

## Samson's Riddle

**Luke 24:44 (NKJV)**

**<sup>44</sup>Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."**

**John 5:46 (NKJV)**

**<sup>46</sup>For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.**

- *It is clear that the main purpose of all Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ for, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."*
- *Even the last book of the Bible begins with the words, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:1).*
- *One of our prayers as we study God's Word should be, "Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law." (Psalm 119:18). And what is more wonderful than seeing the One who is called "Wonderful." (Isaiah 9:6).*
- *The story of Samson is not only a true story, but it provides us with analogies revealing spiritual truths on how to walk with Christ.*

**Judges 13:1–5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup>Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.**

**<sup>2</sup>Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.**

**<sup>3</sup>And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.**

**<sup>4</sup>Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean.**

**<sup>5</sup>For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."**

- *This story took place during the time of the judges when "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years."*
- *However, God in His mercy did not leave Israel in their miserable state, but brought forth a son, who was to be consecrated before God from his birth and "he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."*

- *In one way, Samson can be seen as a prophetic type of Christ, but because of his poor choices this prophetic picture was marred.*
- *Samson’s failures were not inevitable, but the result of his own choices.*
- *However, in spite of his choices his story and life provide us with a number of useful lessons, some which serve as warnings, while others serve to encourage us to trust God to redeem us even in the midst of our failures.*

**Judges 13:24–25 (NKJV)**

**<sup>24</sup>So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.**

**<sup>25</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.**

- *Samson’s name in Hebrew means, “sunlight” and this can be a prophetic picture of the One who is the light just as Jesus Himself said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12).*
- *Christ’s appearance is described as “the sun shining in its strength.” (Revelation 1:16).*
- *Samson can also be a picture of Christians, for Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14).*
- *When Jesus came in the flesh He was the light of the world just as He said, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (John 9:5). However, once He returned to the Father, He gave us the Great Commission, so His light would shine through His Church to this world.*
- *Even though Samson “grew and the Lord blessed him,” instead of having a heart yielded to God, his character developed in ways that led him to many pitfalls and hardships.*

**“And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol” – This verse describes how God had to motivate Samson.**

- *As we read the story of Samson, we begin to understand that he was selfish and generally disinterested in the plight of his people Israel. His main motivation in life was lustful and fleshly pleasures.*
- *The Hebrew word “to move upon” means “to thrust, impel, to stir, to trouble,” signifying having to motivate someone who is resistant to actually doing something.*

- *Therefore, the way the Lord began to move upon Samson is best described by the two places that he found himself in, Zorah and Eshtaol.*
- *The Hebrew word “Zorah” comes from the root word meaning “hornet” or “wasp” with the idea of something that stings.*
- *The Hebrew word “Eshtaol” comes from the root word meaning “to entreat.”*
- *The ways God was moving upon Samson alternated between him being stung and being entreated, whichever method produced the necessary results.*
- *Of course, it is much better to respond to the Lord’s entreaties than His chastisements.*

#### Hebrews 12:6 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup>For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

- *Because of Samson’s selfishness and unwillingness to submit to the will of God he experienced more scourgings than entreaties, but both still reflected God’s deep love for him.*

#### Lamentations 3:33 (NKJV)

<sup>33</sup>For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men.

- *God would much rather entreat us than afflict us, but if we fail to respond to His entreaties, His love will compel Him to chasten us because He will not leave us on a self-destructive path.*

#### Judges 14:1–4 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup>Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

<sup>2</sup>So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.”

<sup>3</sup>Then his father and mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”

<sup>4</sup>But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

- *The first mention of Samson actually being motivated to do something is in regard to his desire to marry a Philistine woman, which was totally contrary to God’s Law. Marrying foreign women invariably led to their husbands being led astray to serve false gods, King Solomon being a case in point.*

- *His father and mother, being godly parents tried their best to dissuade Samson, but to no avail. Samson’s retort reflects a self-willed spoiled brat, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”*
- *“But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.” – It is a most unusual statement when it says that Samson’s desire to marry a Philistine woman “was from the Lord.”*
- *This does not mean that it was God leading Samson to marry a Philistine woman contrary to His commandments.*
- *However, since Samson was so fully absorbed in his own little world of “me,” God gave him over to his own lustful desires in order to lead him to an open confrontation with the Philistines as he experience what the Philistines were like and how they were oppressing Israel.*

**Judges 14:5–14 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup>So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him.  
<sup>6</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.  
<sup>7</sup>Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.  
<sup>8</sup>After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion.  
<sup>9</sup>He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.  
<sup>10</sup>So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so.  
<sup>11</sup>And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.  
<sup>12</sup>Then Samson said to them, “Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.  
<sup>13</sup>But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.” And they said to him, “Pose your riddle, that we may hear it.”  
<sup>14</sup>So he said to them: “Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet.” Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

- *On Samson’s trip to Timnah to meet this young Philistine woman whom he wished to marry, he encountered a young lion that came against him.*

- *This is the first time in the story of Samson that records the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him. Samson's first act of strength is not of him killing one of the Philistines or tearing down some great wall, but of killing a young lion that came roaring against him.*
- *On Samson's return from Timnah, he saw the carcass of the lion he had previously killed, and noticed a swarm of bees had made a hive and produced some honey.*
- *During the wedding feast Samson made a wager in the form of a riddle for his thirty Philistine companions to try and solve: "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet."*
- *Samson thought he understood his own riddle but he didn't. In reality the riddle was for him and was the key for him to find true satisfaction and the true purpose for his life. Unfortunately, it would be many more years before he would understand it.*

#### **Judges 14:15–18 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup>But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?"

<sup>16</sup>Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me." And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?"

<sup>17</sup>Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.

<sup>18</sup>So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!"

- *Samson's thirty Philistine companions threatened Samson's Philistine bride if she did not find out the answer to the riddle. Thus she continued to nag Samson every day until she was told the answer, which she in turn told to the Philistine men. Samson was betrayed by this Philistine woman whom he married.*
- *Samson would repeatedly experience this pattern of betrayal at the hands of Philistine women, until it eventually led to his downfall.*
- *"What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" – The solution to the riddle is actually a messianic prophecy!*

- *Who is stronger than the lion? The Lion of Judah! The answer is none other than Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.*
- *What is sweeter than honey? The salvation we have received through Jesus Christ's sacrificial suffering, death, and resurrection.*
- *"Your words are so sweet to me, like the taste of honey!" (Psalm 119:103, ERV). Jesus is the Word! (John 1:1).*

**Revelation 5:1–6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup>And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**

**<sup>2</sup>Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"**

**<sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.**

**<sup>4</sup>So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.**

**<sup>5</sup>But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."**

**<sup>6</sup>And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**

- *John wept when he understood that no one was worthy—either in heaven, or earth, or under the earth to loosen the seven seals and to open the scroll.*
- *Why did John weep? The seals and the scroll represented God's final judgment to bring an end to sin and rebellion. If the scroll was not opened, then sin and rebellion would prevail for eternity and there would be no redemption.*
- *However, then John heard the most wonderful words, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*
- *As John turned to see the Lion of Judah who had prevailed, he beheld the most wonderful sight. In the midst of the throne of God stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.*
- *Who is stronger than a lion? The Lion of Judah who has prevailed.*
- *What is sweeter than honey? The salvation we have received through Jesus Christ's sacrificial suffering, death, and resurrection.*

- *In the midst of our failures and struggles when we think, “Will I ever overcome all this stuff in my life?” we hear those words spoken over us, “Do not weep for behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has prevailed,” and we look and behold “a Lamb as though it had been slain standing in the midst of the throne of God!”*

#### **Judges 14**

**<sup>6</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.**

- *What empowered Samson to tear the lion apart? It was not Samson’s own strength, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of the Lord!*
- *It was not the cunning plotting of the Jewish leaders that led to Jesus’ betrayal and arrest, nor was it the power of the Roman Empire that crucified Him. It was the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled Jesus to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.*
- *Just as Samson tore apart the young lion as “one would have torn apart a young goat,” Jesus also became that sacrificial goat on the Day of Atonement.*

#### **Judges 14**

**<sup>14</sup>So he said to them: “Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet.” Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.**

- *“Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.” – The riddle should have been able to be solved after three days, but still they were not able to understand it.*

#### **Mark 9:31–32 (NKJV)**

**<sup>31</sup>For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”**

**<sup>32</sup>But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.**

- *The disciples finally understood Jesus’ saying about His sacrificial death only after the third day, when He appeared to them in His resurrected body.*

#### **Judges 14:19 (NKJV)**

**<sup>19</sup>Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house.**

- *After Samson had been betrayed by his wife, he began his personal war against the Philistines. However, his motivation was always for personal revenge and never because God had called him to deliver Israel from the oppression of their enemies.*
- *Over the years Samson continued to pursue a life focused on carnality. He continued to visit Philistine women and harlots in a vain attempt to find that elusive satisfaction and purpose that he was missing.*
- *Samson still did not truly understand the riddle that he had posed many years before to thirty Philistine men.*

#### **Judges 16:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup>Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

- *Ultimately, Samson was betrayed by a harlot named Delilah.*
- *Delilah lived in the Valley of Sorek which in Hebrew means the “Valley of Choice Vines.”*
- *Samson was still looking for the satisfaction in life that eluded him. Instead of finding purpose, he found a harlot named Delilah who succeeded in doing what the Philistine armies were unable to do—bring Samson to ruin.*

#### **Judges 16:16–17 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup>And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death,

<sup>17</sup>that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”

- *Samson came to ruin by breaking his Nazarite vows and disdained his consecration to God which the vows represented.*

#### **Judges 16:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup>Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

- *The personal cost to Samson for living a life for his own pleasures was immense. It cost him his eyes and his freedom.*
- *God’s commandments are not restrictive, but protective.*

**Judges 16:22 (NKJV)**

**<sup>22</sup>However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.**

- *In the prison something marvelous began to happen to Samson. While bound in bronze fetters and subject to hard labour, he began to contemplate his life and “the hair of his head began to grow again.” Samson began to renew in a fresh and more sincere way a total consecration of his life to the Lord.*

**Judges 16:23–31 (NKJV)**

**<sup>23</sup>Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: “Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!”**

**<sup>24</sup>When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: “Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead.”**

**<sup>25</sup>So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars.**

**<sup>26</sup>Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.”**

**<sup>27</sup>Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.**

**<sup>28</sup>Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!”**

**<sup>29</sup>And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left.**

**<sup>30</sup>Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.**

**<sup>31</sup>And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.**

- *Samson’s prayer in the last moments of his life reflected not only a desire to fulfill the will of God, but also acknowledged his total dependency on God, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” and “Let me die with the Philistines!”*
- *Samson’s willingness to surrender his life fully to the will of God ultimately meant that his life was not in vain, but resulted in the fulfillment of the God’s calling on his life. Samson’s sacrifice began the process which led to Israel’s deliverance from the Philistines, “And he pushed with all his might, and the*

temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.”

- *Samson finally understood his own riddle and found that true satisfaction and delight is only found in doing God’s will and putting our faith in the Lion of Judah who died for our sins. Out of the bitterness of Jesus’ suffering we partake in the sweetness of His salvation.*
- *Jesus takes even the bitter experiences and failures of this life and redeems them to make them as sweet as honey.*

**Isaiah 55:1–2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup>Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

**John 4:34 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

- *True eternal satisfaction and joy come only from doing the will of God.*

**Hebrews 11:32–34 (NKJV)**

<sup>32</sup>And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

<sup>33</sup>who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

<sup>34</sup>quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.