

Judges 16:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Analysis

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This verse belongs to the Samson cycle addressing Samson, Delilah, and final victory in death. Samson represents both the heights of God-empowered strength and the depths of human weakness through moral compromise. His Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21) set him apart as holy to God, yet his persistent violations of this vow—contact with dead animals (14:8-9), seven-day feast (likely involving wine, 14:10), and finally revealing his hair's secret (16:17)—demonstrate progressive spiritual decline.

Theologically, Samson illustrates how spiritual gifts don't guarantee spiritual maturity. The Spirit of the LORD came upon Samson repeatedly, giving superhuman strength, yet this empowerment didn't produce corresponding moral transformation. His attraction to Philistine women (14:1-3, 16:1, 16:4) directly violated God's command against intermarriage with Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). This demonstrates that God can use flawed instruments for His purposes, but this never excuses or endorses sin.

Samson's final prayer—"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen

me" (16:28)—shows genuine repentance and renewed faith. His death accomplished more than his life (16:30), suggesting that even spectacular failure can be redeemed when we return to God. However, the tragedy is that Samson's potential was largely wasted through moral compromise. His story warns believers that consistent holy living, not merely spectacular spiritual experiences, characterizes faithful discipleship.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to Samson, Delilah, and final victory in death. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1 Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of

apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about Samson, Delilah, and final victory in death reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּלֹךְ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	בְּיַתְרֹךְ	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ
came down	Then his brethren	H3605	and all the house	H1004	his father	H1	and took	H853				
H3381	H251					H5375						
וְיָמַר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	
him and brought him up	and buried	H853				H996	him between Zorah	H996				
H5927	H6912					H6881						
וְיָמַר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	
and Eshtaol	in the buryingplace	H6913	of Manoah	H4495	his father	H1	And he judged	H8199				
H847						H1931						
וְיָמַר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	
Israel	twenty	H8141										
H3478	H6242											
וְיָמַר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	
twelve	years											
H853												
וְיָמַר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	וְיָמָר	אֶת	יְמִינְךָ	
twelve	years											
H853												

Additional Cross-References

Judges 15:20 (Judgment): And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Judges 13:2 (Parallel theme): And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

Judges 13:25 (Parallel theme): And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.