

The Stronger Man



Reading: Judges chapters 14,15.

Luke 11.21-22 "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

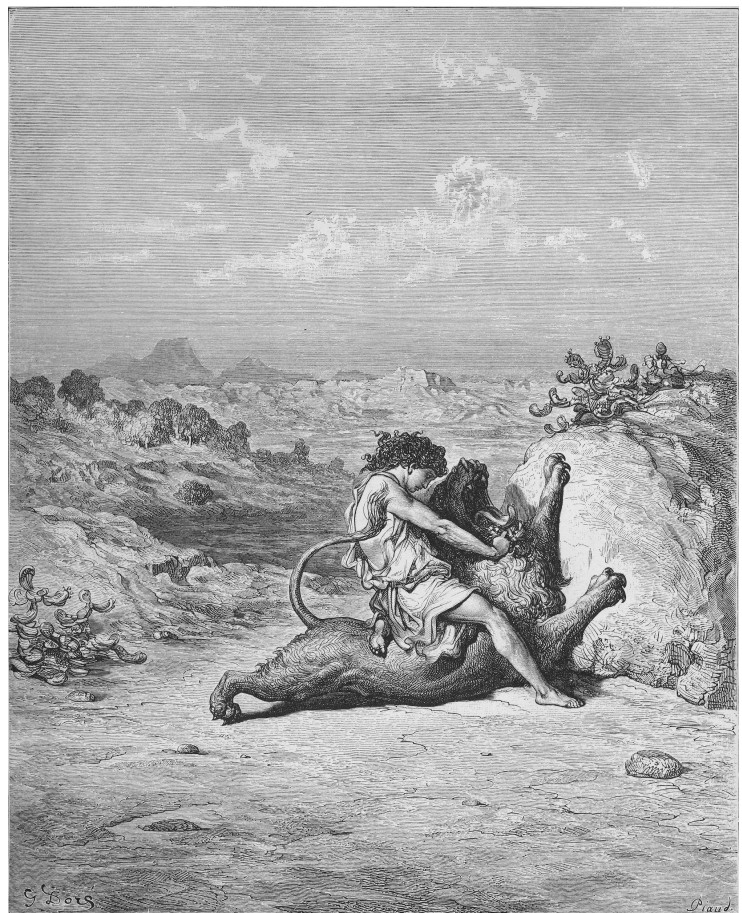
In the verses above we have a 'strong man', and a 'stronger' man. I've no doubt these verses mean for us to recall the strongest man in the Old Testament scriptures - Samson, who we're going to consider. However, these verses actually relate to Satan as the strong man, and to Christ as the stronger man. Satan is strong, he keeps his palace and goods in peace. What is his palace? - This world system, with all its ideologies, seduction and falsehoods. What are his goods? - Us! Without Christ we're just owned by him, an object, used by him, a puppet on a string, and we'll do as we are tempted. We are kept 'in peace'. He tries to keep us happy in our sins, so that we won't notice the judgment coming, or desire the salvation on offer. He wants to take us down. So he placates us with the world's pleasures, goods and fashions. Blinding and desensitizing us with its allurements and entertainments. But there is another, stronger than he, who has overcome him- Christ. He spoils his goods and strips his armour. Satan's defenses are utterly routed, and all he has are taken and shared out amongst the victors to be used in the right way.

How was all this done? How can we understand this picture? It is in understanding Christ in His office as the King. The Biblical idea of a king is the idea of a deliverer, a warrior, a leader and ruler. One who is the champion of his people, overthrower and defender of their enemies. We, obviously, see this in someone like David. But if we look further back we can get the same sense from Abraham saving Lot, from Joshua, Gideon and the other Judges (even though they weren't strictly kings, they embody the same idea). Though, perhaps the clearest embodiment of the idea of the 'warrior, deliverer' is in the 'strong man' Samson. He is mentioned in honour in Hebrews 11. He is clearly strong in faith and a 'type' of Christ. In

our reading we saw that God sought an occasion to overthrow the enemies of His people by him, his mother having been told *"he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."* The Philistines were the enemy of Israel, and they were ripe for judgment. God was seeking to bring about a righteous judgment, and to bring about a gracious deliverance. Let's look at the parallels between Samson and Christ.

Christ comes to the world, a world that should love Him as its Creator, its King. Samson comes to the Philistine women, and her people, desiring her hand in marriage. He could have been the reformer of the Philistines, and brought peace and blessings to the land. But they didn't really accept him. Even his betrothed (whom he, no doubt, sincerely loved) was disloyal and had an adulterous heart. This reminds us of the Lord's parable of the marriage feast. That those who were invited all made excuses not to come. When we love the world, and are part of it, we're just like those Philistines who never really accepted the one who could love and save them. We read that Samson is confronted by a lion, and he defeats and kills it. Later good honey is brought from this event (bees having made a nest in its carcass).

What does this mean? It means to illustrate that the evil in life (that has its origin in Satan, who we are told prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour) is a mystery to the world. They call it 'the problem of evil'. The Bible reveals these things are allowed by God. He means these events to bring about a greater good, like the bitter battle and death of the lion brought about sweet honey. This is especially done with regard to the defeat of Satan and the redemption of those who would trust Christ and His work for them. Satan, like the lion, is defeated by Christ at such times as in the garden of Eden, or when Christ was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, but ultimately at the cross of Calvary (this crucifixion was an 'evil' that God brought about for good). These are all instances of good coming from evil. The 'sweet honey' of the Gospel coming from the overthrow of that strong lion - Satan.



The mission isn't declared openly by Christ at first when He came into the world, and Samson doesn't immediately reveal what he did (killing the lion) to his parents. He goes to marry the Philistine women, in good faith. Did he suspect he'd be betrayed, and that God meant him to be an instrument of vengeance? It's possible. Maybe he didn't fully trust these people. He certainly kept things back from this woman, like Christ *"Jesus did not commit*

himself unto them, because he knew all men." Nevertheless he goes in a genuine way, but the Philistines would soon show their true colours.

Their custom no doubt was to throw a feast to over indulge the senses and appetites. So Samson puts forward a riddle as wholesome activity in order to re-engage the mind, like a quiz at a wedding reception. This he could use to explain God's ways. This riddle was related to the lion and the honey-

"Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong something sweet".

Just like the Lord's parables, the meaning was hidden from them. The world can't understand how God can bring good out of evil events, so they cause the wife to betray Samson and gain the answer by deceit. This is like the world pretending to know the deep things of God and the Gospel, for example in false religions. But they never really understand how God can use Satan (the lion) to bring the sweet fruit of redemption, by allowing the lion some leeway to roam, and therefore evil to occur.

So the wife and her people are disloyal and betray Samson, like the world rejected its Creator. Every time we love the world and the things in it, which are contrary to God, we're like an adulterous wife loving and serving her idol gods. The Philistines threatened the woman, to kill her, and the world won't repay our love of it with kindness - the world will instead be the death of us! Samson offers them a righteous gift of new clothing if they can understand the riddle, just like we can gain the 'garments' and 'sheets', of Christ's righteousness and holiness, if we grasp the Gospel. But because the Philistines seek to cheat their answer, they only gain the garments that Samson takes from a nearby Philistine town in order to honour his word. And this will be all we gain from God if we seek any other way, just the fashions of the world, or the clothing of religious 'good works', which are merely the world's covering, and unacceptable to God.

Christ is long-suffering with Mankind though, and Samson gives the Philistines a second chance. This shows how God holds out His hand of grace to sinners, even after much rejection. Samson brings a peace offering - a kid (a lamb), a symbol of reconciliation by blood. This is a clear type of the sacrificial 'Lamb of God'. But they refuse (like we have done), they reveal how the wife has been corrupted in an unholy union with Samson's groomsman! What a betrayal, like that of Judas. They try to placate Samson, by offering the woman's sister! This is like us trying to appease God in some way, by offering something other than the required repentance and faith in Christ. Instead we can try to offer something to God that He doesn't want. Some religious rite, or some self-righteous work. Men can try to offer a counterfeit religion instead of giving Him our lives in full devotion and consecration. This is just more sin.

Now Samson has an occasion to bring about a righteous vengeance upon the enemy. God had brought all this about to have a reason to punish them for who they were. This is what Christ will do when His day of grace comes to an end in a person's life, and ultimately what He will do on judgment day in order to display His justice and wrath. In doing this Samson is going to bring about a great deliverance for his people, and likewise, this is what Christ did



by bringing about a great deliverance for His own on Calvary. Samson would deliver the Israelites singlehandedly, just like Christ alone wins our victory.

Amazingly God is still ready to forgive, even after many betrayals and rejections, and will



use many warnings in life, by the painful consequences of our sins. This is pictured in Samson taking the 'little foxes', and using them to wreak havoc in the crop fields by setting them on fire. This caused multiple fires at the same time that were impossible to get under control or to put out. This destroyed much of what they had. These little foxes have often been taken to be symbols of the 'small' sins that can wreak havoc in our lives, and cause great ruin. God allows this, withdrawing his hand of restraint so the fires of sin burn. This is like Samson releasing the wild animals. The fires of lust, for example, which can destroy our character. Do

we learn by these warnings of God? Did the Philistines? No, they didn't, don't be hardhearted like them.

The world further hates Christ, like the Philistines hated Samson, and murdered his wife and father-in-law. The world seeks to kill what God loves and holds dear. You only have to look at how it is trying to ruin (to kill) traditional marriage and family today. The world makes good 'evil', and evil 'good', however, as we have noted, God brings good from evil events. So Samson takes his vengeance again with more warnings, inflicting injury and disability upon many of the Philistines. He 'smites' them (probably not death, although people do die in their sins). It is likely he merely inflicted a handicapping injury upon them. This shows the disabling consequences of a settled life, lived in sin and rejection of God. God will not allow us to be at peace, and painful 'mini judgements' are really a forbearance, a kindness to bring us to repentance. In contrast, the 'peace' that Satan brings will cause us to sleepwalk ourselves into hell!

So Samson sits on the mount to see what they will do - repent or reject. This reminds us of Christ sitting on the mount of Olives, looking over Jerusalem and longing to save them. He said:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Is this you? Refusing the salvation of Christ and preferring the world. The Jews of Christ's day continued in their rebellion and rejection, and offered Him up to the Roman authorities to be crucified. In a few short years afterwards Jerusalem would be overthrown in AD 70.

Samson's own people, the Israelites, offered him up to the Philistines because they feared them. Again, is this you? Do you fear the opinions of others, rather than being called a Christian, fearing their scorn and ridicule?

Christ routed the enemy by His work on the cross of Calvary, after seemingly being taken in weakness. In a similar way, Samson allows himself to be taken and bound with fresh ropes. Christ would break the bands of death, taking the penalty of sin, and with a loud triumphant

cry of a warrior, he routed Satan and his strong hosts of darkness, achieving a successful atonement for all who would put their trust in Him. In doing this he binds Satan, and saves His people from their enemies by giving salvation through that very atonement. So Samson routes his enemy, breaking the ropes he's bound with, and causing a great slaughter using a jawbone. This shows how Christ won't use the weapons, or methods of the world in His victory. Christ died after the work was done, and the battle won. After saying he thirsts on the cross. Samson, once again, foreshadows this by nearly dying of thirst after this great battle, but is saved and resuscitated by a miracle of God, in answer to prayer, when water is brought forth from that place. So Christ is resurrected by the power of the Triune Godhead. Samson goes on to be Israel's Judge, and Christ becomes the King of the Church.

So the great lesson is to be warned away from sin and the love of the world. See the fate of the Philistines, and the Jews of Christ's day, as a cautionary lesson. Instead, love Christ the stronger God-Man. He should be your King, the one to worship and serve. Our Deliverer and ruler. His righteousness will clothe you. Don't wear the garments of the Philistines or copy their ways, they don't make you an individual, they make you a conformed slave. In the verses we read about the stronger man, the spoils are taken and divided. These are those gifts we have from God which can never be rightly used before conversion, but after, they will be used to make us strong in faith like Samson. May this be so with you.

