

QUESTION: Why in the world did God choose Samson?

TRN TO JG 13

INTRODUCTION

HEROES/Anti-Heroes/Compared to Heroes

Whether shown in characters like Star Lord, Spawn, or the Predator, we see the rise of these “**anti-heroes**” today—characters who act more like we would than like we *wish* we would. In many ways, as our modern society has become more worldly and less Godly, the kinds of heroes we want become more worldly and less Godly, as well. Less heroes, more anti-heroes. You can tell a lot about a nation by their heroes.

BACKGROUND

This morning, we took a look at the closest thing that the Old Testament has to a comic-book super hero: Samson. We saw how he was **chosen** of God and how he was **empowered** by God. When you hear about how blessed and powerful he is, you’d be forgiven for thinking that he’d be the greatest judge and one of the most righteous men in the book of Judges. You’d be wrong, but you’d be forgive for thinking it.

When I was younger, I thought of Samson as a cool and heroic character—like Superman or Hercules! But as I became more familiar with the Bible and his story, I began to look at him as closer to an anti-hero—prideful and violent: far from a traditional hero. But now, as I’ve studied him more, I’ve come to see that Samson is, in fact, the exact hero that Israel needed. His purpose was to show the nation **the man in the mirror**—to help them to see themselves the way God saw them. For you can tell a lot about a nation by their heroes. For help in seeing this, let’s look at some excerpts from the life of Samson!

BD1: He Had Poor Judgment (JG 14.1-5; 16.1-4)

BKGRND: Samson was born during an age when the Philistines had begun to rise in power. And as they rose, they turned on Israel and persecuted it. Naturally, if you’re familiar with the structure of **JG**, you expect a judge to rise up to lead the people and to stand against their enemies: in this case, against the Philistines. I can’t help but think of a bullied kid in high school waiting for their big brother or friend to arrive and help turn the tides. “**Just you wait until Samson comes on the scene—just wait until he sees the Pharisees!**”

JG 14.1-2 ~ *Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² Then he came up and told his father and*

mother, “I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife.”

EX: “Whoa...whoa...whoa. Wait a minute. What!?” That’s not at all what we expect on our first reading of this. He doesn’t see the Philistines as his enemy. He doesn’t see this woman as a potential bad influence on him. His parents react in shock: “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” (vs. 3a) But notice what he says: “Get her for me, for *she is right in my eyes.*” (vs. 3b) Those words weren’t chosen by accident. Later in the book, almost these exact words would be used to describe the nation, itself: *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* (JG 17.6)

JG 2.11-12a ~ *And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. ¹² And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.*

AP: Samson, ultimately, was the perfect hero for the Jewish people at the time: showing a reflection of their own lack of judgment in his own **poor judgment**. And this woman in **JG 14** isn’t the last case of his poor judgment—she’s not even the last case of him having bad taste in women! There’s the prostitute in **JG 16.1-3**, and of course, his eventual downfall, Delilah (**JG 16.4ff**). In all three of these women, we see him living as an echo of the faithlessness of the people he was sent to judge—whose own willingness to abandon God and embrace false gods was often equated as spiritual adultery.

God’s hope seemed to be that the people would see his **poor judgment** and would then be able to better see their own. **Brethren, is it working?** For we often follow Samson’s example: clinging to the wisdom of our own eyes.

PV 3.5-6 ~ *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

BD2: He Was Compromised (JG 16)

BKGRND: When you first read the stories of Samson’s strength, they read like scenes from a comic book. He tears a lion in pieces (**JG 14.6**), kills 30 Philistines in Ashkelon (**JG 14.19**), and as if that wasn’t enough, he kills 1000 men with an improvised weapon (**JG 15.15**)! **But remember what we said this morning about the Nazarite vow?** Let’s go back to the original creation of this vow:

NM 6.1-8 ~ *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, ³ he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes,*

JG 16.29-31 ~ *And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. ³⁰ And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. ³¹ Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.*

What a strange story. What a strange man! In many ways, he was an antihero: a flawed and failed man who showed Israel’s own reflection: their **poor judgment**, their **corruption**, and their **unfaithfulness**. But in the same way, he stands as a reflection of God’s relationship with His people: despite their **poor judgment**, **corruption**, and **unfaithfulness**, the hair was always ready to regrow: God was always ready to rush back upon His people—if they’d only call upon Him, again. And so, at last, we see about Samson that he was **saved**.

RM 10.8-17 ~ *But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

INVITATION

Today, we can often find ourselves more like Samson than we’d like to be: he can also remind us of our own **poor judgment**, **corruption**, and **unfaithfulness**. But let us not forget his end: that God was ready to rush upon Him. That God is like the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son: waiting and watching, ready to run to us and kill the fatted calf in celebration at our return. Waiting to **save**.

where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (MT 6.19-24)

CONCLUSION: He Was Saved

JG 16.21 ~ *And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison.*

EX: The final days of Samson’s life were dark—no pun intended. The strong-man who seemed to live a boisterous and blessed life ended his life blinded, bound, and besieged by his enemies. In this final image, we see him matching the life and journey of the Jewish people during the time of judges: initially **chosen** and **empowered** by God, their own **poor judgement, corruption, and unfaithfulness** resulted in their final miserable state: **blinded, bound, and besieged** by the enemies of God. Yet...the passage closes with a hint of hope: *But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.* (JG 16.22)

In this, Samuel (the likely writer of **JG**) is pointing to the hair as a symbol of the continued offering of God’s blessing. Despite Samon’s **poor judgment, corruption, and unfaithfulness**, God lingered still: prepared to return—prepared to bless, again!

JG 16.25-31 ~ *And when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson, that he may entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. ²⁶ And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.” ²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. ²⁸ Then Samson called to the Lord and said, “O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.”*

EX: Only one other time do we see Samson *call upon the Lord* (**JG 15.18**)—and then, it’d been because of his thirst after the slaying of the 1000 men. Now, he calls upon the Lord for true: and he asks for Him to strengthen and to deliver him. Remember: every other **JG** begins their ministry with a call to the Lord for deliverance. Samson ends his with one.

fresh or dried. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins. ⁵ “All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long. ⁶ “All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body. ⁷ Not even for his father or for his mother, for brother or sister, if they die, shall he make himself unclean, because his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he is holy to the Lord.

There were three key parts of the vow as described in **NM**: separated from wine and strong drink, no razor shall touch his head, and he shall not go near a dead body. Now, with those aspects in mind, look back, again, at his seeming victories from before: not only does he tear the lion to pieces, but later, *he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. ⁹ He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went.* (**JG 14.8b-9**). There goes “**part one**” of the Nazarite vow—broken again, later, by that “**improvised weapon**” I mentioned earlier—the *fresh jawbone of a donkey* (**JG 15.15**) he uses to kill 1000 men. But, you might think, maybe that’s all he’d broken! Sadly, that’s not the case.

SAMSON/Nazarite Vow/Wedding Feast

Long before the razor ever met Samson’s head, we see that Samson was **compromised**. God had made simple, clear commands: and Samson had somehow managed to mess up, even those. **Why would God have chosen him to judge Israel when he was guilty of the exact same sins they were?** Well, that’s the point: Samson showed a reflection of the Israelites own sins and compromises in his own sins and **compromises**.

JG 2.12b-13 ~ *They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. ¹³ They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.*

EX: The Israelites had allowed the influence of the sinful people around them to corrupt them: like sewage drained into otherwise clear water. And as a result, they’d become guilty of numerous moral **compromises**.

JG 2.16-19 ~ *Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. ¹⁸ Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was*

moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. ¹⁹ *But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.*

AP: It was quite a fall from Joshua to Samson—a **compromised** and **corrupt** leader—unconcerned with his own moral purity and holiness. But if the Israelites would have stood there, shaking their heads at Samson, they should have opened their eyes to their own **corruption**. They’d similarly allowed the wicked influences of the nations around them to lead them away from God. And sadly, we can often fall into the same.

1CR 15.33-34 ~ *Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”* ³⁴ *Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

BD3: He Was Unfaithful (JG 16.23-31)

JG 16.23-25 ~ *Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.”* ²⁴ *And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.”* ²⁵ *And when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson, that he may entertain us.”* *So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars.*

Fast forward to the end of Samson’s time as judge, we see him tied-up, blind, and powerless in the temple of Dagon (**JG 16**). This warrior who’d defeated thousands was now a shadow of his former self: seemingly as weak as a kitten. **What happened?**

Many will point to Delilah: her tempting, poking, and prodding him—trying to determine his weakness—his kryptonite. At first, he plays with her: **“Seven fresh bowstrings!”**, **“new ropes!”**, **“weave the locks of my head in a web with a pin!”** But eventually, she wears him out: *And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.”* (**JG 16.17**) Many might think that this was the point where his doom was set: after all, this is when *“his strength left him”* (**19b**). But while clearly this was when *the Lord had left him* (**20b**), it wasn’t really the reason why He had. To understand that, let’s look at what lay at the heart of Samson’s choice that day.

EX: When reading the story of Samson, you’ll notice something at the heart of each of his decisions. It was present in **JG 14** when he touched both wine and the corpse of the lion during the feast, in **JG 15** in Lehi when he grabbed the bone of the freshly dead donkey to kill 1000 Philistines after they sought revenge for his actions, and in **JG 16** as he lay in Delilah’s lap. Samson’s weakness was the love of pagan women. And in this, he echoed the sins of the nation of Israel.

EZ 16.32-34 ~ *Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!* ³³ *Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings.* ³⁴ *So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.*

EX: God’s relationship with Israel was like a husband to a beloved bride: and yet, multiple times in the age of the judges and beyond, they would *“play the whore”*—seeking out the gods and protection of other nations. And in every case, this had resulted in the same ultimate thing: God’s patience, God’s steady hand upholding His still disrespectful people until, eventually, He would withdraw from them—cutting them off.

DT 28.15-20 ~ *“But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.”* ¹⁶ *Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.* ¹⁷ *Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.* ¹⁸ *Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.* ¹⁹ *Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.* ²⁰ *“The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.*

EX: Samson had, similarly, **“played the whore”**—turning from God to the comfort of another faithless bride. In that, he showed a reflection of their own **unfaithfulness** as he was also **unfaithful**. In the end, he trusted in the power of his keeping of the vow: not in the God who empowered Him. And with that, his **unfaithfulness** was complete, and God left him.

AP: God expected faithfulness—God *expects* faithfulness. He doesn’t want divided loyalties—listening to the tempting whispers of godless masters and mistresses. *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,* ²⁰ *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and*