

Church of God Sunday School

THE BIRTH AND RISE OF SAMSON: GOD CHOOSES SAMSON

Judges 13:1 — 16:3

"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 [*FIL-ee-steens*] forty years."

God sent an angel unto the wife of an Israelite man called Manoah (*muh-NOH-uh*). He and his wife had no children. The angel told the woman that she would have a son. The angel gave the woman special instructions to follow before her son was born: she was to drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing that was unclean.

The woman told her husband about the angel, and he asked the Lord to send the angel back. God did. The angel told Manoah and his wife that their son was to be a Nazarite (*NA-zuh-rite*) from his birth to his death. (A Nazarite was set apart unto the Lord for a special work. He was never to eat grapes or drink grape juice or any strong drink; his hair was never to be cut, and he was never to go near a dead body. Read Numbers 6:1-8.)

Just as the angel foretold, a baby boy was born to Manoah and his wife. They named him Samson. When he was grown, the Holy Spirit "began to move [on Samson] at times," giving him super strength.

Samson wanted to marry a woman of the "daughters of the Philistines," but his parents tried to persuade him to seek a wife from his own people. However, God was using that to make a way for Samson to begin delivering the Israelites from the bondage of the Philistines.

Samson asked his parents to arrange for him to marry the Philistine woman (as was the custom). They could not change Samson's mind. So, Samson and his parents went to have the wedding arranged.

Sometime on the trip, a lion came out and roared at Samson. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and strengthened him so much that he grabbed the lion and

tore it apart with his bare hands! But Samson did not tell his parents about the lion.

Later, when Samson and his parents were returning for the actual wedding feast, Samson passed the place where he had killed the lion. Bees had swarmed in the lion's carcass (the skeletal remains) and made honey. Samson took some honey and ate it. He gave some to his parents, too—but he did not tell them where he had found it!

Samson's wedding feast lasted for seven days. Thirty Philistines came to the feast. They were to be companions of Samson, but they were really there to see that he made no trouble for the Philistines.

Samson said to 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 [shirts] and thirty change of garments: But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets [shirts] and thirty change of garments."

They said, "Put forth thy riddle." Samson said, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

The men thought and thought. They could not guess the meaning of

the riddle. So they went to Samson's wife and told her to make Samson tell her the answer. They threatened to burn her and her father's household to death if she did not. She was very frightened. She went to Samson, crying and telling him he ought to tell her the answer if he really loved her. So, he told her the answer; then she went to the men and told them the answer!

On the last day of the feast, the thirty men said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?"

Samson knew then that his wife had talked to the



men. "The Spirit of the LORD came upon" Samson. He went to Ashkelon (*ASH-kuh-lon*) and killed thirty Philistines and gave their clothes to the thirty men.

Samson did not go back to his wife then. He went home, to his father's house. The girl's father thought Samson did not want her anymore, so he gave her to another man, thinking Samson hated her. But after a while, Samson decided to go back to his wife. When he learned that she had been given to another man, he became very angry, and what do you think he did?

Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes. He tied them tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails! Then Samson lit the torches and turned all the foxes loose in the Philistines' cornfields! The foxes ran here and there through the cornfields, setting both the standing corn and the shocks on fire, destroying them. Then they ran through the Philistine's vineyards and olive orchards.

Oh, the Philistines were mad! They felt that Samson's wife and her father were to blame for all the destruction that Samson had caused; so they killed them! That only made Samson want to punish the Philistines more; so he went out and killed many of them.

After that, Samson went down to Judah, to the top of a high rock. The Philistines told the men of Judah that they wanted Samson. When three thousand men of Judah came to get Samson, they said to him, "What is this that thou hast done unto us?" Samson said, "As they did unto me, so have I done unto them."

Samson did not try to resist the men. The men promised Samson they would not kill him, but they tied him up and took him to their enemies, the Philistines. The Philistines shouted when they saw Samson. Suddenly, the power of the Holy Spirit came over Samson in a great way. He broke the cords that bound him as easily as if they had been flax that was set on fire—and no wonder, it was the fire of the Holy Spirit that melted the cords!

Then Samson "found a new jawbone of an ass." (How sturdy was a jawbone as a weapon? Would it have been easy to hold onto? Wouldn't it seem like it would have splintered or broken after several blows?) Yet, with just that jawbone and his God-given strength, Samson killed a thousand more Philistines!

Samson called that place Ramath-lehi (*ray-muhth-LEE-hi*), meaning "the lifting up of the jawbone." He said, "With the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men."

Then Samson became thirsty, and he prayed for water, giving God the glory for his great victory. God wonderfully provided water, and Samson called that place En-hakkore (*AIN-hack-ore-ray*), which means "the spring of him who prayed."

The Philistine people really hated Samson, and they never stopped trying to catch him. One time, Samson went to the Philistine town of Gaza (*GAY-zuh*). That night, men surrounded the city and hid by the gate of the city, waiting to catch and kill Samson in the morning.

Samson decided to leave the city at midnight. Naturally, the gate was closed and locked. But that did not stop Samson. He grabbed hold of the doors of the gate, the two posts that held the gate up, and the bar too!

Samson jerked the whole thing loose from the wall, put it on his shoulders, and walked off! He "carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron" (thought to be a distance of several miles). Can you imagine how surprised the people of Gaza were the next morning? Could anything stop Samson?

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him."  
—Judges 13:24*  
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