

Study 5 Judges chapter 13-16 In The World But Not Like the World

During the period of the Judges Israel continually mixed their belief in God with the beliefs of the Canaanites and the nations living around them. After several cycles of moving away from following God, followed by oppression, followed by crying out to God to send them a deliverer, to God raising up a judge to lead Israel, God then anointed Samson. Despite already raising up eleven judges Israel continued to return to “doing evil in the eyes of the Lord” (Judges 13:1). Because of Israel’s actions God delivers Israel into the hands of the Philistines for forty years (13:1). Sadly, no mention is made of Israel repenting and asking God for help this time. Israel had wandered so far away from God that it appears they no longer saw any need for repentance. There was no cry for deliverance from the Philistines. But despite this, by grace, God took the initiative and raised up Samson. God had not abandoned His people.

Read Judges 13:1-5; 13:24- 14:7; 14:20-15:8; 15:20-16:6

1. The word “Nazarite” comes from the Hebrew word meaning “separated” or “dedicated”. Why is this significant when we consider the state of the people of Israel at this particular time in history? Do you think Samson himself fulfilled his calling as a Nazarite?

“There is in truth no such thing as harmonious coexistence between church and world, for where there is no conflict it is because the world has taken over” (Michael Wilcock)

2. Do you agree or disagree with this quote by Michael Wilcock? Explain
3. Why do you think God wanted to seek an occasion for Samson to confront the Philistines? (Judges 14:4).
4. How do you think Christians today should live in the world and interact with the world as salt and light while at the same time not being completely like the world? (In areas such as: morals, values, politics, business, caring for the poor and disenfranchised, movies and other forms of entertainment). As you answer, remember Jesus’ summary of the Commandments: to love God and to love people (Matt 22:39).
5. What does Delilah and Samson’s relationship reveal about their characters?
6. Why do you think Samson revealed the secret of his strength to Delilah? What does this tell us about Samson’s priorities and his relationship with God?

Throughout the Book of Judges we read about God using imperfect people to accomplish His purposes. Sometimes God used people despite their failings. At other times God used people like lefthanded Ehad and fearful Gideon BECAUSE of their failings so that people will see God’s power working through His people.

7. What might God be calling you and or your Life Group to do for Him?

Notes:

Question 1: Remember that the people did not initiate by crying out to God for help, but it was God who graciously initiated and then ensured their deliverance from the Philistines?

Question 3: It sounds as though Israel had completely accommodated to the culture of the Philistines. God is forcing Israel out of their complacency.

Question 5: Like a boat in water, Christians are called to live in the world. And, as a boat cannot have water from the outside enter into it, so too Christians must be careful not to allow the morals, the values and the ways of the world to influence them otherwise they could "sink". When society's morals, values and ways are in conflict with God's Word, Christians will be in conflict with culture.

This does not mean Christians cannot mix with non-Christians. We must be IN the world in order to share the wonderful Good News about forgiveness and life through Jesus Christ. Knowing how to be in the world but not overly influenced by the world will look different in different cultures and times. But there will ALWAYS be some conflict between what we read in Scripture and our culture. People are made in God's image (Genes 1:26). The cultures people create therefore will have some good in them. However, people are also fallen. And because we are fallen sinful creatures so too are the cultures we create. Christians can agree with culture when it's values, morals and ways agree with God's values, morals and ways. Christians must always confront culture when culture's values, morals and ways are in conflict with those revealed in God's Word.

At the time of Samson God wanted His people to follow and worship Him alone. Israel appears to have fully embraced Philistine culture: intermarriage, religious practices, moral standards. At a time when God wanted His people to be separate from the other nations, Israel disobeyed and followed the morals, and ways of the world around them.