

A CHARACTER STUDY ON

SAMSON

Lesson 3

FIRE BRANDS AND A JAW BONE

Judges 15:1 - 20

Study 3
Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
H. David Nichols

SAMSON

III. FIRE BANDS AND A JAW BONE

Samson was chosen from before his birth to “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5b) Because of the apostasy of the Israelites, God had allowed the Philistines to conquer and dominate His people. The Philistines troubled the Israel until the time of King David. When the people of God cried out to God He chose to raise up a deliverer. This pattern occurs several times in the book of Judges. The people would sin. God would use the Philistines to punish His people. When they repented He would raise up a leader that was called a Judge. The Judge would lead the people and begin to throw off the rule of the oppressor. As Samson grew to manhood he was trained to understand that he would be the deliverer of Israel. “The child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.” (vs. 24b – 25) When the Spirit of God came upon him he was able to do amazing feats of strength.

In chapter 14 we studied about how God used the engagement with the Philistine woman in Timnath to set in motion a series of events that would begin the overthrow of the Philistines. When his riddle was guessed at the wedding feast Samson became angry and used this as

an excuse to attack and kill 30 of the Philistines. He left the wedding feast in a rage without claiming his bride. Her father gave her in marriage to the best man. Sometime later, after his anger had cooled Samson returns to take his bride. When he learned that she had been given to another he used this as an excuse to lash out at the enemy by burning “the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.” (vs. 15:5) He took advantage of the dryness of the harvest and destroyed them. This was a major blow to the Philistines. It destroyed a major portion of their food supply for that year. They responded by lashing out at Samson. They returned to the home of Samson’s bride and destroyed her and her family with fire. Samson struck back with another assault on the Philistines. “And Samson said unto them, though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.” (vs. 7-8) “Hip and thigh” is an expression that suggested that he killed a great many of the enemy that day. He then escaped to a ridge in Judah called Etam. The people of Judah, in fear of the reprisals of the Philistines, came to Samson to ask him to leave their area. They promised him safe passage to the Philistines. At this point, “When he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the

cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.” (Vs.14-15)

God chose to use a man such as Samson for His own reasons. In the book of Joshua God challenged His people through the man Joshua:

“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods.” (Joshua 24:14-16)

Unfortunately the people that came after Joshua’s generation did not keep this promise and began to follow other gods. Judgment always followed. God sent Judges to deliver His people and to lead them back to Himself. God came upon Samson in such a mighty way to demonstrate to His people that God was the one who was defeating

their enemies. Samson was a Nazarite from his birth. He was not always faithful to those Nazarite vows but his appearance was a reminder to the people that he had been dedicated to God all of his life. They needed to dedicate themselves to the Lord as well. Surrender to the will of God is always the place of safety.

Ideas to consider:

1) Do we sometimes see the sin, be judged, repent cycle repeat itself in our lives today? How should we respond to correct this?

2) How can you apply Joshua 24:14-16 to your life today?

3) With the history of Moses, Joshua, third generation, how would you describe the sin of the third generation?

Notes

References:

Wycliffe = The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. Moody Press.
1962.

JFB = Jamieson, Fauset and Brown A Commentary, Vol.1.
1946.

MHenry = Matthew Henry. Vol 2. Fleming H. Revell Co.