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## A Biographical Study of Samson

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# *Samson*

## CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. His mission
  - A. Samson's mother was visited by the angel of the Lord, who told her of his future birth. "There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 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" (Judg. 13:2-3).
  - B. This heavenly messenger instructed the parents that their child was to be raised a Nazarite (13:4, 5). According to Numbers 6:1-6, the Nazarite had three restrictions placed upon him.
    1. He was not to touch wine or any other product of the vine.
    2. His hair was to remain untouched by a razor.
    3. He must not touch a dead body. Note: Samson's mother was also commanded not to drink wine or eat any product of the vine (13:4, 14).
  - C. On this occasion Samson's parents prayed a prayer all expectant Christian parents should pray (13:8, 12). "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 . . . And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" (13:8, 12)
  - D. Samson was born and empowered by the Holy Spirit even as he grew up (13:24-25).
- II. His marriage
  - A. He determined to marry an unbelieving Philistine girl, to the dismay of his parents. Already Samson's carnal nature was coming to the surface. In spite of his sensuality, he was still used for God's glory (14:1-4).
  - B. En route to Philistia he killed a lion (14:5-6).
  - C. Later he discovered that a swarm of bees had chosen the carcass of the lion to make honey in it. At his wedding feast Samson used this experience as a basis for a riddle (Judg. 14:12-14). "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" (Judg. 14:14).
  - D. The guests eventually dishonestly solved this riddle, getting it from Samson's bride. He was furious at this and paid his debt to the wedding guests, but only at the expense of 30 Philistine victims (14:15-19).
  - E. He then went home in anger, leaving his wife with her father.
  - F. He returned the following harvest, only to find the girl's father had given his bride to Samson's best man! In the act of revenge, the Hebrew strongman did the following: "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. 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" (15:4-5).

### III. His miracles

- A. He then killed many Philistines (15:8).
- B. After this, the Philistines threatened to destroy the tribe of Judah unless they delivered Samson bound to them. Samson meekly allowed himself to be tied up, but as the enemy came in view he broke the ropes, grabbed the jawbone of an ass, and slaughtered 1,000 Philistines (15:9-17)!
- C. He prayed one of his only two recorded prayers. Both were totally carnal and self-centered (Compare 15:18 with 16:28). "He was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day" (15:18-19).

### IV. His misconduct

- A. At Gaza (a Philistine city) Samson once again avoided capture, this time by tearing off the gate of the city (16:1-3). His purpose in going to Gaza was to visit a harlot!
- B. Samson was finally done in by a Philistine woman named Delilah, who discovered the source of his great strength (16:4-20). Note: At this point, Samson had probably violated all three Nazarite vows:
  - (1) He had touched the carcass of a lion (14:8-9).
  - (2) He may have drunk wine at his wedding feast (14:10).
  - (3) He had allowed his hair to be cut (16:19).

### V. His misery

- A. Samson now learned the high cost of low living. "The Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (16:21).
- B. In prison he regained his strength as his hair grew out again.
- C. He was then allowed by God to destroy thousands of Philistines who had gathered in their heathen temple for a drunken orgy. In the following destruction Samson himself perished (16:22-31). "Samson called unto the Lord, 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. 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. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; 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" (16:28-30).

## **THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

- I. Samson was the first of three famous biblical Nazarites.
  - A. Samson (Judg. 13:4-5)
  - B. Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11-28)
  - C. John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17)
- II. His faith is referred to in Heb. 11:32

## **STATISTICS**

*Father:* Manoah (Judg. 13:2)

*Spouse:* Unnamed wife (Judg. 14:10-18)

*First mention:* Judges 13:24

*Final mention:* Hebrews 11:32

*Meaning of his name:* "Distinguished, strong"

*Frequency of his name:* Referred to 36 times

*Biblical books mentioning him:* Two books (Judges, Hebrews)

*Occupation:* Judge (Judg. 15:20)

*Place of death:* At the arena at Gaza (Judg. 16:21-30)

*Circumstances of death:* He was crushed by a falling building (Judg. 16:30)

*Important fact about his life:* He was history's strongest man (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14)