

SAMSON—PART 1

Judges 13–16

BIRTH NARRATIVE

- nearly a whole chapter is devoted to the story of Samson's birth (Judg 13:1–24a)
 - only two sentences are devoted to his childhood (Judg 13:24b–25)
 - this is the only birth narrative in the Book of Judges
- the story of Jesus' birth follows the same pattern: long birth narrative (Matt 1–2; Luke 1–2) and short childhood (Luke 2:41–52)
- sometimes God plans the deliverance of his people far in advance, as in the case of Samson (Judg 13) and Jesus (1 Pet 1:20)

SAMSON'S LIFE WAS A MIRROR FOR ISRAEL

- he typifies the nation of Israel: (1) special calling at birth, (2) set apart from birth for the LORD, (3) endowed with unique power, (4) chases after foreign women (foreign gods for Israel), (5) enticed and subdued, (6) loss of strength and God's presence, (7) overcome, taken captive, bound, and blinded, (8) return of his strength and God's presence when he asks God for help
 - Israel was to see herself in Samson

TRAGIC HERO

- a comedy is a story that begins in prosperity, descends into tragedy, and rises again to end happily (Esther, Ruth, Genesis 38)
- a tragedy is a story of exceptional calamity—a movement from prosperity to catastrophe (Esau, Gen 25–27; Saul, 1 Sam 8–31)
 - flaws of character make the tragic hero responsible for his own downfall—and to some extent deserving of it
 - all biblical tragedies are variations of the theme of disobedience to God

FIRST OF FOUR DELIVERERS FROM PHILISTINE OPPRESSION

- deliverance from the Philistines *began* with Samson (Judg 13:5), successfully continued with Samuel (1 Sam 7:2–14), failed under Saul (compare 1 Sam 9:16 with 28:19), and was completed by David (2 Sam 5:17–25; 8:1; 19:9)
 - *Seventh Apostasy and Oppression*: the LORD delivered Israel to Philistine oppression for 40 years (Judg 13:1)
 - this was the last and apparently the deepest apostasy
 - there is no record of national repentance or cry for a deliverer during Samson's twenty-year ministry
 - the expected cry of the people for help is absent: the only person to cry out to the LORD anywhere in the story is Samson
- people have acquiesced to bondage: only army mustered by Israel was to capture Samson—not fight Philistines (Judg 15:11)
 - Samson weakened the Philistines and kept them in check, but provided no permanent deliverance for Israel

PERSISTENT CARNALITY

- he married a Philistine woman of Timnah (Judg 14)—apparently God's permissive will (compare Judg 14:4 with Deut 7:3–4)
 - he visited a harlot in Gaza (Judg 16:1) and had an affair with Delilah (16:4–20)
- he embodies everything that was wrong with Israel: weak will, self-indulgence, the dangers of success, sensuality, overconfidence, bad company, recklessness, misplaced trust, and spiritual complacency
 - in spite of his persistent carnality God's blessing of special strength remained with him
(after visiting a prostitute he was able to carry away the city gate of Gaza some 30 to 40 miles (Judg 16:1–3))
- only when his hair was shaved did the Spirit quit empowering him—a careless violation of his Nazirite vow (Judg 16:19–20)

RESULTS OF HIS CARNALITY

- he gave the Philistines an opportunity to glorify their false god—Dagon (Judg 16:23–24)
 - he was blinded, imprisoned, and mocked by his enemies (Judg 16:21, 25–27)
- his last prayer was “Let me die with the Philistines”—a tragic end to a careless spiritual life (Judg 16:30)