
Day 82 - March 23

Conquering a Land (1400 – 1100 BCE)

Samson the Strong Man

Readings: *Judges 13:1-16:31*

Reflections:

- The story of Sampson reinforces many of the themes that we see being established. God is using someone who is really messed up in so many ways. God's methods seem to go against everything God himself had set out as guidelines. Anyway, this again is simply a demonstration of what ultimately will not work in establishing God's heart within his people.
- Sampson's birth fits the pattern of a uniquely initiated birth by God. Like Abraham, Sarah and Isaac, Sampson's conception is divinely aided.
- The Nazerite vow with his hair is the tangible expression of his commitment to God.
- The appearance of the angel is apparently God himself or Christ. He won't reveal his name because it is "beyond understanding" or another way to translate it "so wonderful." They conclude they have seen God himself. It seems to suggest, like other times in the story of Israel, that God did meet with people, and for us who follow Christ, seems to suggest that this is Christ appearing in the story of Israel. The whole story is fascinating and shows the very human like experience of interacting with God/angel of the Lord.
- The Spirit of God is on Sampson even as he grows as a boy. This specific verse seems to echo what is said of Jesus.
- Sampson's desire for a Gentile wife goes directly against everything the people of Israel understood. Here is God working through Sampson as he breaks the very rules God has set up. God's purposes must always remain first and foremost rather than blindly following rules, even the rules God gives directly.
- The image of the honey in the lion is an interesting picture and may be a picture of how Israel is defeating her enemies. Their enemies are like lions and through the Spirit of God these judges slay the lions. The Israelites are like the bees that can live out of the dead carcass of their enemies and even produce something sweet. God can bring some

unsuspecting good out of the dead carcass of the enemy. It shows the ultimate triumph over their enemy.

- The fact that his wife betrays Sampson is all part of this set-up for conflict. It is really an awful story. He not only kills a bunch of guys for their clothes but his wife is given to his friend to be his wife/concubine. More death and destruction follows, including from his wife.
- The men of Judah get involved and play a role in delivering Sampson to the Philistines. Sampson's defense for waging his personal war is the basis for the Old Testament. "I merely did to them what they did to me." This is simply an eye for eye. Sampson is afraid his own country men will kill him. Interesting to see how this type of vigilante lives in fear.
- The image of Sampson killing all these men with the jawbone of a donkey is exactly as it appears. It is a visual picture of these Philistines being fools, to be killed so easily by the jawbone of an ass.
- Sampson then goes to see a prostitute. This starts to tip us off that Sampson is a Rambo figure with a weakness for sex. We can guess now that he will probably meet his end because he is uncontrolled in this area.
- The story of Sampson and Delilah is not a story of love, but of seduction. The focus is on revealing his power and it ultimately ties back to his Nazerite vow. As simple as it may seem, regardless of how messed up he is, it is his basic loyalty to honor his Nazerite vow that maintains his relationship with God.
- Key line: "With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death." Classic line!
- He finally betrays his vow with this confession, she seduces him to sleep and his hair is shaved off. His end is brutal. His eyes are gouged out and he becomes a slave grinding grain in prison. Again, we see the shock and horror of Judges and its brutality and sin.
- His hair does start to grow again though. He is brought out as pitiful entertainment at a feast to the god of the Philistines. Here he commits suicide and takes the whole party down with him. A sad ending to his life. Again, these stories are not to set an example but to cause horror, shock and sadness that cause us to wonder, "How bad can it get?" So much for the Rambo's of this world!