

SAMSON AND THE LION

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Reading: Judges 14

When the Children of Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua, they did not conquer all their enemies. Some of the nations of Canaan were *very* strong and were not overcome for hundreds of years. As long as the Israelites obeyed the Lord, their enemies had no power over them, and they lived at peace. But when the Israelites did evil, their enemies became strong and destroyed their peace.

During this time of the Judges, the Israelites had no regular leader or king. When a great leader was needed to help the people, the Lord would raise one up, and prepare him for his work, and fill him with the Divine Spirit. Samson was such a man. He was prepared by the Lord to help Israel.

For forty years the Philistines had been the masters of the land. But when Israel turned again to the Lord for help, He prepared a new leader who would overthrow the Philistines. The Lord sent an angel to tell the woman who was to be his mother that Samson would be born. One day when she was in the field, the angel appeared and told her that even though she was old and had no other children, the Lord was going to give her a child. This child should be a Nazarite promised to the Lord. He should never have his hair cut, nor should he ever drink wine, nor eat any unclean thing. When he grew up, he would begin to deliver the Children of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Everything happened as the angel had said. The baby was born, and they called him Samson. As he grew up his hair was never cut, and it became very long. He became one of the strongest men that ever lived. The Lord gave him this great strength so that he could fight against the Philistines and deliver Israel.

Although Samson was so very strong in his body, he was not always so strong in living a good life. He would sometimes disobey the Lord's commandments. After he was grown, he wanted to marry a woman of the Philistines, although the Lord had said that the Children of Israel should only marry other Israelites. But Samson had fallen in love and wanted to marry a Philistine woman.

One day on his way to see this woman of the Philistines, Samson was walking along without any weapons when suddenly a young lion roared and sprang out at him. Now most people would turn and run away. They would be afraid of the lion, but Samson was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. He rushed at the lion and caught it with his bare hands. He tore it asunder so that it was killed and could not hurt him at all.

Several days later, on his way to the wedding feast, Samson found that some bees had made a hive in the lion that he had killed. He reached in and found some honey there. He ate some and gave some to his mother and father. Then he went on to the feast which would last for seven days. Thirty Philistine men were his

guests. As they ate and talked, he made a riddle of the thing that had happened to him. He said, "I will give you a riddle. If you can answer me, I will give you thirty new garments, but if you cannot answer me before seven days are up, then you must give me thirty garments. Now this is the riddle: 'Out of the eaten came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.'" The Philistines thought about it, day after day, but they could not get the answer.

Of course, what Samson meant was that out of the lion had come something good to eat. Out of the strong lion had come the sweet honey. But the Philistines did not know the answer to the riddle. They were afraid that they would not learn the answer in time, and they would all be obliged to give Samson a new suit of clothes. So they said to his new wife, "Find out the answer to this riddle from Samson, and tell us." She went to him and cried and said, "You do not really love me, because you asked them a riddle and did not tell me what it meant." Samson was angry. He said that he had not even told his parents. But she coaxed him, and teased him, until he told her. Then she went and told the Philistine men. They came to Samson and said, "We know the answer to your riddle. What is stronger than a lion, and he is an eater of meat. And that which comes forth from the lion must be honey, for what is sweeter than honey?"

Samson then grew very angry, for he knew that they had tricked him. And the Spirit of the Lord filled Samson, and he went down to fight against the enemies of Israel. He came to a city of the Philistines and there he killed thirty men and took their garments. He gave these garments to the thirty men who had tricked him to find out the answer to the riddle, and then he went back to the land of Israel.

The Lord teaches us many things in the Word, and He wants us to learn something important through this riddle which Samson asked the Philistines. It has an important meaning for us today. If we think from the Lord and try to understand what He wants us to know, then we can discover what He meant.

Sometimes our evils come up against us as strong as a lion, just like the lion came up against Samson. They want to overcome us and tear us apart. Sometimes we must face a lion of stealing, or of lying, or of disobeying. These evil desires come and fight against us in our minds. Sometimes they seem powerful like a lion, and we want to run away from them. But, if we fight from the Lord, then His Spirit will fill us, and we can overcome these wicked lions by doing what the Lord tells us to do. Then that lion of temptation is destroyed. And when we overcome an evil in temptation a wonderful thing happens. The Lord is happy that we did what was right, and the angels are happy. Because we have overcome, the happiness of the Lord and of the heavens comes down into our hearts and minds, and we, too, are made happy because we have been strong and brave. From overcoming a lion of evil, we have the sweetness and happiness of heaven, as Samson drew honey from the carcass of the lion he had slain.