

## Delilah & Abigail

In Ephesians 6 we are given the command to "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

(Eph 6:10-12)

Fighting this battle is an everyday occurrence. This lesson is a contrasting look at two women, Delilah and Abigail, and the different responses that each made in their lives.

Before we begin our study, I believe that we need to understand a few things about Samson. For most of us as parents or grandparents, we have told the story of Samson to our little ones. But have we really taken a good look at who Samson was? Was he that great hero - that strong warrior?

### The Nazarite

The primary meaning of the Hebrew verb "nazar" is to separate. A Nazarite was one who separated from others by taking a vow to abstain from certain worldly influences and to consecrate oneself to God.

Among the Jews, the vow was an option for most persons; it could be taken for a short period or for life.

Nazarites expressed their dedication to God by:

1. Abstaining from all intoxicating drinks and grape products (Numbers 6:3).
2. Refusing to eat food regarded as unclean (Numbers 6:4).
3. He would not let a razor touch his head, but would let his hair grow naturally as a crown to God (Numbers 6:5).
4. He would not allow himself to draw near a dead body, even a member of his own family

(Numbers 6:7)

When the specified period of consecration was completed, the Nazarite could appear before the priest for a ceremony of release.

Nazarites who broke their vows could be restored only by observing specific restoration rites (Numbers 6).

Some of the persons that took this vow in the Old Testament include Samson and Samuel.

Samson's parents were told by an angel of the Lord that their son would be a Nazarite until his death (Judges 13:7).

In the New Testament, it is because of his self-denying life style, that John the Baptist was believed to have been a Nazarite.

## Background History

Samson could have been one of the greatest leaders in Israel since Joshua, IF he had been true to his Nazarite vows and to God. He had been chosen before birth to do a mighty work but instead chose to lead a life of selfishness and uncontrolled passion. In a few chapters that deal with his life the phrase, "And the spirit of the Lord came upon him" is written. As I read about Samson, it was confusing to me how the Lord's spirit would come upon such a man and allow him to do the things that he did. For example, Judges 14:19 says, "And the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil..." Why? Ashkelon was one of 5 major Philistines cities and the people were enemies of Israel. But why did he kill these men? (Judges 14:12-14) At his wedding he had challenged a group of men with a riddle. The men could not figure out the answer so they went to Samson's bride and threatened her and got the answer from her. Samson did not go to Ashkelon to protect Israel and God did not command Samson to kill the men of Ashkelon. Samson killed them to pay off a debt!

So exactly what could this phrase, "And the spirit of the Lord came upon him" mean? It troubled me to think that the Lord's Spirit would come upon him, and then with God's spirit he could go to a neighboring city and kill men for his own personal gain. So I prayed and did some research on this phrase.

In the church today, when we say "he has the Lord's Spirit with him," we mean that the person we are referring to is close to God, a spiritual person. The kind of spirit which we are talking about when we use that phrase comes only through obedience and righteousness.

In the account of Samson's life the phrase, "the Spirit of the Lord" came mightily upon him is used three times in the Book of Judges (14:6, 19; 15:14); but in each case it is in reference to his demonstration of great courage and physical strength, not necessarily referring to the spirit that he carried.

His strength was a gift given by God and sustained by the Nazarite vow he was under. It is believed that when the author of Judges used the phrase, "the Spirit of God," he did not mean it as we use it today but was actually referring to Samson using his gift of strength. In other words, the writer was giving credit to the Lord, the source of Samson's strength by writing, "the Spirit of the Lord" came mightily upon him.

Samson was a mighty man, who went freely among the enemy doing what he desired. If he wanted to date their women - he did! If he wanted to visit their cities - he did! In the book of Judges chapter 15, when the men of Judah, afraid for their village, talked Samson into giving himself up and then bound him and turned him over to the Philistines, Samson picked up the jaw bone of an ass and killed 3,000 Philistines. In Judges chapter 16 when he went to see a woman at Gaza (a Philistine city), they locked the gate. The next morning not only did he tear down the doors of the gate but also the posts and bars, put the whole thing on his shoulders and carried it to the top of a mountain. (It is believed that the hill was Mt. Hebron, which would be a distance of about 30 minutes). How great was the desire of the Philistines to capture Samson? I'd say it was on their list of top ten things to do!!

## Delilah

The story of Delilah is found in the 16th chapter in the book of Judges

**16:1-5** Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver while Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver, the average price, at the time, for a slave. Delilah was offered 1100 pieces of silver, which gives us a little insight as to how much they wanted Samson. The lords of the Philistines were the rulers of 5 major Philistine cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. The name Delilah means "the weak" or "longing one."

**16:6-8** Delilah took them up on their offer. It is believed that seven green withs are new vines.

**16:9-10** But Samson had lied and Delilah was unhappy.

**16:11-14** Again, Samson lied and Delilah was unhappy. In those days, the judges wore their hair divided into 7 locks on their head. The web referred to is believed to have been a primitive loom, and when she fastened his hair with the pin that she used in weaving, he awoke out of his sleep, walked away with the pin and the web in his hair.

**16:15-16** Delilah was now into some serious nagging!! So much so did she nag him that he was ready to die, "his soul was vexed unto death."

**16:17** Finally he told her what he believed was his secret, his uncut hair. Samson had ceased being a Nazarite in his heart long before he ceased to be one in his outward appearance. The strength of Samson was not in his hair but that God was with him. He gave credit to himself and not what God had done through him.

**16:18-21** Delilah called for the Philistines. They paid off their debt to her and she caused Samson to fall asleep on her lap. He slept (?) rather soundly as he did not wake when his head was shaved!! He thought that it would be as the other times - he would go out, shake it off. His strength was a result of the Nazarite vows he had taken. Delilah's treachery and the shaving of his hair was the final betrayal of his vows. "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

**16:22-31** The consequences of our sins always prove to be great lessons! Samson suffers every indignity. His eyes are put out; he is loaded with fetters of brass and set to the lowest prison work of slaves. And now when Samson has a chance to show the glory of his God - he asks God to make him strong only one more time - that he may avenge the loss of his eyes! It seems that God allowed him this, maybe not for the reason Samson asked for, but quite possibly because in His protection of Israel, He used Samson to slay their enemies!

Delilah's nagging wore Samson down until he gave in to her. Isn't that how Satan works with us? Tempting us until we give in? This same tactic that Delilah used against Samson is one that Satan uses against Christians.

In the story of Abigail, we find a sharp contrast to Delilah. While Delilah gave in to the temptation of material wealth, Abigail chose to be a peacemaker, who used her means to stop a battle and bring peace into a situation.

### Background History

King Saul sought to kill David. He had taken David's wife Michal (Saul's daughter) and given her to another (1 Samuel 25:44). He had also banished David from access to the tabernacle and the rituals of sacrifice that were of great importance to the Hebrew people. David, who was now forced to hide from Saul, lived among the enemies of Israel, the Philistines, and sent his parents to live among the Moabites for protection. Besides losing his best friend, Jonathan, David had lost his wife, his relatives, his country, and the ordinances of religion. I Samuel chapters 24 and 25, recount the flight of David from King Saul.

In I Samuel 24:10, we see a little bit of the character of David that we should admire. Although anointed by God's prophet, Samuel, to be King of Israel, and even though Saul is seeking to take his life, David will not lift his hand against Saul saying, "...I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed." David knew that it was the Lord that had called Saul and it was the Lord's responsibility to remove him. (Is there a lesson in this about silencing priesthood?)

### Abigail

The story of Abigail is found in I Samuel chapter 25.

**25:1** Samuel died and was buried "in his house" at Ramah. The house that is referred to, is believed to be a tomb for the dead. In 1824 a missionary Rev. W. Jowett reported seeing on Mt. Lebanon in Syria a number of small solid stone buildings that had neither doors nor windows. They were the "houses of the dead." Every time a burial took place a wall had to be opened to place the body inside.

**25:2-3** In the wilderness of Paran in a place called Maon lived a harsh man whose business was in Carmel. He had obtained for his wife, a woman of good character and beauty. (Interesting note - that he was a Calebite - Caleb was one of the spies that gave a good report about the Promised Land). The name Nabal means "fool."

**25:4-8** When David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent 10 of his men to Nabal to ask for food. David was trying to bargain - they had left Nabal's possessions alone and for this favor they had granted him, they asked for food. This was a fair offer. After all, Nabal had not suffered any losses. In the sending of his men for food, David, according to custom, was also expecting some respectful acknowledgment for what he felt he deserved.

**25:9-13** The honor of one's name is of most importance among oriental society. The reply Nabal gave to David's request was very insulting. When his men told David that Nabal had refused, he became angry and took 400 of his men to kill Nabal - leaving 200 men behind.

**25:14-17** God intervened to keep His servant from sin. One of Nabal's men learned what was going to happen and he told Nabal's wife, Abigail. Belial is a Hebrew word referring to wicked people and wickedness. In 2 Corinthians 6:15 it is used in reference to Satan.

**25:18-20** Without telling her husband, Abigail gathered together provisions to take to David and his men. She met them coming down the covert of a hill (the hollow of a hill). Her courage was not shaken!!

**25:21-22** The phrase used in verse 22 is rather shocking to us because our society uses this as profanity. However, this phrase is a Hebrew idiom meaning "every male". Not only was David threatening to kill Nabal but also every male connected with him as well as everything he owned.

**25:23-27** With an Oriental greeting of respect (Israel is on the Asian continent) Abigail addressed David. She told David that it was God's Providence, which had sent her, and she pronounced a blessing on David and his men and offered what she has brought not only for David but to his men as well.

**25:28-30** Abigail told David that she knew him to be a godly man fighting the Lord's battle. She pleaded with David and in so doing used the images of a bundle and a sling. It was her way of saying that David's precious life was bound up with God's and would be spared. While the lives of his enemies would be flung from David and from God as a rock is flung from a sling.

**25:31** In closing, she requested that when God had fulfilled all His gracious promises that David remember her.

**25:32-35** David in listening to Abigail, realized that what he was about to do was wrong. He took what she had brought, and she returned.

**25:36** Upon her return home, Abigail found Nabal drunk.

**25:37-38** The next morning, when he was capable of understanding, Abigail told him what she had done. It is believed that the phrase, "his heart died within him and he became as a stone," was a way of saying that he suffered a stroke or heart attack. While it seems as if what Abigail told him had caused this attack, in verse 38 it is clear that the fatal attack was brought by God.

**25:39-42** When David heard that Nabal had died, he blessed the Lord for keeping him from wrongdoing.

**25:43-44** David married two women at this time. Although Abigail is mentioned before Ahinoam, it is Ahinoam who was the mother of David's oldest son, Amnon. She is always listed first when his wives are named. In marrying Abigail, David now had a wife through

whom he had received spiritual advice.

Abigail stopped a battle by using kindness. She gave gifts to her husband's enemy and was brave enough to confront him about what the consequences would be of what he was intending to do.

As followers of Jesus, we are involved in a spiritual battle. Satan, the present god of this world, tries to blind our eyes to his existence. There is a beautiful side to evil and he is hard at work trying to make sin seem "as normal." We can just look around us in these last days and see how busy he is.

Obedience to God is a choice that we make everyday. It is easy to look at the comparison of these two women and see that Abigail was successful while Delilah was not. But how many of us are like David? We become angry and ready to strike, unaware that what we are caught up in is spiritual warfare.

You know the end of the story don't you? We all do. We all know who will win the battle between good and evil. So does Satan!!

Deuteronomy 30:15-19

Ephesians 6:10-13