

## Sam and Samson in Ashkelon

Jdg 14:1-4, 14:19-20, 15:9-16, 16:1-3

Use NIV

To The Village Church, 07/30/2006

To "I am the Way the Truth and the Life" Church, Ashkelon, 6/17/2006

Main Idea: The Father uses Samson, and us, because of Christ, so worship Him.

Meditation:

Angry Samson

by Robert Graves

Are they blind, the lords of Gaza  
In their strong towers,  
Who declare Samson pillow-smothered  
And stripped of his powers?

O stolid Philistines  
Stare now in amaze  
At my foxes running in your cornfields  
With their tails ablaze,

At swung jaw-bone, at bees swarming  
In the stark lion's hide,  
At these, the gates of well-walled Gaza  
A-clank to my stride.

Post-sermon song theme: Oh the wondrous grace, that saved a wretch like me.

Benediction:

May the God of Samson, look upon Christ and so refresh you; May He so never discard you, but incorporate you into His Kingdom-building in New York.

Charge:

Go forth in self-denial, that you not be shown to be an ass as He uses you.

## I. Through the Gates of Ashkelon

A) The Great Ashkelon, city that of the Philistines

About **1200 BC**, a great sea people arrived on the shores of Southern Palestine...

During the first half of the second millennium B.C., Ashkelon was one of the largest and richest seaports in the Mediterranean. Its massive ramparts formed an arc of earthworks extending over a mile and a half and enclosing a city of more than 150 acres, with probably 15,000 inhabitants, nestled beside the sea.

Scallions came from there: Next time you bite into scallion, you're biting into greatness.

Lawrence Stager of Harvard found the oldest arch in the world! The gate was constructed during the Middle Bronze Age, around **1850 BC**.

It was still intact—So maybe used during Samson's time also?

**14:19-20**—this gate faced the North, so would have been gate he went through.

Israel Nat. Parks system does a superb job of preserving such sites while providing access

Dim: **8 feet** wide x **11.5 feet** high arch. Then passageway **15m** long and a similar arch

over what was once a gate. So tough to break in: Samson did whatever he wanted to.

I was alone, thinking of the last verse of the Bible re Ashkelon: **Zep 2:4-7** "Ashkelon shall be left in ruins."

I made a muscle with both arms, shouting "Aargh!" Do you want to know why I did that?

## II. Samson and Me

A) Samson was an ass

*He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it.*

as in **14:1-4** - wanting the woman seen at Timnah.

No patience, no wise counsel, certainly no parental advice. Samson was an ass.

Number of things to see in the story of Samson:

Sin is bondage.

Lust consumes your time and your thoughts and your energy

B) But He was still used by God

➤ **14:19, 15:14** HS still came upon him.

This tells us that the story is not so much about Samson as it is about God.

Holy War then and now.

Note on Israel.

➤ **15:16** Ed Clowney: God was speaking in Samson's boast:

God would use Samson even though He was an ass.

C) I am Samson

Why make the muscle under the arch? Look into my heart. I see the same thing. At a particular time of discontentment. *I want what I want when I want it.*

I take good presents God gives me and misuse them for my own ends. I spend the very gifts of the Spirit on myself and my own desires.

I look at, sometimes, the selfishness with which I treat my wife and children.

➤ Correcting my children in a way that wasn't necessary.

I corrected in the way that I did was because I want what I want when I want it.

➤ In the gym, of scoffing at the older guy. What would have been right.

I am Samson. I am an ass.

D) And Yet... He still uses me.

The HS of God still comes upon me, to do his work.

God still uses me to build His Kingdom, to advance His work, to be part of the game.

Because of my goodness? No, In spite of my lack of it.

What an amazing God. If you don't represent the company well, you just get fired.

That is why I made muscles under the arch.

➤ Hard for translator to get "Arrrgh" when preaching this in Ashkelon.

### III) Because of Jesus Christ

How come? Because of Jesus Christ.

#### A) Christ took Samson's "ass-ness" on the cross

God looked ahead to the cross and so could generously grant victories to Samson. He had blessing for Samson in his fighting because Christ took his punishment.

Hence, at end of Samson's life, He calls upon God for his strength.

Even though Samson faced some hard times because of his lack of self-control, God never abandoned him, never discarded him or cut him off from the plan.

#### B) Christ took our "ass-ness" on the cross

Because of Christ, God incorporates me into His work, in sometimes striking ways.

Because of Christ, God will use you. Not because of your inherent goodness.

➤ What do you need to pry your fingers from? God would spare you Samson's hardships.

His love is better than wine.

#### C) Two sites at Lehi

One more passage: **Jdg 15:17-20**:

"When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi. <sup>18</sup> Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the LORD, "You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" <sup>19</sup> Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore, and it is still there in Lehi."

God in character: Instead of discarding His own, He will graciously refresh us.

Do you see his heart? Because of Jesus, He will give you and I to drink too, whether you are an ass or not.

That is why I made muscles under the arch. Because I rejoice in the God I serve.