Study of Samson - Part 3

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[0:00] The Book of Judges And verse 14, chapter 14 and verse 14.

And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.
Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. Now last week we saw how Samson began his ministry under the hand of God.
He began it at around 30 years of age, having lived for nearly 30 years as a Nazarite consecrated to God. And he didn't run before he was sent.
It was the Holy Spirit who moved him. And he began his ministry under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit of God. And that's brought before us in the very last verse of the previous chapter, where we read that the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtol.
[1:46] So right on the border of Dan and Philistia, the Spirit of God moved on Samson, ready to deliver him, or to make him a means of deliverance from the yoke of the Philistines.

And the first act of his ministry was to go down to the town of Timnath in chapter 14 and verse 1. And that we saw was an Israelite town which was now occupied by the Philistines.
And there he was led to a daughter of the Philistines. And there he was led to believe that this was the woman whom God would have him marry.
And we read that he brought this before his parents, and they were not understanding what the will of God was in the matter. But it was God's Spirit who moved him to that.
And we'll see in a moment. Because this was the means by which God was going to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Now just as Samson was going down to the wedding feast, God prepared him for his ministry.
[2:53] And we saw how that happened through the lion roaring at him. And Samson killed that lion with his bare hands. The lion we saw was representative of the evil satanic power of the Philistines.

They were represented by a lion even as the devil is represented by a lion. And the lion roared at him, which was to indicate the satanic opposition that Samson would arouse once he would begin to antagonize the Philistines.
But Samson slew that lion with his bare hands. And that in itself indicated that Samson needed nothing, no help of man at all, to perform the ministry which God had given him to do.
All he required was the Holy Spirit of God. And it's written that it was the Holy Spirit descending on him that made him able to tear apart the lion as he would have torn apart a kid goat.
And God was telling him by that particular incident that if he would trust in God and look to the Lord, God would enable him to destroy the Philistines or to remove their yoke away from Israel.
[4:11] In other words, he fought this lion with his bare hands. And he fought him with the Holy Spirit. And the only visible sign of that was his long flowing seven locks of hair which spoke of the presence of the Holy Spirit upon him.

And we also saw that afterwards, when he returned to that lion, he found a carcass. And in it, bees had made some honey. And that was again a token to him from God that if he would have the courage and the strength to slay the lion, then he and others would feed upon the honey of God's word.
Because what is sweeter than honey? Well, only one thing, and that is the law of the Lord. As Psalm 19 tells us, it is sweeter, sweeter than the honey that falls from the honeycomb.
So the blessings of the gospel would be theirs if they would slay the lion. Now I want to turn with you to the marriage itself, and particularly to the feast that takes place at the marriage.

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In verse 10, so his father went down unto the woman. Now that must have been something to do just with the etiquette or the customs of the time. It was Samson's father that went down first.
[5:29] And then when Samson arrived, he made there a feast, for so the young men used to do. And this wedding feast, like every other wedding feast in that part of the world, lasted seven days.

Now that was a long time, and guests would arrive from many different parts, and they would perhaps stay a day, or stay for two days, and then they would go away. But for the whole seven days, there was a feast in Timnath, where Samson was marrying this woman.
Now Samson had brought no male companions with him. It was customary to have what you would call the children of the bridegroom. And interestingly, in the New Testament, you have a couple of references to that.
They were male companions. Something like a best man, except that there were a lot of them that the groom would have during the wedding. But you'll notice that Samson doesn't have them.
They are brought for him by the Philistines. Because we read in verse 11, that it came to pass when they saw him, that they brought 30 companions to be with him.
[6:39] Now you can't help but feel that on the one level, there is some kind of self-protection here on the part of the Philistines. Isn't it interesting, the expression that you have here, when they saw him, they brought 30 companions.

Now Samson was a formidable sight. It was one thing to encounter him. It was something too, just to see the man. There he was with this vivid symbol, with his seven flowing locks of hair, of a man who was consecrated to God from his youth as a Nazarite.
And although his strength came especially from God, there is no denying that he would be to some extent built accordingly. To some extent. And when they saw him, and knew him as Samson, and when they marked him, they brought him 30 companions.
And so on the one hand, they're saying, well, they will be your companions. On the other hand, it's a kind of protective guard for themselves. But you'll notice, interestingly, at no point, and this truly is interesting, at no point does Samson call upon the help of anyone in his whole ministry.
I think I'm right in saying that. Never once do you see him fighting with anyone else. Why? Because he is messianic. He is messianic in his strength.
[7:53] He must trample the winepress alone. It is his own battle, and he must do the liberation. And all he has are foolish instruments.

Sometimes the jawbone of an ass, or something of that kind. But there is never the help of man, because he is to do this work of liberation himself, reminding us that Christ, our Redeemer, had no helper.
When he fought the real battles, there was none to help. Right at the close, even the three closest disciples, they fell away, and he went to the cross on his own.
As Isaiah 63 reminds us, I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none to help. So, Samson, in many respects, put the fear of God into these people.
They recognized right at the beginning that there was an unusual presence with them. Now, while they were gathered at the feast, right on the first day, Samson makes a proposal.
[8:58] And he makes a proposal in the form of a riddle. And he puts the riddle out like this. He says, I will put forth a riddle. If you can discern the meaning within the seven days of the feast, he says, I will give you 30 sheets.

Now, that would be better translated 30 shirts. It means inner garments. 30 shirts or inner garments, and 30 change of outward garments.
But if you can't declare the meaning of the riddle, then you shall give me 30 sheets and 30 change of garments. And they said to him, put forth your riddle that we may hear it.
So this riddle becomes the central part of the whole wedding feast. And in fact, everything that progresses here in the life of Samson arises out of this riddle.
So I think it's important for us to understand the significance of this riddle. And let me look with you as the Lord enables us at three things. First of all, the riddle itself.
[10:07] Secondly, the way in which the Philistines respond to the riddle. And then thirdly, Samson's vengeance against the Philistines.

The riddle, the response, and the vengeance of the Redeemer. Now, first of all, the riddle. Now, what is a riddle?
Well, a riddle is just a way of saying a thing. It's a way of presenting a truth in an obscure way.

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A way that's quite attractive, quite interesting, but still dark and veiled. It's designed to arouse the interest of people and to awaken their intelligence, to think around the riddle, to see what it could possibly mean, to get past the veil of it, to get to the heart or to get to the kernel.
Now, apparently, well, some people maintain anyway that this was a fairly standard kind of thing to happen during these wedding feasts, that it was quite often for people, quite common for people to amuse themselves intelligently in this way by presenting riddles which people were meant to solve.
[11:24] And in the ancient world, people used to pose riddles a lot. I'm sure many of you will have heard of the famous riddle of the Sphinx. And there are many other kinds of riddles too.

In fact, the riddle of the Sphinx might be connected with all these things here, but I don't have much time to go into that. But a riddle was quite popular in the ancient world. It was the truth veiled in a certain kind of way.
Now, this is a special kind of riddle that Samson has here. And we could call it quite simply a gospel riddle. It is a gospel riddle.
And by a gospel riddle, what I mean is this, that it is the message of the gospel or it is the truth of God concerning judgment, concerning salvation, presented in a veiled kind of way, a figurative or a parabolic way.
It is hidden. But if you desire to find it out, you can find it. If you press into it and if you strive to enter into it, you will discern it.
[12:32] But if you do not, then it will hold its secret against you. Now, you'll notice that the gospel is often presented in a kind of riddle form in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

You would almost be right in saying that the further back you go, the more of a riddle you find the gospel presentation. For example, it's not too long since we looked at this one. The very first announcement of the gospel in the Bible, Genesis 3, 16, God turns to the serpent in the garden of Eden.
Because thou hast done this, he says, thou art cursed. And then comes the riddle. I will put enmity between your seed and the seed of the woman.
You shall bruise his heel, but he shall crush your head. There you have the gospel and it is presented in a kind of riddle.
It is in a veiled kind of way. But if you press into it, and if you desire to press into it, you will know it and you will understand it. Now there's a way in which you could see the whole of the Old Testament as being a gospel in a riddled kind of way.
[13:51] In other words, the gospel in the Old Testament is presented in parables, in symbols, and in types. For example, let's take the clearest picture of the gospel in the Old Testament.

We would understand it as being the type, the sacrifices that went on in the tabernacle. Everything there in the tabernacle, the altars, the animals slain, the bloodshed, it all spoke of God's way of redemption, but in a kind of riddle.
It was in a kind of mystery. There was a veil drawn over it, but still, if you desired, with the help of God, you could pass into it and you could discern its meaning, what the blood meant, what it symbolized, what the altar spoke of, what the incense spoke of, what the priesthood spoke of, the ark of the covenant, everything became clear if you but sought it and asked the Lord for grace to see it.
And in fact, when Paul is speaking about the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians 3, he describes it as being veiled, as being veiled.
And interestingly, the Lord Jesus Christ himself began at one point in his ministry to speak in parables. Now, if you work out the order, you'll find that he didn't speak in parables immediately.
[15:11] His first preaching of the gospel was very, very plain. It was only once opposition had been aroused that he began to speak in parables. And the disciples didn't understand why.

They said, why are you speaking in parables? And the Lord made plain why. It was to help the disciples to understand, but, and here's a solemn truth, it was to partly put a veil upon what he was saying to those who were opposed to him.
See, you don't normally think of the parables like that, but you read Matthew 13 very plainly and you read Mark 4 and you'll find it clear there that the Lord began to teach in parables. It was a kind of two-edged sword.
It was like the pillar of cloud. It gave light to the Israelites, but it darkened the Egyptians. It was a kind of veil that was dropped over. These things are spoken in parables.

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Now, from there I want to go somewhere else. In the Old Testament, now and again this word riddle appears. And I'll tell you the best example to illustrate what this riddle means.
[16:24] And that is the Queen of Sheba. We're told in 1 Kings 10 that the Queen of Sheba went to Solomon to ask him hard questions concerning the name of the Lord.

Now, I want you to follow this carefully because I think it puts a lot of light on some things in the Old Testament. She went to ask him hard questions. literally, in the Hebrew, riddles.
Riddles. That's the same word. She went to ask him riddles concerning the name of the Lord. What does that tell us?
It tells us that the Queen of Sheba, 2,000 miles away from Solomon, that she had heard of this God in a kind of riddle form.
Many sayings had come to herself from her forefathers that had something to do with God, that had something to do with justice and judgment, perhaps even with a serpent, with a redeemer, with a mighty conqueror who was going to come to do away with sin and to destroy the curse.
[17:35] These riddles had come down even to herself. And we can easily understand, as the gospel is spread throughout the world in these Old Testament times, how bits and pieces of it would filter to the people, sometimes in the form of a riddle.

And you know, it's very interesting to go into the myths and legends of people all over the world. You do that, if ever you have time to do it, go back into the mythology, the myths and the legends, and you'll find that some of them are so like the gospel.
Why? Because it was from the gospel they came. The myths and legends of the world are often very like the gospel because they are remnants of the gospel riddles that have filtered and changed somewhat right throughout the world.
She heard them. Who knows but that she even heard the first one that had been given in the world that the seed of the woman would crush the seed of the serpent. And the Queen of Sheba is interested enough to go and find out what that means.
And that takes us to what the riddles are all about. I mean, you might say, well, why was the gospel put into the form of a riddle? Well, there's a few answers to that. In the first place, there's one way of arousing the mind and of interesting the mind to go after it to discern the truth.
[18:55] And that's what it did for the Queen of Sheba. Sheba. She was so concerned to find out what God had to say that she crossed all these miles to meet with Solomon and to speak with him.

And these riddles remind us too that we are really ignorant of what God has to say. Riddles remind us, gospel riddles or the veiled truth reminds us that we don't know the truth.
It reminds us that it belongs to none of us by nature. None of us deserve to know the truth. You don't, neither do I. I mean, you might say, well, why put it in the form of a veil?
I would say, why put it there at all? It's God in his mercy putting it there even with a veil over it to encourage you to go behind the veil. The veil is itself an attractive thing that says come beyond and find out what's inside.
It is God in his mercy giving it to us even with a veil over it to teach us that we don't understand it. And then again, there's this and it's connected with it. It's in the form sometimes of a veil so that we will go to God to get the veil taken off.
[20:08] God. If you feel your inability to understand the gospel because of this kind of veil, then go to God for your understanding because it is God ultimately that gives you an understanding of the gospel.

It's God alone that can give you the kind of mind that receives the truth and embraces the truth. God alone. No man by searching can find out God. No man can work out salvation for himself.
It is God that opens and applies the gospel to us. And therefore the gospel was given in riddles. But before I leave that, let me say this.
Paul says in the New Testament that that is a characteristic of the past. That is a characteristic of before Pentecost and before the coming of the Holy Ghost.
No, he says, if our gospel is hidden, it is not hidden because it itself is veiled. Not at all. He says we have the full light of the truth. We have God's word clearly before us to explain and expound who Christ was and what he did.
[21:20] And if this gospel be veiled, he says, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In other words, if you can't see the gospel tonight, it is not because there is any defect in the New Testament gospel.

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It is not because there is a veil over it. There is not. The veil, Paul says, is over your eyes. If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing, in whom, he says, the God of this world has blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest they should see the glorious gospel of Christ. No defect in the revelation. The defect is in the organ that sees the revelation. It is in my eye. And that is why you must pray to the Lord for grace to see the gospel, even though it shines bright and clear.
What is the riddle? Out of the eater came forth meat. Out of the strong came forth sweetness. You can see that this is based on the experience that he had with a lion.
That spoke of the gospel to Samson. Samson knew that God was going to deal with sin and that he was going to bless his people. And he puts it in the form of a riddle to present it to the Philistines.
[22:39] The lion is death. And once death is killed, then life will come. Sometimes, I suppose all preachers of the gospel wonder why maybe a certain text is laid to their heart.

I can't help but wonder myself why I had to preach not too long ago about death the devourer being destroyed. Well, I think it fits very well in here.
I had no intention of doing this at that time. But it fits very well in here. Death being destroyed and life coming out of that. That's what happened on the cross.
Death was destroyed and Christ gave us life. And that's what you have here. Out of the lion, the devourer, the strongest devourer of all, God brings life.
Honey, the blessings of the gospel and the word of salvation. In other words, Samson is bringing the gospel to the Philistines.
[23:41] Now, the Philistines are the neighbors of Israel and don't forget it's impossible for two countries or two peoples to be side by side without infiltration, one way or another.

There's no doubt that the Philistines knew who Israel worshipped and they knew how Israel worshipped and perhaps they knew even many of their riddles or had heard many of their riddles or gospel sayings in a veiled form.
And here is one of them presented by Samson. And you'll notice that it is a kind of core gospel riddle. It's got the whole of the gospel in it. that if sin and death is destroyed then honey will come. The blessing of God will flow. Now, I want to point out one or two things in connection with this. First of all, I think this helps us to understand why God moved Samson to marry this woman.
Now, I know a lot of people are not too happy with saying that God moved Samson to marry this woman, but he did. And the way the verses run, it is just quite plain that he did.
[24:49] The spirit of God began to move him and he went down to Timnath and saw a woman. It is all of the spirit. All of the spirit. And this is why. Because God, before he deals with the Philistines in a way of judgment, will first present the gospel to them.

In other words, this act of marrying the Philistine woman is an act of evangelism. God is going to use it to bring the truth to this people.
Why? Because God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God would have it that the Philistines would bow their head in submission and kiss the sin before in his wrath they perish from the way.
Is God not saying to you what he's saying to everyone. Why will you die, O house of Israel? Why do you persist tonight in going down a path of sin when you could be going down the path of righteousness?
Why? The gospel is presented before you to turn you and to arrest you, especially before the hand of judgment falls. And it's interesting that God is just about to bring his hand of judgment upon the Philistines, but before he does it, he brings the gospel to them first.
[26:15] Samson, in other words, is presenting this attractive riddle and it's a serious business for Samson. This isn't spoke for him. I know people say that this was a kind of amusement.

Not so for Samson. Samson takes a gospel message and he brings it before the Philistines to see if they will be attracted to discover its meaning, to get to the bottom of it, to learn and in learning to be saved.
If they would but accept Samson even, who he was, what his hair spoke of, and what his ministry of redemption was, then they would be saved. That is the test.
Accept Samson. Accept the riddle. Seek the answer. Find it and be blessed. Or else reject Samson. Be devious in dealing with the riddle.

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Reject it and be cursed. And this brings us back in a way to the Queen of Sheba. She goes all the way to Solomon because Solomon is God's man upon the earth.
[27:17] And the Philistines should have gone to Samson and accepted him as the Messiah of God for his own generation. And they should have been saved through means of this gospel.

But no, that is not what he did. And in connection, what they did, and in connection with that there's this, I think it is right to say that God never judges anyone or never punishes anyone without first calling them to his own grace and to his own mercy.
Herod descended to the pit. Yes, he did, but it was with the voice of John the Baptist ringing in his ears. Pilate himself went down to that place, to his own place, where Judas went.
But he went there with a dream of the Holy Ghost given to his wife, ringing in his ears. Ahab himself went to his own place.
But that was not till after a bow, an arrow from the bow of the king had smitten him between the shoulder blades, the one part where he was not protected. God spoke to him, spoke to him through Micaiah the prophet, who told him the truth.
[28:35] God never judges without an opportunity to repent. And none of you, and I pray none of you will go to a lost eternity. But if you go, you go with the gospel in your ears.

You go with the gospel presented, one way or another, and God will hold you accountable to that. And make no mistake, the Philistines could turn around and say, this people, are these the blessed people, the people who are in subjection to us.
And you too could say, well was I supposed to listen to them? Was I supposed to listen to that church? Well yes, my friend, God expected the Philistines to listen to Israel.
However weak they had become, however paralyzed and remiss they had become, God expected the Philistines to hear the gospel through them. And so it still is today.
And I've said this before, but I make no apology for saying it again, never use the imperfections and the blemishes and the sins of the visible church of Christ as an excuse to keep you back from hearing the gospel in that church, or to keep you back from embracing the Christ that is proclaimed in that church.
[29:53] God wouldn't accept that as an excuse from the Philistines, and neither will he accept it from me or for you. God, through a weak vessel, proclaims the gospel, and it is to you and to me to hear it, to obey it, and to embrace it.

So Samson proclaims a gospel riddle. How do the Philistines respond? Well, they respond like this. Look at verse 14.
He said unto them, out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth's weakness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.
So that's the first thing. After three days, now it was a seven-day feast, but after three days they couldn't expound it. And then you have this in verse 15. It came to pass on the seventh day that they said to his wife, entice your husband that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire.
And then we're told in verse 17 that Samson's wife wept before him the seven days while the feast lasted.
[31:11] And it came to pass on the seventh day that he told her, because she lay sore upon him. These things are hard to reconcile. For three days they couldn't guess it.

Then on the seventh day they went in to Samson's wife. And then we're told that Samson's wife wept for seven days. And then she told the riddle, or he told her and she told the Philistines.
How do you piece that together? Well you piece it together like this. There's no inconsistency or contradictions in God's word. The proceeding is like this. She weeps for the whole seven days because right from the beginning she wants to know the meaning of the riddle.
When she heard Samson stand up and in front of that vast assembly call out out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness, she wanted to know.
And it's going to become clear as we go on that she was never really too allied with Samson anyway. And there's an important point there. Samson did love her but she did not love him.
[32:20] She was never really close to him and from the moment the riddle was given she wanted to know that riddle and she wept for the whole seven days. She wept wanting to know what that riddle meant and Samson said I have not told it to my mother or to my father whom I have known and loved all 30 years of my life.

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I have not told it to them. And the reason of course he kept it was because it was a test. He was wanting to test the Philistines so he was not going to tell anyone. But on the third day something happened or I should say on the fourth day.
the Philistines kept drawing a blank as far as the riddle was concerned. So on the fourth day you could say they made the first approach to Samson's wife. And they began just to lean on her a little bit as much as to say well you're one of us and you should find out that riddle and you should tell us what that riddle means.
And by the seventh day that had become a full-born threat. They came in to Samson's wife and they said entice him to tell the riddle or you and your father will be burnt.
Your house will be burnt down. And so on the seventh day she really presses him sore. She vexes him. And finally on the seventh day he tells her the answer to the riddle.
[33:44] What is stronger than a lion and what is sweeter than honey? immediately she goes to the Philistines. And then we're told on the seventh day just before the sun went down in other words in the nick of time the Philistines stand up at the feast and they triumphantly proclaim this.

What is stronger than a lion or what is sweeter than honey? And Samson knows immediately what has happened. Why? Because he has only just revealed this to his own wife.
And that is when they find out what it is. And it doesn't take him too much to put two and two together. And I'm quite sure as well that they used the same form of words exactly as he had given to his own wife.
In other words they didn't just say a lion and honey but they said what is stronger than a lion and what is sweeter than honey? It wasn't just the right answer it was in the right way and in the right form.
And Samson says if you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have understood the meaning of this riddle. Samson discerns that they had no understanding of the gospel and that they had no desire to understand the gospel and he knew that they had got it by foul means.
[35:06] Now I think that's very important to understand here because just as Samson presented them the gospel so the way that they responded to it was their response to the gospel and what is their response to it?

Well they just trivialized it. They played a game with it. All that mattered to them was getting one up on the strong man. It meant that they were winning over the Israelites and that was all that mattered to them.
The actual riddle and its substance didn't matter but just to win the contest to put Samson to shame and to defeat the Israelites that was all that mattered.
They were too proud to come and say to Samson we don't know the meaning of these spiritual things can you tell us what they are? Too proud for that. They just wanted to win the game.
Do you know people like that? Well friends there are people like that. There are people and they will read just to know. There are people and they will read just to argue.
[36:15] And there are people who argue with you not to know or to find out but to show that you don't know as much as you think you know. There are people who argue with you about the things of the gospel just to bring you to a point where you feel that maybe they know more than you and you'll be so ashamed and you'll wilt that you'll never talk to them about the gospel again.

And maybe it works like that. Maybe you feel so ashamed that they knew more about you than this thing that you feel well what's the point of me talking to them anymore. The gospel to people like that and to people like you is just a game if that's the way you work with it.
If it's just a riddle in the sense of being a game so that you can match your wits one person or another what does it profit you? It profits you nothing. You are taking the greatest gift of God and the greatest revelation man was ever given and you're playing around with it just to score points to gain cheap victories.
And yes you might have the pleasure of sending away a humble child of God feeling that he's lost an argument but what has that done for your soul?
Nothing. Much for your ego? Yes. Nothing for your soul. Nothing for your salvation. That is how they treated the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[37:40] That is how they treated it. It was just a game. One up over Samson. That's all that mattered. I hope my friend and pray that there are none of you like that here. People who just like to win arguments on spiritual things.

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That is to no avail. And if that's the way you deal with the gospel well God's judgment will find you out. It will find you out. And by the way Samson learned here exactly what kind of wife he had. And of course he learned and so did Israel learn what kind of people the Philistines really were. Even when they allied fairly close they had no love for the gospel and no desire to know about it. So what happens? Well Samson becomes the means now of bringing God's judgment upon them. God's judgment comes through Samson in various stages until finally he brings down the temple with his bare hands.
We'll come to that another time. But interestingly even as these judgments come there are still little tokens of mercy here and there.
[38:54] Little opportunities for God, from God, to come to himself. Now I want very quickly just to take the three preliminary judgments for you here as we read them together.

And the first one occurs in verse 19 here of this chapter. Chapter 14 and verse 19. We're told that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he went down to Ashkelon and he slew thirty men of them and took their spoil and gave changes of garments to them which had expounded the riddle.
Now there's something going on here that's quite important. Samson leaves the feast and he travels 24 miles, now that's a substantial distance, and he goes to one of the major Philistine cities.
They had five big cities. This was the one on the coast called Ashkelon. And there he slew thirty men and he took their changes of garments there and then and brought them back to the wedding feast.
Now I've heard many people say, well how on earth can you justify something like that? He just walks into this place and he kills thirty men and takes the clothes off their back and brings them back to the wedding feast.
[40:12] Well it's not as simple as that. It's not as simple as that. And it's not as simple as that for these reasons. First of all let's take the word garments.

The inner garments and outer garments here mean very very fine and expensive clothing. It is a form of clothing that was very highly valued in the ancient world.
In fact, for example, when Naaman came to bring gifts to Elisha after he was healed in the Jordan, he brought gold and silver and changes of fine linen.
In other words, they were that valuable. They were the clothes that were worn on festival occasions. When people were required to be at their very very best, if they possessed these garments, inner and outer garments, they would wear them.
Now, the next thing is this. These 30 men were obviously gathered together. I mean, it wasn't just a matter of going through a street and finding 30 people who happened to be dressed like this.
[41:20] obviously, they were gathered together at some particular occasion or some particular festival. Now, it is a well-known documented fact that the Philistines used to gather frequently in the many temples which they had strategically placed in Gaza, Ashkelon, and the five major cities altogether.

They would gather frequently for their festivals dedicated to Dagon, their god, or to their other gods. And on those occasions, they would be arrayed in these finest clothings of all.
And interestingly, this is pretty near harvest time. We'll see that from chapter 15. And just as we have our thanksgiving harvest, so did they have their thanksgiving to their own god at harvest time. Remember in chapter 16, at the close of this story, when Samson brings down the temple, the people are having a feast there in honor of the god Dagon.
Now that's what's going on in Ashkelon. Samson goes to where some particular idolatrous festival or feast is kept, and he slays thirty men who are worshipping in these fine garments, or who are attending that festival in the finest garments.
[42:39] In other words, the Messiah breaks into the heart of idolatry in Philistia, Samson and there he slays thirty men and he leaves them naked, because it's interesting that these men looked in their own clothes, as their own glory, and as their own beauty.

But what are they before God? Filthy rags, and these clothes in which they both stood before their gods, Samson strips these clothes off, and he takes them to give to the people at the wedding feast.
In other words, that in itself is an act symbolic of gospel judgment, that when people are in the midst of sin, when people are in the very midst of wallowing in iniquity, like Belshazzar, the night in Babylon, when they took out the vessels, and they were blaspheming and everything before God,

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God came in and dealt with it.
Well, that's what happened. Samson appears from the middle of nowhere, in the middle of their festival, and he comes with all the strength and power of Christ, and he slays thirty of them, and takes away that in which they boasted, and he brings that back to the feast, and he gives it to those who are there.
That is an act of judgment, judgment on idolatry. Now, notice again in verse 19, it was the spirit of the Lord who did it.
[44:04] The spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew these men. So it's an act of righteous judgment. And very quickly I want to mention another one.

I think I'll leave the third one because my time has run, but I'll just mention the other one. Now, chapter 15 and verse 1, we read that it came to pass within a while after, in the time of the wheat harvest that Samson visited his wife with a kid.
Now, what that says is this, after he had slain the people in Ashkelon, he went home. he had been betrayed and he was bitterly hurt, and he went back to his father's house.
But after a short while, he goes back down to Timnah, and he desires to be reconciled, and that in itself is a gospel spirit again. He even brings a kid goat, and that was a standard meal to eat for a time of feasting.
He wished the family, as it were, to be brought together. But when he goes in the door, her father says, I thought you hated her, he says, and I gave her to the one who was your best man.
[45:15] And he says, take her younger sister, she is fairer than she was. Does that appeal to Samson? No. And that's a spanner in the works of people who say that he was blinded by lust at every point.

That does not appeal to Samson at all. Not at all. In fact, he sees this as a further sign of what the Philistines have done. And it appears, really, that the whole of the Philistines were agreeable to doing this.
Because we read that Samson's wife was given to his companion whom he had used as his friend. In other words, to further shame him. To shame him, she is given to the man he had used as his friend or companion.
And again, the spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson, and he does something remarkable. He takes 300 foxes, notes the time of the harvest, and foxes here might mean jackals.
It's the same word that's used. The jackal was about a 15 inch high or maybe two foot high animal. That's a bit like a fox. But the jackals, they go around in packs.
[46:19] Samson caught them, and the word caught in Hebrew means to catch with a snare. He caught them, and he kept them all together. And then at one point, he started to unleash them.

He took them in pairs. He tied their tails together around a burning torch. In other words, he took a torch with a kind of resin on it that burnt. He took that torch and he tied the two tails of the two jackals and sent it out into the Philistine fields, into their corn.
And he did it at strategic points, right through the valley of Soreg, right across that border between Israel and the Philistines. Here he would let out a couple. At another strategic point, he would let out another couple.
And so on until 300 or 150 pairs of jackals were let out. Now the jackals are notoriously afraid of fire. So what did they do?
Well, one would want to run into a hole somewhere and the other one would want to run into another hole somewhere. And they're pulling in different directions and all they're doing is they're going through the standing corn and the sheaves that the Philistines had gathered.
[47:29] And before long there's a fire, blaze, and roaring right along the Philistine harvest. We're told that even their olives and their vineyards were set on fire.

Why? Well, the main reason is this. It is God's grace that gives any of us a harvest and we'll say more about that on Thursday, God willing.
It's God's grace that gives any of us a harvest. God has been dealing hard with his own church for a time and the Philistines have had their harvests. But God will never allow his own church to be trampled underfoot.
Yes, he will hide his face from them for a moment in his wrath. But now he's going to show the Philistines that Dagon is not the one who's giving them their harvest. That he is the Lord of the harvest and he will use his Messiah or his Samson to destroy their harvest harvest and to make

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them realize their poverty and their need so that even in the midst of this judgment they would still call upon the name of God.
And isn't God gracious in that? How many judgments and providences come into our lives and in them all God is saying be reconciled to me. Yes, they look so hard and they are hard.
[48:52] But still it's a wound with a view to heal. are not even God's judgments. Do they not come with mercy in their tale? Do they not come with a voice that says come to me?

God flattened their harvest and pretty much ruined their economy for a whole year by the hand of this man Samson. I think it's interesting just to point out I don't think this is particularly taught here but it's very interesting that God uses the agencies of the enemy to destroy the enemy.
The fox in the Bible is always I think always used to symbolize cunning and evil especially against God's church. In the Song of Solomon we have the little foxes spoiling the vines of God's people but here Samson takes them, ties them together and they destroy the Philistines.
It symbolizes every kingdom divided against itself can't stand. And ultimately Satan's kingdom like that it's pulling in different directions all the time. It's pulling in completely different directions and it will destroy his own vineyard.
It will destroy his own harvest and God will be seen to be triumphant. Now I'm going to leave the third judgment and I'm going to look at it in connection with what happens when Samson flees back into the tribe of Judah because he's really awoken.
[50:23] the wrath of the Philistines and he's going to have to encounter them as he has never done before. May the Lord bless our thoughts on his word. Let us pray. Our gracious God, will thou enable us to close in with the gospel while we still have opportunity to do so.

For it is presented to us in the clarity of the New Testament revelation and help us to recognize that Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light.
May we desire to know him and may we seek thy light and thy truth that we might come to him, that we might find him and walk in the light as he is in the light.
Help us not to trivialize these things, but to realize their utmost importance. For a greater than Samson is here, one who offers us honey himself.
But if we do not listen then we are told in the Psalms that he has a rod of iron in his hand with which he will chastise the nations. Oh, help us to embrace him in mercy, lest we come under his wrath.
[51:46] For Christ's sake, Amen. Amen.

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