

David Rice - Samson

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Had heard a talk on it, and exactly how he's going to approach it is going to be interesting. The title Samson.

Thank you, Brother Evans.

Samson was one of those faithful ones of the Old Testament that we're very familiar with that the Apostle Paul includes in his list of the ancient worthies in Hebrews 11:32, where he lists quickly in passing several of the stalwarts of faith. Among them is listed Samson, and so our attention is drawn to the fact that Samson's course of life and his service was a life of dedication to the heavenly father and that he did exhibit a great deal of faithfulness, and in this life we find for ourselves some lessons and some experiences in his life that testify to experiences which may happen to the faithful in this age. We're going to treat Samson's life this morning as an illustration of the Gospel age church.

We understand that that life was intended divinely to serve as an illustration of the life of the church through the Gospel age in various standpoints and aspects.

So we're going in our presentation this morning just to break it down so you'll know how to anticipate the flow of thought. We're going to look at some superficial evidences that may indicate that his life was a type or illustration of the church through the Gospel age. Then we're going to go into the story itself and review the story from the Chapters of Judges 13 through 16 which contains the narrative. Then we're going to look at some of the particulars of that story and see how they might tie into particular experiences in the history and the development of the church as a whole.

Then we're going to look at some incidental features of the experiences of the narrative of Samson's experiences and see how they might dovetail to a Gospel age picture. Then we're going to look at some lessons of a practical nature from his life, and finally, if time permits, see how the experience of Samson fits into the larger perspective of the whole book of judges.

There are four items that appeal to us as more or less superficial evidences from the life of Samson that he does picture to us the Gospel age church. One is the fact of his birth. You remember that Samson was one of those few in the scriptures that were specifically born by promise. Manoah and his wife had been visited by an angel, and the angel had instructed them that they would receive a son and he would be a specially set aside son.

Especially separated son from the womb to be a Nazirite, and we are reminded by this of the other prominent son that was born of promise, Isaac, and you recall that Isaac, being a child of promise. Paul uses to typify the church, and so, by comparison, if Samson was also a child of promise.

It's not unlikely that he may have a similar identification as a picture or illustration. Secondly, the fact that Samson was himself a Nazirite. That is, that he observed the Nazirite vow not just temporarily. Because remember in Numbers, the sixth chapter where it gives the law of the Nazirite. It could be that you could take the oath of the Nazirite vow for a certain period of time.

Or you could take it for your lifetime, as Samson did and as Samuel did. Also, because in Numbers, the sixth chapter in the description of the Nazirite vow. There seems to be sufficient there to identify the vow as symbolic of the vow that we take. Of full dedication and consecration to the Lord. Therefore, when we find a prominent faithful one in the Old Testament.

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Who had accepted that vow for his lifetime. It's not unreasonable that there may be a lesson here. That he serves to illustrate or picture the class of the gospel age. Which would antitypically be observing the Nazirite vow. Remember that in that vow there were three stipulations, essentially.

That represent to us things pertinent to our vow and to our circumstance. One was not to partake of any wine or any intoxicating beverage, and so we're not to be intoxicated with the spirit of the world. Or the spirit of Christendom. The hair was to grow long, Symbolizing the vow of faithfulness.

And the outward manifestation of their strength from the Lord that they were to appreciate. Thirdly, they were not to be in contact with the dead body, and certainly this applies to the spiritual church. That as far as Adamic death is concerned. Were cleansed and were free and were pure because of justification.

Now, of these, at least two of them were observed faithfully by Samson. Because of his circumstances. He was in contact with death. Because as a judge and a leader of strength and might, he actually did participate in death. Also.

The third element is the supernatural strength that Samson had, and we think here of the supernatural strength that is attributed to the church, and in relation to this, the apostle Paul, you remember specifically mentioned. I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me, and so we think the strength that was given supernaturally to Samson.

Pictures for us the strength and the power of the church through the Spirit, and fourthly, the name Samson itself. Which prudence identifies as a splendid son. Or sunlike or little sun, and since the sun is used in the Scriptures to picture the Gospel.

And In a fuller sense, to picture Christ's head and body as they will radiate in the kingdom. So Samson the little son would testify that identification of the Gospel church this side of the veil. Before they are shining in the strength of their glory in the kingdom.

With this to kind of set our minds as to what might possibly be an application to the life of Samson. We'd like now to review the story itself, and it appears in Judges, chapters 13 through 16. Chapter 13 basically tells us about his birth, and that he was a child of promise that he was to keep the Nazirite bow.

It expresses that twice the angel visited the family that Samson was to come from. We're going to pass over that, except just the last verse. That the Spirit of the Lord began to move at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtael, and it began to move through Samson. That is, through various of his experiences.

But now, really going into the details of Samson's mature adult life, we start with chapter 14, and the first experience that is recorded for us. Is the experience of his getting involved with one who was to become his wife. But different than what you might expect of a faithful hero of the Old Testament. He didn't confine his attention to looking for a wife.

Only to within Israel. He went out to the Philistines, and remember that during the life of Samson, the Philistines were the lords of Israel. So they were going to be constantly in association and connection. Matter of fact, most of Samson's life was devoted to serving to rebel.

Or to weaken the authority of the Philistines, and to encourage the Israelites to more or less stand for their rights as God's people and to defend themselves.

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So as it turns out, he is attracted to a Philistine woman, and it says in verse three. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren. Or among all thy people. That thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?

This was a bothersome point to his parents, of course, that he wouldn't intermarry into the stock of Israel. But verse four says, his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord. That he had sought an occasion against the Philistines. For at that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel. So even this experience, even though it seemed like a wrong direction, was if not caused, and we wouldn't say caused, but at least overruled.

And permitted in seen by the heavenly father to work Out a good purpose.

Now, as the time came forth to have the marriage ceremony. There was the custom to have a feast of seven days. Before the consummation of the marriage itself, and previous to this time, you remember the story that Samson had been going to see his prospective wife, and he had found a lion that attacked him.

And he slew the lion, and the lion's carcass was strewn by the side of the road. On a subsequent pass through the area, you remember he found that this carcass had produced a swarm of bees. Who had put a honey hive there, and there was considerable sweetness in honey which he took and he gave to some of his fellows and to his parents.

And then he used this as the source for his riddle that he propounded to the Philistine companions at the seven days feast, and here was the riddle, verse 14. He said unto them, out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness, and they could not expound, not in three days expound the riddle. Well, the riddle essentially is a statement that you're supposed to explain and understand and say, what is he talking about?

And we think this riddle gives us an insight to the riddle of the divine plan of the ages. Which became known at the first advent, the riddle of the ransom. That out of the eater, out of the strong one would come forth meat and benefit to others, and sweetness to the testimony of the lives of others. Because the lion, we think, pictures the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And out of the one that should be strong and powerful and overcoming, you find a death, and then you find from that death produced the sweetness. That is going to be the restoration between man and God. But this was a riddle. This was something that was just becoming to be understood at the time of the early church.

You remember that finally the Philistines were able to buy subterfuge to break the riddle. Because they found out from his wife what the riddle was, and because the wager had been that if they could understand the riddle, Samson would give them 30 changes of garments. This is one reason why the Lord allowed this whole thing to take place. Because this provided an occasion for Samson to wreak some vengeance upon the Philistines.

He went down to slay 30 men from Ashkelon to get their garments to pay the debt. It seems a rather hazy way to operate. But again, it was supervised by the Lord to provide an opportunity for some confrontation. So that there would be some opportunity for Israel to realize that at least one among them Was standing on the strength of the Lord against the Philistine oppressors, and this would serve to encourage the other Israelites subsequently.

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Well, because of the experience, Samson was quite. With his wife having betrayed him, he was quite upset, so he left, and because the father of this Philistine bride didn't know when to expect Samson back, he gave his daughter to another friend, to a companion whom Samson had used as a friend, and now in chapter 15, we pick up the narrative again. But it came to pass within a while after in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid.

And he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber, and her father would not suffer him to do so. When he found out that she had been given to another man, he was quite irate, and so, in order to vent his fury against the Philistines again, this was the occasion for him to catch 300 foxes, and he tied them tail to tail and put a firebrand between them and sent them out into the standing corn.

Corn or the fields of grain, and while this may seem like an interesting practical joke in one sense, actually it was a rather devastating blow to the Philistine host. Because their grain produce, their crop is now going to be devastated in a rather ingenious way, which will directly lead to a weakening of the Philistine power, and so even this experience was overruled for the purpose of weakening the the Philistines. Because of this action, the Philistines then took retribution.

They said, why did this happen? When they found out the cause, they went to his former wife, his former bride. They burned her and her father and his house, and they were destroyed. Samson, in turn, says in verse seven, I will be avenged of you, and after that I will cease, and he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.

And then, of course, having slaughtered a number of the Philistines, they're going to be looking for him. So he flees. He flees into the rock Etim, which apparently was rather a wilderness area. The rock Etom itself means ravenous, or the word Etom means ravenous bird, according to Cruden's, and it gives you the thought that he went out into a desolate, high, arid area where perhaps ravenous birds would inhabit and had security there.

Then, as the story progresses, the men of Judah, instead of receiving some encouragement from their stalwart of faith, instead of this, they had a weak heart. Instead of rallying around Samson, verse 11 says that 3,000 men of Judah went to the top of the rock Edom to bind Samson and to deliver him over to the Philistines Samson consented, full of faith that the Lord's strength would be sufficient, and so when he was bound with cords and given into the host of the Philistines, remember that the spirit of the Lord came upon him. He broke the cords, and that's the occasion. When he found the jawbone of an ass, he picked it up and slew a thousand men.

After this experience, he thirsted. He had been in a dry, desolate area. He had just undergone physical strain and stress, and he was thirsty. So thirsty, in fact, that he was thirsty as though to die soon.

And in verse 19, we read, But God clave in hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout, and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived, and again this deliverance has, we think, an atypical meaning. Which we will get into shortly afterward.

But just as a detail of the passage in the King James, you might get the idea that the jaw somehow had a hollow spot in it that he had used, and the hollow spot began to sprout forth water, and he could drink from it. We don't think that's really the thought here. The area of the country that he was in was called Lehi. It was called Lehi because lehi means jaw.

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And it was called that because that's where he took the jaw and killed a thousand men. So in this area of Lehi, there was a hollow place, and evidently a spring was provided and bubbled out to refresh him, and so it says that he clicked God crave a hollow place in Lehi, which means jaw. So you read the rendering in King James.

It was a hollow place in the jaw. It was really a hollow place in the geographical area of Lehi, where a spring evidently ushered out and refreshed him. This takes us to the 16th chapter, and here we merely have the expression that Samson went to Gaza and saw there in harlot and went in unto her, and again we have an experience which is not something we could look to as an example of.

Of the kind of character that even some of the other ancient worthies would have manifested. But on the other hand, this also was intended as an occasion against the Philistines, was intended to show an example of Samson's overcoming of the might of the Philistines. Because the Philistines took this occasion when they perceived that he was in their city to lay wait for him, and in the morning they had plans to kill him, and so Samson, being wary of this, rose up at midnight, took the gates of the city on his back, went up the hill and deposited the gates up there, as though to say he had been victorious over their schemes and plans.

And if you wonder why he took the gate of the city, or what possible significance that could have you remember that the gate of a city was used in olden times to signify the control of the city. So even in the Abrahamic promise, there was the promise that Abraham's seed would bless all mankind and that they would have. Let's see. Perhaps we should read the exact words in Genesis the 21st chapter.

22nd chapter. Excuse me.

The end of verse 17. Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. So to possess the gate of your enemy would be to control them, to have dominion, to have authority over, and so this expression by Samson of lifting the gates of the city and carrying them forth would be an expression of triumph, of control of authority over the Philistines.

After this, he became involved with another woman, evidently of the Philistines. It says in verse four that it came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah, and you remember the story well concerning Delilah. That this was to lead to his eventual end. That because of his affiliation with her, finally, by her pleading, after giving her three false answers, he finally divulged the secret of his strength.

That it was in his hair, representing his faithfulness to his vows to the Lord, and should that be cut, then the Lord's strength would leave him. So she arranged by deceit to have that done. The Philistines captured him. They put his eyes out, and they used him as a work animal to grain in a mill, as he had time to reflect and to think.

And as time passed, he realized the folly of his experiences. His dedication and resolve to the Lord was firm and true. His hair began to grow out, and finally he saw his opportunity when he was brought out to make sport before the Philistines. His opportunity to pray finally for another vestige of strength to topple the two pillars of the palace area that the Philistines were upon.

And so it says in chapter 16, verse 30. That he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life, and his father and his brother picked him up and

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buried him.

And he judged Israel 20 years. By the judging of Israel. We think it's referent to the fact that he more or less defended and stood for them, and was their stalwart. Against the Philistines for a period of 20 years during the Philistine oppression.

Well, now let's go back again to of the details of this picture and see how they might illustrate to us something concerning the true church and the history of their experiences from their beginning to their end. In connection with this we'd like to turn to a reprint article.

This is in reprints 4088 and the article continues on to 4089. It's a rather lengthy article on the life of Samson, and we'd like to start just a portion of it in the second column on page 4088, in which a suggestion is given by Brother Russell about some of the aspects of Samson's life as a picture of the Gospel age experience. We'll read just a paragraph. It was when Samson rested his head upon the lap of Delilah that he was shorn of his hair and of his strength a condition of his vow being broken. Similarly, those who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might through their faithfulness to the vows of consecration as followers of the Lord Jesus, are in danger of going to sleep in the lap of the modern Delilah.

A spirit of drowsiness is their spirit of rest from the activities and self sacrifices of their vow a spirit of slumber, and with that spirit goes their strength. Is there not in some respects an analogy between the experiences of Samson and the experiences of the Church of Christ? Consider the activities of the early church and the victories they gained in the name and strength of the Lord. Consider how the adversary entangled and seduced the church, and how for a considerable time the stupor and drowsiness and ease and worldliness were upon those who vowed to be faithful to the Lord in his service.

Consider how the strength of the gospel message was lost while in that drowsy condition in the Dark ages. Consider how the eyes of our understanding were put out even as Samson lost his natural sight. Consider that even since the Reformation time the church has been, to a large extent, under the blinding influence of the adversary, a slave to churchianity in the world, even as Samson was the slave of the Philistines. As their slave, Samson was used instead of a horse to turn a great wheel for grinding their food, and thus indeed the church has been grinding food of a certain kind for many while still a slave to the world and its blinding influence.

And then skipping down a little further, he goes into the closing experiences of his life.

Have we not come to the time when the Lord's people are recovering a little of the strength of the early church, and have we not also come to the time when the worldly wise Are feasting and rejoicing, and giving honor to the God of evolution? And through their higher critics, Denouncing the true Israelites and their hopes and the divine testimonies? Have we not come very near to the time when those who are still faithful to the Lord and to the principles of his word.

Are made sportive by the worldly wise? And have we not come to the time when some, at least, of the Lord's true people. Are ready to put forth all their strength, the strength and their power. Through the volunteer work and the co Porter work, the pilgrim work, and so forth? And then he proceeds to suggest that the last vestige of the church on the earth.

Would be taken roughly at the time of the collapse of Christendom and the old order. Now, we'd like to go into some of these points, and take more or less a clue from these expressions, and see

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how well the experience of Samson Might fit the experience of the church. We're going to suggest in this.

That when we look at the Philistines, we have a picture of the adversary of the church. Primarily from the standpoint of their civil power, and that when we look at the women in Samson's life, and there were three of them. We think of the religious affiliations which the church has had.

Which have proved a trial and a restraint to them, and a deception to them down through the gospel age.

Now, the article starts more or less with pointing out the experience with Delilah, and Delilah is suggested to be a picture of the spirit of churchianity. We'll suggest specifically of Protestant churchianity. Which finally proves to be the downfall of. Of Samson.

Where his eyes are put out, and he's blinded to the testimony of, spiritually speaking, the church will be blinded to the testimony of the truth. But then, as his vows of consecration and devotion, Represented by his hair growing, come back, Representing the fact that at the end of the age. The church would again renew their diligence and their zeal and their faithfulness. Because of the testimony of truth.

Coming back at the end of the age, they would receive strength for a last message. Just as Samson received strength for a last activity, and this message would be the message of the transition from the old kingdom of this world to the new kingdom of Christ, and subsequently their toppling.

With this hint about Delilah. Let's go back to the first Philistine bride that he took. Her name is not given, but you recall that she was from the Philistines and that he never fully was joined to her in the full sense, but that there was a rapport there and he was going to marry this woman. But they never did fully consummate the marriage. We think that this woman would represent the religious association that the early church was involved with, and specifically the Judaic influence in the early church.

And picking up the narrative again in judges, the 14th chapter, excuse me, the 15th chapter, we see that after Samson had left in a rage, so to speak, and then he had come back and burned the fields of the Philistines, that part of the retribution visited upon his wife and upon her father was the burning of their house and the desolation and destruction of them as an entity. This is in chapter 15, verse 6. Then the Philistines said, who hath done this? And they answered, Samson the Son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife and given her to his companion, and the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

And in verse 15 we have an interesting time setting of at least the season of the year for this experience. Chapter 15, verse 1. It came to pass within a while after in the time of wheat harvest that this experience, as we follow a narrative happened. I suggest this is taking us back to the wheat harvest of the Jewish age, in this case showing the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people of the Jewish nation, the affliction of the true church, Samson in this arrangement, and finally, what indeed did happen to the Jewish nation?

Their house was burnt with fire. They were destroyed and overturned. We find the same experience upon Israel, referred to twice, at least in the prophetic word. One of these is In Daniel, the ninth chapter, verses 26 and 27 tells us that Messiah would be cut off after threescore and

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two weeks, and then the people of the prince that shall come, the prince being the Roman general Titus, and the people of the prince's army, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

The end thereof shall be with the flood and unto the end of the war. Desolations are determined. So there was to be the cutting off of Israel after the Messiah's experience, and then again in Revelation, the eighth chapter, verses 5 and 7, describing the events which happened under the first trumpet, which was the first part of the gospel age.

In verse 7 the first angel sounded, and it followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up, and we think that what's Being described here, this overthrow, this social overthrow of a polity at the first period of the Church, is basically what happened to the Judaic polity when they were overthrown in 70 AD.

Now, as we go a little farther, we see the avenging of the Philistines for having done this act against the proposed wife of Samson, and as a result of this, there was a great slaughter, and we think that this suggests to us that the pagan Roman system, which was responsible after all for the overthrow of the Judaic polity, was then wreaked vengeance upon. Then they were destroyed, then they were overturned, and we find that in Revelation, the next series, in the seven stages of the Church, or in this case, the seven trumpets which parallel the seven stages of the Church, we think represents just that activity.

Revelation 8. 8. The second angel sounded, and as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood. We think we have here represented that great mountain of pagan Rome burned with fire and judgments overthrown and succumbing, and finally, of course, what took over was papal Rome from pagan Rome.

But now the next episode in Samson's life sees him fleeing, fleeing to the rock. Etam and as far as the experience of the true Church, Midu see the true Church fleeing into the wilderness in the third stage of the Church, Remember, in the third stage of the Church, and we'll go back to Revelation the 12th chapter to pick up the third stage, the church of Pergamos. It was specifically said to them, Revelation 2:12. These things saith he, which hath a sharp sword with the two edges defining Jesus as having the testimony of the truth.

I know thy works, where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. Thou holdest fast my name. Perhaps a reference to the fact that the true church held fast the testimony of Jesus as the Son of God, while the Trinity doctrine was spreading at this time. Thou hast not denied my faith. Even in those days where an antipas or anti father or anti pope, anti the papal institution was my faithful martyr.

And we think, of course, what's being described here in the third stage of the Church is that there was doctrinal errors coming in the papal system developing, and the true church therefore was cast out, considered to be a martyr, and we think this is the time when Elijah the Church had to flee into the wilderness, where there was a place prepared for her, for him for 12, 60 days, and you remember that Elijah was fed by the ravens. So here we have Samson fleeing now to the Rock Etom the rock, ravenous bird, A desolate wilderness area.

Just as Elijah had to flee out into the desolate wilderness area. But there was sustenance for Elijah and we think pictured here, the ravenous bird, the raven pictured as the rock of relief for the Samson class, the church during this period.

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Now, the fourth experience is when Samson is delivered by his own people back to the Philistines, and then he kills a thousand of them and slays them quite a bit. Now, if we go into the fourth episode of the church in Revelation, there is one characteristic which keynotes that church, and that is death. That there was to be death in that church. This was the time when Jezebel was to be reigning supreme, when those who called themselves Christians and should be supporting the true church weren't, and they were afflicting her.

The time when Samson was delivered up by his brethren. But in this passage in Revelation, the second chapter, concerning the fourth church, this was what was said to happen to them. Verse 23, concerning Jezebel, I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. Now, of course, Revelation is talking about a spiritual death that in Christendom, because of the severe power, entrenched power of Jezebel and her defiling doctrines, there was to be spiritual death in multitudes in Christendom.

They were not to prosper spiritual children and have true spiritual life. But typically, we think this was pictured by the death visited by Samson upon his opponents during the time of his experience.

We pass on to the fifth element of Samson's life, the fifth stage of his life. In Judges, the 16th chapter, there's a decided break between the 15th and 16th chapters, when suddenly we start a new narrative entirely. Then Samson went to Gaza and there saw an harlot and went in unto her, and we think again, we have testimony of the fact that the church had gone down to a harlot. They had gone into the harlotry system of the Antichrist.

That they were entwined and embedded in that system just prior to the time of the Reformation. That's the whole point of the Reformation, to cause a split, a cleavage, to separate her from that evil influence, and we think Samson's involvement here with the harlot pictures the church's involvement now in the great Antichrist system of being captive, so to speak, in this system. In Proverbs, the seventh chapter, verses 5 through 27, we have a long running account about harlotry and about the deceptions of a harlot over a young man, and we think that this passage in Proverbs.

Proverbs 7, 5, 27. Was a typical picture of the affliction of the great harlot of Christendom. Over those that would be deceived among the church into their participation with us. Proverbs the seventh chapter, verse 5. That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

For at the window of my house I look through my casement, and behold, among the simple ones, I discerned among the youth, a young man, void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner, and he went away to her house, and as this observer is watching the whole scene, he sees this young man seduced. He sees her go in. He sees him go in.

And he concludes in verse 26 and 27, she hath cast down many wounded. Yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way of hell, going down to the chambers of death. Now, when this whole passage starts, which we think is typical of the deceptions of the great harlot Christendom, the antichrist system In Proverbs 7:4, there was a hope for deliverance from this problem. Verse 4 says, say unto Wisdom, thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman, that they may keep thee from this harlot.

Remember in Revelation the 13th chapter, where it talks again about the great harlot in the man of sin and the Antichrist. 666. It says, he that hath wisdom, let him count the number of the name. For

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it is the number of a man, 666. But it specifically identifies wisdom with preserving one from being entrapped by this harlot of Christendom.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is 666. So the thought that the harlot in the Scriptures was a picture of the great Antichrist system that the church became entwined with, we think is well grounded. But here we have not just the fact that Samson was involved with his harlot, but more specifically, that if he had remained there until daybreak, until the millennial morning, so to speak, he would have died.

They were lying in wait for him to kill him in the morning. But he didn't. The church was delivered. They were rescued. At midnight, it says, he got up and went out of the city and carried the gates of the city forth with him.

And we think this takes us to the time of the Reformation. We think this would be the fifth stage of the Church, when the Church is delivered out of the Antichrist system, the gates again signifying that they had a victory here, and that they escaped and went forth out of their association with the harlot.

But again there was to be another woman in his life, Delilah, representing to us the flatteries and the slackening of consecration vows which that brought that were put forth by the Protestant Systems. In Daniel 11:32 and 34 we find reference to this Daniel 11:32, 34, such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries. But the people that do know their God shall be strong in due exploits. We have there a reference to the first falling away of the church into the the great Antichrist spirit, and verse 33, they that understand among the people shall instruct many.

Yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, in captivity and by spoil many days, and verse 34, now when they shall fall, they shall be holme with a little help the Reformation that helped the Church deliver themselves from the fall from faith. But then verse 34 continues, and here's the point about the Delilah experience. But many shall cleave to them with flatteries, and some of them of understanding shall fall to try and to purge them, to make them wide even to the time of the end, and there we have a reference to the fact that after the Reformation, there would be a falling away again and a spirit of slumber and of sleep into the Protestant systems, we think represented by Samson's affair with Delilah.

This led directly to the putting out of their eyes of understanding, and we realized that prior to the second Advent time, there was to be an element of the Church that was in Christendom grinding out what grain they could, what sustenance they could, and then from that situation they would be taken and given into a greater insight into the truth. You remember In Luke, the 17th chapter, which talks about the harvest of saints during the Lord's Presence, in verse 35, 2 shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, the other left. If you try to determine that our Lord is drawing this expression or the symbols here from something in the Old Testament, and you look somewhere in the Old Testament to find out about grinding in a mill or grinding out food, you basically only find two examples.

One talks about grinding the manna in the Old Testament, and that would apply to spiritual sustenance, because manna represented the spiritual sustenance of the saints. But the other is the example of Samson, when he was used as an animal to grind out the grain, so to speak, picturing the church in captivity to Protestantism, grinding out what sustenance they could, but from which they would be delivered and rescued at Ord's.

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And finally, the last experience of Samson's life was to see his strength renewed, his vigor reinstated, and his hair, representing the vows of consecration to the Lord, would grow long again, representing the fidelity of the true church to their consecration vows at the second advent, and again we have a scripture which pictures the church as gaining their strength again at the Lord's return and being used for his service. This is in Isaiah 40:31.

Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

The passage in Isaiah 40 takes us in its time setting to the second advent, when the church would be renewed with strength, mount up with wings as eagles, and fly to the carcass of truth and be renewed in their consecration determinations.

Now, there's one other point we'd like to refer to concerning the episodes in Samson's life that seems quite striking, and that, we think ties it also into a gospel age picture. You remember when Samson made his wager with the Philistines at the time of his first betrothal, he made a wager concerning 30 changes of garments, and then he slew 30 men to get the 30 changes. When he lost the wager.

Just Note the number 30, that there were 30 garments involved in a following episode when he sent the foxes into the field, remember there were 300 foxes that he sent out in another episode when he was being bound by the men of Judah. It was 3,000 men of Judah that came to bind him and deliver him to the Philistines, and finally, in his almost his last experience, when he was in Delilah's lap, you remember that he gave three lies before he finally divulges the truth of the secret of his strength. So we find these numbers connected with three constantly recurring. You have the three lies, 30 garments, 300 foxes, 3,000 men of Judah.

And every time there seems to be a specific number mentioned, you can almost count that it's going to be related to three. Exactly why three? I don't know. But the fact that in Revelation a third, a factor of three, continually reappears in the gospel age descriptions, we think is significant. For instance, in the Trumpets.

In the seven trumpets, you constantly see the expression that a third of the trees, or a third of the sun, moon, and stars, or a third of the creatures in the sea died or were made better. In Revelation 12, a third of the stars of heaven were cast down by the dragon. When you get to the harvest picture and the seven last plagues, you don't see the third anymore. You see all all the creatures that were in the sea died, all the rivers were made foul, all the sun was darkened. But the fact that during the gospel age pictures in Revelation, you find only a third at least perhaps links into this concept of three back in Samson's life, which seems so prominent and repetitive.

So we'd like to turn now to some of the lessons that we might learn of a practical nature from the life of Samson.

The Samson serves to illustrate to us one of the requirements for the ancient worthies in the kingdom. As you examine the life and character of Samson, you see that though he was resolutely devout and faithful to his vows insofar as possible to his consecration as a Nazirite, and though he was strong and full of faith in every regard, that the Lord would give him the strength needed for whatever activity he was to enter upon, nevertheless we do see that certain aspects of his character were not rounded out as thoroughly as, for instance, the Christian dispensation would

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require of us, and we realize that in the case of many ancient worthies, this was the case. We think that this shows the requirement that in the kingdom there will be a mediator of a new covenant for even the ancient worthies. Because, lacking the full rounding out of character, lest there should be any side slips, though their physical person will be brought forth perfectly and whole and entire, and, we think, equal to perfect manhood, yet their characters will need some polishing, some rounding, and some developing.

Unless there be any slips or misjudgments or misstatements, we think that it is good that they will be under the mediator of the new covenant.

Secondly, we see in his life faithfulness and devotion and loyalty, and we see in this respect that which the Apostle Paul notes as an example for our own faithfulness and our own devotion and our own loyalty. He was an example for our courage. He stood when all others fled. It reminds us of Paul in second Timothy, the fourth chapter, verse 16, when he says, when he was being withstood by, I think it was Alexander the coppersmith, that at his first answer, no man stood with me, but the Lord strengthened me, and so is Samson.

If you actually try to Put yourself in his position, trying to defend the integrity of the strength of the Lord, and yet on one occasion, even being delivered by your own countrymen back to your enemies. The fact that he had the courage and the fortitude to trust in the Lord and stand for his position is an example that we should emulate in standing against the entrenched enemies that we have in our flesh and in the world and with the adversary.

We also see a characteristic in Samson that we appreciate whenever we see it. Sometimes, however, it leads to problems than it did in the life of Samson. But there was just an utter direct simplicity in the whole format of his life. He had many flaws and many problems. He made some misjudgments, but there was such a direct, simple honesty of his actions that we can emulate.

This subtlety and deceit were no part of his makeup.

The lesson of Samson and his esteem in God's sight as an ancient worthy shows us that God is looking for the devoted heart and forgives much of our foolishness. Just as with the example of the patriarch David, a man after God's own heart who committed some gross sins and yet was esteemed very close appreciated by the heavenly father. But we also learn from Samson, as we learn from the life of David, that although the Lord forgives much of our foolishness, there also are consequences in the flesh for our foolishness. Samson had to suffer much for his own problems, so we also suffer sometimes for foolishness sake. But in the final analysis, it is our heart condition that the Lord is to be judging our eternal status on.

There is an expression from the reprints that Sister Ruth has put on our inconspicuous place in our home that I often think of and that is a constant reminder to us in keeping our heart faithful to the Lord. It reads, keeping the heart implies a critical examination of every motive of life, and we think that that is something that if we could keep always in mind, would help us to overcome in our decisions and our judgments concerning our actions.

We'd like to go now to the last stage of our presentation and see how the testimony of Samson's life fits into the larger picture of the Book of Judges. We have suggested that Samson was a picture of the Gospel age church from beginning to end. That his follies and his mistakes, his temptations and his trials and weaknesses exhibit a lesson of what happened to the Gospel age church and some of their testings, their trials, their follies, but finally their faithfulness and their deliverance and

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their strength.

In the whole context of the Book of Judges. We think this picture of the Gospel age church fits very well. Now consider the two narratives in the Book of Judges which follow the life and experience of Samson. You have first, following the narrative of Samson, the story about Micah and the priest or the Levite that he took to be a priest unto him, and this was the grandson of Moses that we heard about last evening.

And you remember that the tribe of Dan came upon this person and took him to be a priest for their tribe, and the tribe of Dan had this one as a priest to them, and he was an idolatrous priest. As the worship proceeded down through history, it became more and more idolatrous until the time of the taking away of Israel at the captivity. So the history tells us that all during the period of the kingship, and much a good part of the period of the Judges, the tribe of Dan was in this idolatrous worship condition, a false worship. We think this typifies the experience of those who will ultimately be of the second death class, the second death in the church, that those who go into a spirit of idolatry, of attraction to the world, or anything that would take away from their consecration, ultimately will find themselves debarred from life at all if they persist to the end in this situation.

And directly because of this, we think In Revelation, the seventh chapter, when they list the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel, you notice that one tribe is missing, that is the tribe of Dan, suggesting to us that Dan really was a picture of the second death class. In the prophecy that Jacob gave of his 12 sons before he died, you remember the prophecy about Dan was the most incriminating, that he shall be as an adder in the way that bites the horse's heels and causes the rider to fall backward, suggesting the experience with the Dan class of being a venomous viper, so to speak, in their interplay with the true church of Christ, that they are mingled with them because they are spirit begotten, at least at first. But they fall by the way and become an agent of the adversary, and they will be of the second death class.

But now if we go into the next experience, the next passage in the Book of Judges, we come to the experience of the tribe of Benjamin. It describes how the tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed, and they were almost destroyed because there was a gross iniquity in the tribe. There was a gross iniquity that was brought to their attention, and all the tribes of Israel looked to Benjamin to see if they were going to correct the iniquity that had arisen in their tribe.

If they were going to take those men, the sons of Belial, of, of wickedness, and have them punished for their deed. But they didn't. The tribe of Benjamin did nothing about the iniquity that these men had perpetrated, and as a result, the other 11 tribes gathered against Benjamin, and finally, as the result finally happened, Benjamin was nearly exterminated.

But because they wanted to preserve them as a tribe, they finally had some arrangement Whereby the remaining 400 men of Benjamin could find wives and perpetuate the tribe. The lesson here, we think, deals with the Great Company, that the Great Company class would be destroyed because of their lack of faithfulness, because there is iniquity in the Great Company that they don't take the opportunity to correct of their own accord, and so they have to undergo a purging of the flesh, and as Paul says, the one that he turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved. So the tribe of Benjamin, we think, represents the Great Company class, almost exterminated they would be under any normal circumstance.

But their spirit is saved, they are preserved. They are brought forth as an agent of the Lord in the heavenly kingdom. After all, after their purging experience, destroying the flesh. So we have here in

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these last three narratives of Judges, typical illustrations or narratives that show the three classes of spirit begotten in the Gospel. The true Church, the second Death, and the Great Company.

Now that concludes all the classes that are developed by the begotten of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel age. Now, if you go to the first part of the Book of Judges, you see three other long narratives, and all of these narratives are commonly assigned to be pictures of Armageddon battle in some way, shape or form. We don't have time to go into the details of the pictures. Just list the three narratives to remind you what they were.

One was the struggle of Gideon and Barak against Jabin and Sisera. One was the struggle of Gideon against the Amalekites, and one was the struggle of the people of Israel effectively against Abimelech, who had usurped authority, and again, as our time is fast expiring, we'll just suggest what we think these three, three pictures, all thought commonly to be pictures of the Armageddon struggle, how they interplay in the Book of Judges. We have here three pictures to show the three elements of nominal Christendom that are brought together in the Armageddon struggle.

We have the three nominal classes of the Gospel age, enumerated in Revelation as the beast, the false prophet and the dragon. So we have in the Book of Judges first an account of the history, the development, and then the destruction of the three nominal systems of the Gospel age. Then we have three narratives which give us the history, the development and the final judgment of the three Spirit begotten classes of the Gospel, the Church, second Death, and great company. So we have in the Book of Judges a rather comprehensive outline of the activity of the Gospel age, both in its three nominal classes and the three Spirit begotten classes.

The Book of Judges, of course, describes things as they were in Israel's history before the kingship, and so we think even this fits into yet a larger picture of showing the period of the Judges as a Gospel age illustration prior to the kingdom of Israel, which would picture the kingdom ministration, and so we think that the experience of Samson fits not only into the context of Judges, but even into a larger context, a very orderly sequence of types and illustrations concerning aspects of the divine plan.

But to us, as we look to Samson and note his faithfulness and his devotion to be strong in the Lord, we seem reminded of one admonition of the apostle Paul that should stick with us whenever we consider the actions in the life of Samson, and this we find in First Corinthians, the 16th chapter, verse 13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Be strong.

Thank you, brother David.

Samson.