

## Judges 13-14

Ch 13 introduces to us one of the most interesting bible characters, who had probably more opportunity, more potential and more, possibility to be used of God and do more for the people of God and the glory of God than any other man who has ever lived outside of Christ Himself. He's a man who could have been, and should have been, but unfortunately never was, he never utilized all the resources that God had equipped him with to be the most effective individual to the glory of God that he could be. He started pretty well, but unfortunately he didn't finish well and as you've heard me say so many times before it's not nearly as important in this life how we begin, as it is how we end. Not to justify peoples lifestyles of sin in the mean time, the bible emphatically teaches holiness and consecration to God, and so many people begin there in there relationship with Jesus, but Jesus never said well *begun* good and faithful servant, He said well *done* good and faithful servant. And so it's no that I'm seeking to belittle how we begin because the foundation can set the standard for the whole thing, but how we end it's what's so critical. And these next few ch will speak to us of a man who started off pretty good, but ended up not so well, because he couldn't seem to control the appetites of his flesh. He couldn't strike the balance between being in the world but not of the world, he seemed for the most part to stick to the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law, if it wasn't specifically stated, then he indulged, but understand that consecrating one's life isn't a separation "from" you can't do this or you can't do that. Consecration isn't a negative thing, it's a positive thing, its' not separated "from" but separated "unto" unto the Lord and His will for our lives. So it's not that I don't do this or I don't do that, it's that I do the things that are pleasing to my Lord, I do what brings Him pleasure, it's a positive thing. Samson had all the resources he needed, divinely implanted into him by God, to lead a radical life of victory setting multitudes free from oppression and bondage all the while leading a life of victory himself. But in the big picture he never really harnessed those resources to the glory of God and so though he had the potential to do great things for God, his folly cost him his life. You know as believers we're more blessed spiritually than Samson ever was, we have all the necessary resources in Christ that we'll ever need in order to lead a life of victory, to have the strength and power that we need over sin and transgression, oppression and bondage to the flesh. But how many of us ever utilize those resources that God has implanted into us by His Son through His Spirit. There are many parallels in the life of Samson to many believers today, people that have great potential that never achieve what God would have for them if they'd only consecrate themselves over to God and quit living for their own selfish pleasures. It's interesting that the name Samson means "sunny" or "little sun", and he could have been used to bring light into these dark times in Israel's history, but in the end he wound up in darkness being blinded by the very enemy he was ordained to conquer. He was a paradoxical man to say the least, a deliver that couldn't deliver himself, a conqueror who couldn't overcome his own frailty, and a strong man who fell pray to his own weakness. As we enter into ch 13 Israel has through these last series of judges experienced a little over 30 years of peace and now we read in vs 1 of ch 13 for the 7<sup>th</sup> time.

You recall that in ch 2:19 we read what we're once again seeing here, *"And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way."*

And so once again after Abdon died and was buried in the Mts of the Amalekites that the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord. It's as if at times the needle is stuck on the record player and it just keeps on repeating itself, never really getting beyond a certain point as a nation. But kind of hidden here in this vs is 2 facts that kind of shed some light on understanding the life and ministry of Samson. The 1<sup>st</sup> of which is who specifically their oppressors are at this time namely the Palestinians or their biblical name, the Philistines. During Samson's life the Philistines appeared as the major enemy, we seen of them in ch 3 concerning the days of Shamgar, but it wasn't until Samson's days that they really became the primary enemy of Israel. And they were a radically advanced military society compared to Israel, they had learned to smelt iron and make weapon's of iron and they could have easily overpowered Israel from a military point of view. As a matter of fact so much so was their fierceness over that of Israel that God opted to take them another way to the Promised land rather than going through Philistine country because He said that seeing such war might freak them out and send them back to Egypt, that they wouldn't have the fortitude to press on. Ex 13:17-18 tells us that, *"Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt."* Now in ch 10 of the book of judges they come into play again and then here in ch 13 they're in full force. But interestingly enough it wasn't through military might (as far as we read) that they were delivered into the hands of the Philistines. They just worked their way in through trade and intermarriage, they had disarmed Israel and Samuel tells us that they had to go to the Philistines just to sharpen their plowshares and trade tools to farm the land. So they had a monopoly over all the weapons, and they had no problems letting Israelites marrying their women, so Israel was just slowly being assimilated into this pagan nation. So they weren't being enslaved through military dominance but as one commentator puts it, through "spiritual and cultural seduction." Which takes us into the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that we see here in this vs or actually the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that we don't see, and the fact that we don't see it is what causes the caution lights to flash. So far in each episode of oppression we've seen a common thread woven into their deliverance and that was that as their oppression became greater and greater that they got to a point where they would cry out to God for deliverance. And yet here concerning their oppression by the Philistines they've been oppressed longer than in any other occasion in the book of judges (40 yrs) and yet never once did the people as a nation cry out to God for a deliverer. And so because there was no national repentance, there was no national deliverer.

But God had a plan for the nation of Israel and so rather than watching them be slowly wiped out through compromise, in His mercy, He by Himself raised up a man who would expose the dangers of the Philistines and hold back their complete dominance of Israel. So two key facts that entered into God's raising up of Samson was Philistine assimilation and Hebrew apathy. And those pressures were very real in Samson's life, making him a great example even of a 21<sup>st</sup> century believer. Because you and I are confronted with the same pressures today, being assimilated into the world through lack of perception due to apathy and complacency in our lives, so there are some very applicable lessons for us through the study of the life of Samson. Now we read in vs 2

### Vs2-5

Vs 2 sets the stage for Samson's birth, we meet there his parents Manoah and his wife. And we learn in vs 2 that she was barren which meant that not only did they have no kids but they weren't going to either by any natural means. But once again what's impossible with man is a simple opportunity for God, and so in this whole thing God and God alone is going to see to it that if there's any glory to be taken that it will be by Him because even in the conception of the child it's only going to come to pass through His divine intervention. And that's exactly what He does, by His grace He reaches into this God fearing couples life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and did a work to His glory. In vs 3 the Angel of the Lord announces the fact that she's going to conceive and bear a son. Now this is interesting and for you bible students there's an interesting little side note here in that who is it that is announcing the birth of Samson? It's none other than the pre-incarnate Christ, the same "Angel of the Lord" that had appeared to Gideon and to Moses, and to Joshua and Abraham, but something that should give you a peculiar insight into this event is that in all the scriptures the Lord only announced the birth of one other child. And that was the promised son of Ab, Isaac, who would give birth to Jacob who would later be known as Israel as in the nation of – Israel. Now J.B. And Jesus both had their births announced but Gabriel was the angel, who announced their coming, but this is the Lord Himself and we'll see that a little later. But it would have been simple for Him to send Gabriel to tell Manoah's wife the news but He didn't and so that fact alone should cause us to pay attention to this mans birth. God wanted them to know that He was doing something very special. And he underscores that through the instructions that He gives her in vs 4-5, He gives her some prenatal advice, He says don't drink wine, and don't eat anything that's not good for you because those things affect the child and he's going to be a Nazirite from the womb. Now back in Num ch 6 vs 2-21 the law of the Nazirite was given, the word "Nazir" means "to be separate" or "set apart", so a Nazirite was to be one who was set apart to God, one who had dedicated and separated himself to God and His purposes. But we find there in Numbers, 3 basic things that constituted this vow. #1 He wasn't to drink any wine or have any association with the fruit of the vine, no grapes, no raisins, no vinegar or similar drink. Not only because wine clouds our senses but grapes are a symbol of earthly joy, and we are to joy in the Lord, and not the things of this world. So the Nazirite would stay away from the fruit of the vine. Also one who had taken this vow wasn't to cut his hair the entire time that the vow was being kept. This was sort of the physical or outward showing of his inward consecration of the heart.

And then also he wasn't to touch anything dead, making himself unclean. Now for anyone else the vow was voluntary, it was a voluntary cutting of oneself off from certain things unto the Lord in order that they might be a holy "vessel of honor" as Paul puts it, and then also it was temporary, it was for a specific period of time and then when that time was up, you would shave your head burn your hair with the sacrifice you would make and then you would go on. But with Samson both of those rules were void from his life, he didn't have the choice, God appointed him a Nazirite and it wasn't temporarily it was for life. In Jer 1:5 we read, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.*" And that's what we see in Samson, God had his life mapped out for him, now we'll see that God never interfered with his own free will, but this was God's intentions for this mans life. But the key word that we need to see in vs 5 is the word, "begin" he will begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. God wasn't going to completely break their yoke because the nation hadn't repented, but that's something that hasn't yet applied to all the other judges, they knew victory, Samson never would, now he would never be completely defeated, but his victory was partial at best.

The Philistines wouldn't be completely dealt with clear up until the time of David. But again bare in mind that Samson fought alone, not once do we read of so much as one man joining Samson against the Philistines. So when we're observing all these failures we need to balance it out with the fact that he was literally a one-man army who held the nation of the Philistines at bay while Israel did nothing to aid him in any way. Why, because they had been assimilated, integrated and compromised it was only Samson, who had been set apart to God who had the strength to fight the enemy, remember that. When you've compromised and integrated into the world you have no will nor desire to fight the enemy, but those who are set apart to God are ready and equipped to do just that. Why, because strength comes from separation, so Samson was to be separated from the world unto the Lord.

Vs6-9

I thought that was interesting, God responded to Manoah's prayer and came again to his wife.

Vs10-14

So Manoah seeks confirmation and he gets it, but the Lord doesn't give him any more info, why, because He's already told his wife that he's to be a Nazirite and now all they have to do is consult the word of God, because God has already instructed them on the lifestyle of the Nazirite in His word. So He just repeats the exhortation.

Vs 15-18

Now some of your bibles say a little something different there, but literally this is what it says, seeing it is wonderful, it's more than you are able to comprehend in your human frailty. But even in this He gives us a clue to His identity, it is wonderful, where have I heard that? Isa 9:6 *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”* So even in this we see His identity as the Lord.

Vs19-21

I'll bet he did, can you imagine that, offering up a sacrifice, setting it on fire and as the flames ascend into the sky, this man of whom you're really not sure who he is steps into the fire of the sacrifice and as the flames go up he just \*\*\* goes right up with them. You'd freak out, and that's exactly what Manoah did, check it out.

Vs22

This is kind of funny to me, it's much like Gideon, the Lord appears to him tells him His plan for his life and then when he realizes he's spoken to the Lord he's all “that's it no one can see God and live, it's over I'm toast.” But he's not looking at the Father he's looking at the pre-incarnate Christ and not only that why would God tell you a plan that he has for you and then kill you? His reasoning faculties just took a hike. But luckily his wife is a little more together, and many times its that way so husbands listen to your wife's input and do like Manoah seek the Lord for confirmation, many times they're more sensitive spiritually than we are.

Vs23

Oh, yeah, I guess you're right.

Vs24-25

The only one of the Judges of whom it is stated that the Lord blessed him.

## Ch 14

Vs1

This vs is much more profound than it looks, it says that Samson went “down” to Timnah, which was a truer statement than he may've realized, because it was all down hill from here. He saw this young Philistine girl and it was lust at 1<sup>st</sup> sight.

Vs2

In that day parents arranged your marriage and so Samson is basically saying, man I saw this unbeliever who was a knock out, do what you need to do, but I want to marry her. He's not worried about pleasing his parents, he's not worried about breaking God's law, all he's worried about is pleasing himself, he's succumbed to the lust of the eyes and the lusts of the flesh. Hebrews records Samson as a man of great faith, but he wasn't very faithful, he may've had great faith *in* God, but he wasn't very faithful *to* God. He was a “he-man” with a “she-weakness”.

And no sooner than he said this, his parents world began to fall apart, here they've known of God's call on his life, they've raised him according to the word, they've prayed that he would be Israel's deliverer and now here he is wanting to yoke up with the enemy which is a direct violation of God's word and God's call on his life. He's coveting, he's lusting, he's being selfish and for all of this God's going to accomplish His purposes anyway. So many people are willing to throw everything away that God wants to do in their lives because they can't bridle the flesh.

But God is going to "overrule" so to speak and use this evil for His good. And I love that about the Lord, does God want us to compromise our consecration? No way, but what man and Satan means for evil, He can use to accomplish His will, it's the strangest thing, but it's the wisdom of God.

Vs3

So what do we see here, Samson is a man who rejects authority. He's not honoring his mother and father, they're seeking to give him wisdom, they're saying hey, she's a heathen, surely you can find a good godly woman around here. And in defiance of the word of God and the godly advice of his parents he says, go get her for me because she pleases me well. Literally she is right in my eyes, the lust of his eyes, the book of judges tells us that the problem with the people of Israel during this time is that every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. And what does Samson say, "She is right in my eyes" it doesn't matter what's right in God's eyes or your eyes she's right in my eyes. You know there's a lot of arguments and good excuses that people come up with for doing what they do, but the bottom line is that we're either going to submit to God's authority, or the authority of what is right in our own eyes. You see Samson is becoming a legalist, he could argue and say, she's not dead, she's not grapes, and she's not a haircut, I'm with in my bounds, I'm with in God's will, but the problem was that he was submitted to the God who's will it was. He was sticking to the letter of the law and not the spirit; his separation was formal and legalistic. One commentator (Inrig) says this, "Some Christians understand separation the way Samson did. They live by a strict code, if you were to ask them, Are you a separated Christian? They would say, of course I am. I don't do this, I don't do that, I don't go there, I don't own that, and besides I don't hang around with the people who do. But negative separation is not biblical separation. If spirituality is determined by what a person cannot do, then quadriplegia is close to godliness. Paralysis is not spirituality. God does not call us to isolationism. Nor does He call us to a life-negating, joyless asceticism. Separation is, above all else, a positive, joy filled relationship with Jesus Christ A truly separated Christian is a believer whose heart and life are set apart to God, and who lives life for Him." But here we have Samson in essence justifying sin by examining it through his legal code, or not even caring but just blatantly going against the word and will of God, either way he's revealing the flesh drive in his heart.

Vs4

You see God's going to use it anyway.

## Vs5

Yellow light, again he's a Nazirite, he's not supposed to have anything to do with the fruit of the vine and here he goes (apparently his folks walking on) but he veers off into the vineyard and whether it was the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour or God saying hey, you better think about where you're at and what you're doing either way he finds a surprise there in the vineyard as a young lion (fully grown, but young) comes out against him.

## Vs6

So there we see the secret of his strength, the Spirit of the Lord and he just rips the thing from limb to limb and then strolls back up to his parents and doesn't tell them, probably because he wasn't supposed to be there in the 1<sup>st</sup> place.

## Vs7-9

So he goes to check it out and finds some honey, now again he's violating his vow because he's not supposed to be touching dead things, again that's why he didn't tell his folks where he got it.

## Vs10-17

So she broke out a woman's ultimate weapon, her tears, he's all look I haven't even told my folks I can't tell you. But day after day she's weeping, under pressure worried for her life, she should have confided in Samson but instead she betrays him, if she'd have told him he'd have just killed them all, but now there's going to be trouble.

## Vs18-20

Now we'll talk about a couple of more things next week in review but, so far we've seen compromise after compromise and it's getting Samson deeper and deeper into trouble, rather than submitting himself to God's authority he keeps doing whatever seems best to him, he's strong enough to take a city, but can't rule his own spirit, and ultimately the lust of his eyes, the pride of life and the lust of his flesh will be his downfall.