a Nazarite vow. Taking a Nazarite vow was a way for a non-priest to dedicate one's life to the service of God. There were three conditions to a Nazarite vow. We won't turn there but you can check it later in Numbers 6:1-8

- You don't consume alcohol.
- You don't cut your hair.
- You don't come near a dead body.
- You do so for the period of the vow.

The vow could be for a short time or a long time. We're going to see in Samson's case, it was to be for his entire life.

7) But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. [A lifelong vow.]

8) Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. (KJV)

Teach us how to raise him, how to teach him, which is a wonderful attitude.

9) And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. (KJV)

So, God Almighty answered Manoah's prayer because he had a right attitude. Now to verse 15. The angel has come and Manoah is in his presence.

15) And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. (KJV)

We want to fix you a meal.

16) And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. [He was saying don't offer it to me, I am not worthy of that, only Yehovah] For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.

17) And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor?

18) And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? (KJV)

He is not there to be exalted or worshipped or honored, he is there to give honor to God Almighty.

19) *So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.*
20) *For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.*
21) *But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. (KJV)*

Verse 24.

24) And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. (KJV)

The name *Samson*, when you look it up, means “brilliant” or “the sun”. Something bright, easily seen, easily recognized.

25) And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah [his home town] and Eshtaol. [Which was a little town two miles to the east] (KJV)

It’s interesting that Samson’s appearance is not noted. But it’s also interesting that Joseph and Goliath and Saul and David’s appearance in scripture, were noted. So why was Samson’s appearance not noted? I can remember as a kid in the ’50’s, my dad took us to the movie, *Samson and Delilah*. It was a big MGM extravaganza at the time. The leading actor playing Samson was Victor Mature and he was a handsome looking guy. He had buffed up for the part. You could tell that he had lifted weights for who knows how many months prior to the part because he was pretty bulked up and muscular looking to fit in with the part. Was that the case though? Was Samson some guy like Arnold Schwarzenegger swaggering around Israel? I don’t think so, because my guess is, Samson was of average build for his day and that he was like that *so that no flesh should glory*. Remember in 1 Corinthians 1 we talked about our calling—He calls the weak of the world that no flesh should glory. My guess is it was the same thing that was true for Samson.

That was the background, now let’s come to Judges 14:1.

Judges 14:1 *And Samson went down to Timnath [about 2 miles from his home], and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. (KJV)*

The Philistines had dominated Israel for forty years, and they have moved all throughout southern Israel. So, the Philistines were among the Israelites. We see, right out of the shoot that Samson has an attraction for Philistine women. This will become apparent as we go on. He did not hate, fear or flee the evil that the Philistines had as a result of their culture and religion.

2) And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. (KJV)

Of course, his parents reacted as most parents would.

3) Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4) But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion [the Hebrew can also mean “have power”] over Israel. (KJV)

They dominated Israel. So, Samson right here broke the command to not intermarry with the surrounding nations—Deuteronomy 7:3, Moses warned Israel not to do that. We see that Jehovah used Samson’s waywardness to fulfill His purpose regarding the Philistines.

5) Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6) And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him [this lion] as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. (KJV)

We know that David killed a lion with his staff, but we see here that Samson killed a lion with his bare hands. It’s obvious that he has a spiritual gift, a supernatural gift—1 Corinthians 12 talks about spiritual gifts—and his spiritual gift was manifested by his tremendous, superhuman strength and probably quickness too. In Romans 15:19 we see an example of spiritual gifts that were meted out to Paul. Paul is talking about the wonders that were accomplished through the Spirit of God.

Romans 15:19 *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (KJV)*

Spiritual gifts can be manifested in many ways. To Paul, it was preaching but to Samson it was this supernatural strength. Let’s go back to Judges 14 and pick up the account in verse 7.

Judges 14:7 *And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.*

8) And after a time, he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

9) *And he took thereof in his hands [so he actually touched a dead carcass], and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. (KJV)*

He violated one of the three principles of a Nazarite vow; if you want a reference, see Numbers 6:6.

10) *So his father went down unto the woman [to make the marriage arrangements]: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. (KJV)*

It was a local custom for the impending groom to make a feast and have a party. The Hebrew word for *feast* here literally means the “act of drinking”. Remember he is a Nazarite. So, we have to ask the question, “*The fact that this Hebrew word is used, does this indicate he violated a second Nazarite vow about drinking alcohol?*”

My guess is—probably so.

11) *And it came to pass, when they [the Philistines] saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. (KJV)*

This seems kind of odd. Samson didn’t invite Israelite companions to go down there but the Philistines invited thirty companions to be with him. Could they have been guards, because they didn’t trust Samson? He’s an Israelite invading their little town, trying to marry a Philistine woman. We don’t know—it’s not said.

12) *And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments: (KJV)*

This seems kind of odd; where did that thought come from? Where did that idea come from? It obviously came from God Almighty. He put this thought—this urge—into Samson’s mind to deliver Israel from the Philistines. God Almighty wanted to start that process.

Continuing in verse 13)

13) *But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.*

14) *And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.*

15) *And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and*

thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?
(KJV)

We see here, this tells us about the character of the Philistines. If they're not happy with someone, they are perfectly content to just murder them and burn them fire.

16) And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?

17) And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted [probably drinking for seven days]: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people. (KJV)

He told her the riddle and she passed it on to these thirty.

18) And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. (KJV)

There may be more meaning to that than we understand, but that's what was said. You can imagine what the possibilities might be.

19) And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. (KJV)

He didn't go back to his wife; he went back to his father's house. Ashkelon is twenty miles to the west-southwest, right on the coast. It's a principal city of the Philistines. Could he have gone that far away in hopes they wouldn't hear about what he had done? We have to remember, verse 4, it was Yehovah who sought an occasion against the Philistines. He goes down with apparently no compunction at all and kills thirty men and takes their clothing to fulfill the riddle and give them their booty.

Continuing in verse 20)

20) But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend. (KJV)

Now let's go to chapter 15—we have two more chapters to go.

Judges 15:1 *But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. (KJV)*

We don't know if he consummated the marriage prior to this or not, it's not said. Her father would not allow him to go in. We don't know if after his anger subsided and he went back to his parents' place, he might have wanted to have come back down and consummate the marriage if it hadn't been consummated and atone for leaving her—we don't know as the details aren't presented.

Continuing in verse 2)

2) And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

3) And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

4) And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5) And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives. (KJV)

Basically, what he did was ruin the Philistines crops for that season. We'll see when we come to chapter 16:24, that the Philistines call him the destroyer of their country and this was a big part of it. There were no fire engines back then, no water bombers. You run those foxes with fire between their tails and they are trying to get away from the fire and running as fast as they can through all these fields. Once the fire catches hold, there is no way to stop it. They can beat the ground with blankets all they want; it's not going to stop it.

Continuing in verse 6)

6) Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. (KJV)

The Philistines are an evil group, they really are. Samson burned their crops so they burned his wife or wife-to-be and her father. It's kind of like what we see going on in Ukraine today. Indiscriminate bombing of children's hospitals and orphanages and killing of civilians for no reason at all. It is the Gentile mind and we're seeing it on display, reading about it right here and seeing it on our television every night.

7) And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8) *And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: (KJV)*

The Bible is silent on how many. Was it dozens? Was it hundreds? We don't know, we're not told.

8 continued) *... and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.*

9) *Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah ... (KJV)*

The Tribe of Judah was located south of the tribe of Dan, south of Jerusalem.

9 continued) *... and spread themselves in Lehi.*

10) *And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? [Remember the Philistines dominated Israel, so the men of Judah are scared] And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.*

11) *Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. [An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.]*

(KJV)

12) *And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. [To get them off their backs] And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.*

13) *And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock. (KJV)*

Judah did not rally behind Samson because they were afraid of the Philistines and what they might do to them.

14) *And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.*

15) *And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.*

16) *And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. (KJV)*

Think about this. If he killed one man every fifteen seconds—coming up to him. He has to parry the guy's thrust or knock his shield aside and kill him—he would kill four people a minute, 240 an hour and that would be over four hours of continual fighting to kill 1000 people. That is truly supernatural; humans just can't do that; they couldn't last that long. It's a 1000 against one. That is truly supernatural. Now we come to Judges 16, the last of the four chapters.

Judges 16:1 *Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her. (KJV)*

You just hit yourself in the forehead and think, “*What is this man thinking? He didn’t learn from his first experience with Philistine women.*”

Gaza was the largest and most southern of the five principal cities of the Philistines. They had five lords or masters over those five cities. It’s about thirty-five miles southwest of Samson’s home.

Continuing in verse 2)

2) And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

3) And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. (KJV)

Hebron is thirty miles from Gaza. It says he came on a hilltop that was before Hebron—maybe there was a hilltop that was half way that distance where you could see Hebron in the distance—we don’t know. The fact is, he probably carried two giant gates with two posts and the bar in between, on his back, probably at least fifteen miles, maybe twenty or twenty-five, we don’t know. Again, superhuman; there’s no man alive who is that strong.

Continuing in verse 4)

4) And it came to pass afterward, that he loved [the Hebrew means “have an affection for”] a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. (KJV)

The valley of Sorek starts about ten miles from Samson’s home, to the west, and runs downhill all the way to the Mediterranean Sea—it’s a valley. The Hebrew word for *Sorek*, Mount’s Hebrew Dictionary, says *Sorek* means “blood red grapes”. So we can probably conclude that this valley was a wine producing valley. We have to ask again, did he violate his Nazarite vow of not consuming alcohol with Delilah. The Bible doesn’t say but it’s a valley of red grapes and he has a relationship with her, so you can kind of guess what went on.

5) And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. (KJV)

That's approximately 140 pounds of silver; that is a fortune. The Hebrew word for *afflict* means "to debase" or "weaken". It's the same word used in Genesis 15:13 that prophesies Israel is going to be *afflicted* 400 years in Egypt. It means "to weaken" or "to debase". Going on in verse 6, out of the New King James.

6) *So Delilah said to Samson, [this was obviously after a period of time in their relationship and if we put it in modern terms, after she could get her hooks into him] "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you." (NKJV)*

Same word, to *weaken* you.

7) *And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*

8) *So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.*

9) *Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.*

10) *Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."*

11) *So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." (NKJV)*

Samson is too besotted with this woman to realize what she is doing. He is just head over heels "in love" with this woman.

12) *Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.*

13) *Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"— (NKJV)*

Now he's getting closer to the truth of his strength. He's getting close to revealing how to subdue him. This was a horizontal loom where he would lay on his back and go to sleep and she would take his hair and weave it into this horizontal loom.

14) *So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.*

15) *Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies." (NKJV)*

She brings love into the equation now.

16) *And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, [this poor man was being tortured]*

17) *that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.*

18) *When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.*

19) *Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.*

20) *And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" [He thought that this supernatural strength originated with him or was in him and wouldn't leave him] But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him. (NKJV)*

The Contemporary English Version of the Bible says, "*He didn't realize that Yehovah had stopped helping him*". For a certainty, the supernatural gift of strength was gone because he violated the third part of the Nazirite vow. However, because we know he is going to be in the Kingdom, he either had the Holy Spirit still with him at that point, even though the strength was gone, or when he was brought to nothing, the Holy Spirit came back to him later and he repented. The Bible doesn't say.

Continuing in verse 21)

21) *Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. (KJV)*

We see that the Philistines had little regard for human suffering—the Gentile mind. Blinding was done in one of three ways. They would take a hot iron or rod or fire and bring it so close to your face that your eyeballs would actually melt. Or they would bore out your eyeballs—stick something in your eyeballs to pop them and you would lose the eyeball. Or they had scoops like an ice cream scoop and scoop the eyeball out. Just horrible. Here he is being not only blinded, but grinding grain which is an animal's job. He has been humiliated to the maximum.

Continuing in verse 22)

22) *However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven. (KJV)*

His hair had to have had time to grow, and this probably went on for months and months. Samson had been brought to nothing. We therefore have to ask the question:

“Did being physically blind for all that period of time, teach him how blind he had been spiritually?”

Here he is, doing physical labor, grinding as an ox would, going around in a circle, grinding grain on a stone—did that teach him how blind he had been and how he had left his Nazarite vow? This was most likely the time of Samson’s deep conversion. He had time to see his conversion, he had time to see himself, he had time to learn lessons, he had time to repent. He had time to renew his Nazarite vow, symbolized by the fact that his hair was starting to regrow. Now we go to verse 23; time has passed now.

Continuing in verse 23)

23) Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. (KJV)

Dagon was the Philistine’s chief god. He was the god of crop fertility. He was also the father of Baal. He was half man, half fish. It’s interesting that Samson put Dagon’s grain to the torch in chapter 15. He destroyed Dagon’s crops. The temple of Dagon in Ashdod was where the Ark was taken when the Philistines later defeated Israel in 1 Samuel 5. Same god but the tabernacle was taken to the temple of Dagon.

24) And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25) And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. [That we could throw rocks at him and throw stuff on him and curse him] And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26) And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27) Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; [the five heads of the five cities plus all the hierarchy were there] and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28) And Samson called unto the LORD, [You have always been, always will be and are right now.] and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. (KJV)

By now, Samson knew that his strength came from Yehovah and not from himself. That's why he was making this appeal.

29) And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30) And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; [supernatural strength returning from God Almighty] and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. (KJV)

We don't know if he killed all 3000, probably not, there were some survivors obviously, but 1000 or 2000 were probably killed.

31) Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years. (KJV)

This went on for twenty years—what we just covered in these four chapters. Samson probably killed, 4000-5000 Philistines. Men of valor, the heads of the cities, the heads of government. He killed 4000 or 5000 in his life and in his death, thus fulfilling Yehovah's plan. Remember in chapter 14:4, Yehovah sought an occasion against the Philistines and he used Samson to do it.

So here we have covered four chapters dedicated to one man. Now what can we learn from this? Originally, I started with twelve lessons but for the sake of time, I've hacked it down to five. We're going to have fun getting it finished on time.

The most obvious one:

1. Samson's life was a type of our process of conversion.

As we have seen, when Samson first started in chapter 14, he was carnal to the core. He took a Philistine wife; he violated Deuteronomy 7:3 where Moses says don't take wives of the nations that surround you. He went into a harlot in chapter 16. He went into Delilah in chapter 16. Carnal to the core. He violated all three parts of the Nazarite vow. He came into contact with the carcass of a lion in chapter 14, he probably consumed alcohol at the marriage feast in chapter 14 and probably with Delilah in chapter 16. Lastly, he allowed his hair to be cut, violating the third portion of the Nazarite vow. Only then, after he violated the third part did Yehovah bring Samson to nothing. He ended up a blind man, grinding grain in a prison. Just think about that.

It's my opinion, being physically blind, made him realize how spiritually blind he had been and only then did he repent. We won't turn there but in Acts 3:19, Peter was saying to the people on Pentecost, *"repent you therefore and be converted, that your*

sins may be blotted out” and during that time of grinding the grain, I believe that’s exactly what happened.

Samson went through much tribulation to enter the Kingdom of God. That is common to all whom the Father calls. James pointed that out in a recent sermon. He saw himself, he learned his lessons, he repented, he renewed his Nazarite vow. Let me mention Acts 14:22, *“through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom of God”*. My point is, all of us have followed a similar path. We were the same as Samson before our conversion, we were just as carnal as stumps. We just did whatever we did and were just carnal to the core. All of us have been spiritually blind, just like Samson was spiritually blind. All of us—we won’t turn there but 1 John 2 and verse 16—*all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life* is not of the Father but of the world and that’s where we were before conversion and still were as we were being converted. Maybe we have not sinned as blatantly as Samson did, but we all have our own sins and we all have our own weaknesses that must be overcome, as Samson had to.

Even after conversion we bring trouble upon ourselves. We drift from our Father’s law. Samson certainly drifted. We drift even after baptism, from our Father’s law. Let’s hope that we can learn that lesson now so that we don’t have to perish like Samson did or have to go through what Samson had to go through. In the end, Samson made it and if he can make it after all we’ve read, after all he’s done, after all of his sins, so can we by the grace and mercy of God Almighty. Samson’s life is a microcosm of our life before conversion and after conversion.

The second point we can learn which is just glaring us in the face:

2. We have to come to recognize evil, hate it, and flee it.

Samson did not avoid an environment of sin. The Philistines were around him where he lived and instead of cleaving to the Israelites, he sought a wife among the Philistines at Timnath in chapter 14. He sought the harlot in Gaza, (chapter 16) which is the capital of the Philistines. Then he fell in love with Delilah who was in cahoots with the Philistine government. We think, *“How could he do that and how horrible he must have been.”* But truth being today, with the touch of a button, with a keystroke on our computer, we can be in the same place that Samson was in back then. Our electronics can take us into a world of sin that is just unimaginable. The question is, will we leave a wrong environment, will we turn off the TV, will we close the computer, will we physically leave a place where evil is going on or is the wrong environment? Samson didn’t and there was a price to pay. Let’s go to 1 Corinthians 6:18 and see a command from Paul that talks about the fact that we have to take action when we are in a bad situation. We can’t acquiesce to a bad situation. Paul is giving us commandments here that we would do well to pay attention to.

1 Corinthians 6:18 *Flee fornication. [Don’t cuddle up to it, don’t acquiesce to it] Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (KJV)*

The principle is fleeing sin—get away from it. Notice 1 Timothy 6:6; this should be our goal. Paul is giving some very critical advice to a young elder that he ordained himself. This is out of the New King James.

1 Timothy 6:6 *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. (NKJV)*

I think we learn that over time. Follow God and be content with what you have.

7) For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8) And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9) But those who desire to be rich [I might add, those who are not satisfied with what they already have] fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts [how many foolish and harmful lusts did Samson fall for?] which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith [Samson certainly strayed from his Israelite roots] in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11) But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

12) Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV)

Samson in his early life did not do this. He didn't flee sin, he didn't identify it and say,

“My fathers have taught me that God Almighty’s Word says I shouldn’t be here, I shouldn’t be doing this, I shouldn’t even be thinking this.”

But he did not do that. He didn't recognize evil, he didn't hate evil, he didn't flee evil. This is a lesson that all of us need to have, given the world we live in, right in our head every second, every minute, because evil lurks right around the corner.

The third point.

3. We must learn from our prior sins.

We have to learn from our prior sins. Samson did not. He repeatedly sinned. His weakness was Philistine women and he just couldn't break that—wouldn't break that for a time. That caused him to break his Nazarite vow. He took the pagan wife and what were the fruits of that? She and her father were burnt to death and then he killed 1000 Philistines. Then he went down to the Philistine harlot. The Philistines tried to kill him and you would think he would get the message there. God helped him, yes, by hauling the gates fifteen, twenty or twenty-five miles. Then if he didn't learn from that, he went right back to Delilah. Once he established a relationship with her, he began to flirt with

sin. He got closer and closer and closer to revealing why he had this special strength and as people can do, they flirt with sin, they get close—they don't quite cross the line, they get closer and closer—until finally they do cross the line because it comes easier after you've been flirting with sin for a while. That is exactly what he did. He went over the line. The third time that she nagged him, he brought his hair into the situation and then the fourth time he told her the truth and he ended up blind, in prison and grinding grain. The big lesson is, sin that is not dealt with or fought and not overcome, will have tragic results. We have to deal with it, we have to identify, fight it, overcome it, because if we don't, Samson is the poster child for tragic results of yielding to sin.

The fact is, our Father will only put up with so much. Samson violated the first vow, coming near a dead body. He violated the second vow of drinking alcohol and God Almighty was patient with him. He didn't do anything and then when he violated the third, that was it. Let's go to Revelation 21:8. As we say, this is the bottom line of our behavior and conduct. The last book of the Bible, toward the end of the last book, second to last chapter and if this doesn't sum it up.

Revelation 21:8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving [Samson was unbelieving for a time], and the abominable [did he commit murder—you bet he did], and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters [he put himself before God Almighty], and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (KJV)*

Reading the story of Samson, we would do well to ask ourselves the question: "Do I keep repeating the same sins over and over and over?" Samson certainly did. We have seen it in abundance. Do I keep repeating the same sins over and over or do I see progress, over the years, in myself, in overcoming my sins and my weaknesses and my faults. Those who don't overcome now, while we have the time, may have to forfeit their physical lives in the tribulation as Samson had to forfeit his life. A big lesson to learn.

The fourth point; this is blatantly obvious. I'm so amazed at God Almighty.

4. God is patient with us, despite our repeated sins and faults.

He is patient with us despite our repeated sins and faults. Samson started out just absolutely carnal. He got involved with women and he repeatedly violated his Nazarite vow. But because Yehovah was patient, he didn't lose his strength until he had violated all three parts of his vow. He could have turned the corner at any time before that. Once he went beyond the line, it was too late. Prior to that time, look at God's patience with this man. Time after time, incident after incident. Let's go to Psalm 86:15, where David notes—and David had his own problems, sins and weaknesses, after he became king and became settled and prosperous and God blessed him—he drifted away for a period of time. David writes with authority about this subject.

Psalm 86:15 *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion [Samson was shown great compassion], and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. (KJV)*

Samson had a very long leash in that regard, until finally God jerked the leash and said “*enough is enough*”. Now let’s see what Paul writes in Romans 2:4 because Paul repeats the same theme, the same understanding.

Romans 2:4 *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (KJV)*

It’s pretty obvious that the Father’s patience with Samson, that He didn’t destroy him completely, and brought him to the point where, yes, he was blind, yes, he was in prison and grinding grain. The fact is he was not destroyed and he took it right to the limit. God’s patience led him to repentance during the time he was blind and grinding the grain. The same is true for us. God is patient with us despite our weaknesses and our sins. I look back at my life and I marvel that God hasn’t just sent a fire bolt down from heaven and destroyed me completely. He is patient with us and gives us time to learn and repent and to flee sin and turn things around.

The fifth and final point.

5. Despite Samson’s waywardness, Yehovah never forsook him.

After all the things he had done, Yehovah never forsook him. Yes, He withdrew for a period of time but He never totally forsook Samson. He brought about conditions upon him that would help him repent. This thick headed, stubborn Danite who just never learned his lessons. God, despite all of that, through patience and mercy and kindness, goodness and love, brought conditions that would help him repent—to see himself. Then He waited for him to repent. But He never forsook him. It was Samson’s sin that separated him from Yehovah. Let’s go to Isaiah 59 verse 2, a very familiar scripture. This is exactly what happened to Samson.

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated ... (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *separated* means “to divide”, that’s another meaning for it.

2 continued) ... between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)

As long as we continue to sin, He’s not going to hear. But our Father is patiently waiting for us to turn around, to repent, to change, to fall on our knees and beg for forgiveness. We have a promise to us, as Firstfruits today. Let’s go to Hebrews 13:5. This is a promise that we can count on. It’s a promise that Samson didn’t realize until after he

was in prison, after he was blind and when he had his hands on those two pillars and he realized, after his repentance, that our Father had not forsaken him.

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he [Yehovah] hath said, [now he quotes Deuteronomy 31:8] I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (KJV)*

That is a promise that we have from God Almighty. The only way our Father will forsake us is when we knowingly, willingly forsake Him. When we make the conscious decision that

“I do not want to be part of the Kingdom of God, I do not want to be part of the God Almighty’s way of life, I will want to do this even if I died doing it—this is what I’m going to do.”

Only then will our Father just walk away. Despite Samson’s horrible sins and repeating them over and over and over, our Father did not forsake him. The life of Samson shows just how great our Father’s patience, forbearing, faith, and love will go. In the end, Samson will be resurrected into the Kingdom of God.

So let’s summarize. Today we have had a look at Samson’s life and his death. We see that he was called for a purpose; to begin to take Israel out of captivity from the Philistines. We’ve been called for a purpose too. To be in His Kingdom and to rule and reign with Christ 1000 years. Samson sinned and went astray and if we are honest with ourselves, we have done the same thing. We have gone astray and we have sinned, and God has been merciful and God has been patient. Samson repented and was forgiven. We have repented and we have been forgiven. We have to make sure that we stay in the state of repentance, examining ourselves—our conduct and repenting of it. Finally, Samson—the good news, at the end of the day—will be in the Kingdom of His Father because in the end, Samson overcame all of that. Look at what it took him to get to that point. We don’t want to follow that example, but in the end, it took him being in prison, grinding grain and blind, to finally repent. In the end he did and he overcame. So it is never too late. It is never too late to turn things around. The reward is the same for us, if we endure, if we overcome, if we repent. Let’s learn the lessons of Samson’s life and Samson’s death.