

Judges 08-08-01b

Let's resume our study now. We're at Judges chapter 16. If you have a New King James, you see the title there, which has been portrayed in story and song for century after century, the story of Samson and Delilah, one of the more famous stories of the Old Testament.

I've seen ladies with this name or take this name. I can't imagine why anybody would look down at a cradle of their little baby daughter and name her Delilah. But there's people that do.

And there's people who have radio shows and so on. They name themselves Delilah. But we'll see why we have this in this section.

We have one detail left from chapter 15, which is the final verse. Samson judges Israel for 20 years in the days of the Philistines. And you get the idea that he's the nominal go-to guy.

Remember, the Judahites were happy to deliver him over. There's three battalions of men of Judah, the men who in Judges chapter 1 were ready to go whip the land and take care of all these Canaanites. And now all they want to do is accommodate.

And they're willing to hand over one of their own to the enemy. There's three battalions of men of Judah, and there's one battalion of Philistines. But they send the three battalions to go get the one guy and give him to the Philistines, rather than appealing to Samson to lead them into battle.

I mean, at least the people over across the Jordan had the good sense to say, hey, Gideon, why don't you be our general? These guys are pathetic. They're wimpy, weakling, cowed, completely, can't we all just get along? They're all wearing tie-dyed shirts. And they're taking Samson over.

There's three battalions. They outnumber the Philistines three to one. And all they want to do is hand over one of their own, so that, well, can't we all just have peace in our time, and so on.

Well, so it says Samson judged Israel. How hard do you think it is to judge a bunch of wimps like this? I mean, now they're all afraid of him. Well, the last time we tied him up, the ropes melted off, and he did the jawbone thing, and named his own mountain, and so on, so OK, well, fine, you be the judge.

But what's to judge? I mean, these people are pathetic. There's nobody to lead. There's no military action.

I mean, who wants to be the leader of a bunch of milk toasts like this? I just don't think Samson probably found this very satisfying, but notice, 20 years go by. 20 years. For most of us, this is about half the time that we can even remember, 20 years.

Some people in here aren't even 20 years old yet. But if you're anywhere past 40, and you

figure most of us can't remember our tiny childhood, and you think this is a good chunk of a lifetime, 20 years, two decades. If he did this in 1988, well, now we'd be up to the present in 2008.

He judges Israel 20 years, and nothing happens. You think, well, so this big flash in the pan, angel of the Lord, Manoah, the goat offering, the grain offering, the angel going up in the fire, and the lion killing the 30 Philistines, again, the changes of clothes, and now he goes down there, and he kills all these guys. Well, that was just kind of a flash in the pan.

And then two decades go by, and nothing. He is kind of a tin pot mayor or something over in Israel. Well, this brings us to chapter 16.

One thing I will point out, however, remember we've been seeing the tracking of Samson's life reflecting different episodes in the history of Israel, not necessarily sequentially, but there was a great show of strength when Israel left Egypt. And then that generation kind of went defunct and dropped in the wilderness. But if you merge the next generation with them, and watch the Egyptians fall into the sea like the ropes burning off, then coming into the land, and under Joshua this great victory taking place.

And then what happened? After the land was apportioned out in the book of Joshua to all of the tribes, how much time has now passed from the days of Joshua down to the days of Samson? Keep in mind now, you get your Exodus in 1440 BC, 40 years of wandering, you're down to 1400. You go into the days of Joshua, and you conquer the land in seven years. The elders who outlived Joshua, you've got another 20, 30 years.

You get down to the low 13s, 13 this, 13 that, to let's say 1350 or so, 1300 thereabouts. And then you've got the days of the judges, which span a couple of hundred years. Remember we added it all up and it was 200 and some odd years total? Well, 20 years of sort of nothing is what we have here.

And you could easily think, well, this 20 years could represent 200 years. It was about 200 years from the time that God gave Abram a great victory over the five kings. And he despoiled them and rescued his nephew Lot.

And remember God did the split animals, the smoking torch, and your descendants are going to come, and they will be oppressed for 400 years. And after that, they will come out again. Well, how does that 400 years break out? It was actually a total of 430.

It was 215 years from that point to going down into Egypt and coming under the thumb of the Egyptians. And then there's 215 years under the Egyptians, the large portion of which was slavery. But there's essentially 200 years between Abram and the going down to Egypt.

And you've got 200 years from Joshua coming down to the time of Samson, give or take. So I just remind you that Israel has had times in their history and in their patriarchal history of great deliverance followed by sort of quietness, where nothing happens. There's a demonstration, a

great effusion of divine power and divine deliverance.

And then it's like nothing happens for a while. And you think, well, is the other shoe going to drop? Is God going to continue to move and march? And the Spirit come down with all kinds of manifestations of divine deliverance? And it just seems like, well, God has stopped acting. What's supposed to happen in that time? Now it's time for His people to respond, right? Are people going to respond? Are they going to be obedient? Are they going to be faithful? Are they going to worship? Are they going to be the presence of God on earth? God has come down from heaven and manifested Himself and created a people and delivered those people and set them up to be His reflection, reflection of His glory on earth.

Now it's your turn. It's kind of like you always used to crack me up watching Tommy and Dickie Smothers when they would be trying to play a tune, and Dick Smothers would be playing along, and then in the middle of a line, he would just say, take it, and he'd stop playing. And his brother's supposed to start playing, but it wasn't the right time, and so the music would just stop.

And then they would start arguing about, what do you mean, take it? Why are you telling me to take it? You can't tell me to take it when I'm not ready to take it. And they've got a whole routine on that. But God comes down and delivers the people, sets them up, gives them the law, gives them the land, gives them an inheritance, and says, take it.

OK, be the reflection, be the manifestation, be the light to the Gentiles that I established you to be. And God steps back. And they're supposed to take it.

They're supposed to carry the torch. They're supposed to pick up and do it. Well, God has given some supernatural enablement.

He has announced, identified, and strengthened, and put His spirit on a deliverer who's going to begin to deliver Israel from this final, greatest scourge of the Philistines. And OK, so people, you've seen the hand of God. You've seen that God is ready to deliver, that God has equipped a man.

He's standing around for two decades with his bulging biceps and his ability to rip things up and tear things down and slaughter things with jawbones and so on. So here's the power. Here's the leadership.

Here's the general. Here's the Nazirite. Here's everything ready to go.

So take it. What are you going to do? Well, Israel does nothing. There is no crying out to God.

These are the days of the Philistines. Look at the last phrase of the chapter. It's the days of the Philistines.

And it's like God is saying, come on, people. I've put a judge down there. He's this guy that

nobody can stop, nobody can bind, nobody can slay.

He's got a built-in hatred for the Philistines. He slays them every time he gets near them. What are you waiting for? Where's the uprising? Where are the people coming and saying, Samson, obviously you're God's man, and we'd love to get out from under the thumb of these Philistines.

We'd like to be the people of God. We want to set up the tabernacle. We want to get the Levites going.

We want to rebuild the worship system here and get back to our sacrifices and offerings and glorifying God and taking the land. We'll drive out the rest of these Canaanites. We'll do what God brought us into the land to do.

We'll take possession of our inheritance. We'll get rid of these noisome, troublesome, idolatrous, uncircumcised Philistines and everybody else. Let's do it.

Let's get with it. Let's fulfill the plan and the purpose of God that he gave to our father Abraham and our father Isaac and our father Jacob and all of the fathers down through these many generations. Here we are.

Let's do it. There is none of that. These are the weakest, milquetoastiest, apathetic, indifferent, compromising, can't we all just get along and, sure, you can marry my daughter.

And yeah, there's nothing. They're not interested in their Israelite identity. They're not interested in the plan and purpose of God.

The great words that Joshua wrote on the rock have melted away with time and with the rains. Nobody remembers the great message that the people of Jericho understood and the people of Ai understood and the people in the days of Joshua understood. The God of Israel that brought forth this people from the land of Egypt is giving them this land and we are afraid.

It doesn't matter if there are giants. It doesn't matter what the issue is. This God of theirs is unstoppable.

He's the God of the mountains. He's the God of the plains. He's the God of walls.

He's the God of water. He can stop creeks. He can knock down cities.

He can bring down hail. Listen to what he did to the Egyptians. There's nothing this God can't do.

The Israelites possess this God. He is their God. They are his people.

And what are they doing with it? God has reminded them through Samson in kind of a small, personal way, look, this man is a remnant. He's a reminder of the power of this God. It doesn't inspire them.

It doesn't remind them. It doesn't create in them any sort of sense of mission or purpose or motivation. Twenty years go by.

Nothing. Not a single village rises up and says, boo on the Philistines. Nobody puts graffiti on their chariots.

Nobody throws rocks at them when they come riding through. Nobody hits them with vegetables when they're coming. Nothing.

Now, you think about Christians in the world today, as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer today. You think about the issues that are faced by Christians in this world today. There is evil abroad.

There is the uncircumcised Philistine all around us. It is in our entertainment. It is on the internet.

It is in print. It is in blogs. It is everywhere.

I would get down on my knees and thank God for 24 hours straight if every blog on the internet would just suddenly disappear. I think that is the most, well, never mind. I think that it has given an opportunity for people with least amount to actually say the most.

And it just clutters up. You can't find quality content because there's too many people talking. It's like people with hearing aids.

You know why old people shut their hearing aids off? Because when they walk into a room full of people talking, they hear everything at once. There's no discrimination. You can't, what's near and what's far, those artificial amplifiers, everything is at the same volume.

When you get out on the internet, you could be Henry Kissinger, you could be Benjamin Netanyahu, or you can be Marge Flanagan in Walla Walla Washington. You get the same space on the web. There is no ability to sift for quality.

Everybody's equal. It's like democracy. It's like true democracy.

But it's like a true democracy. You can't elect a representative and say, you speak, and we'll listen. There's a few islands of sanity out there that you can navigate to if you're willing to surf long enough.

But I'm telling you, it is a sea of evil. It's a sea of misinformation and deception and half-truths and twisted truths and places where people just spew bile and vicious, same kind of attitude I have right now, just all over the internet. So here's the point.

You and I are the people of God, and we need to have a sense of mission, not just any old mission, not the mission of get along, not the mission of I want to prosper, not the mission of I want to set my kids up here in the land of Canaan so that the Philistines don't beat up on them.

What is the sense of mission? What is the right mission? Now, we know what the right mission was for Israel, wasn't it? You're in the land, take possession, drive out the evil, drive out the enemy. That's the mission.

Well, what's our mission? Pretty hard to do the mission if you don't know what it is. What is the mission? What is the land in which we dwell? Is it the United States of America? Should we go forth and start marching on abortion clinics and shutting down the bad movies and so on? What's our mission? Where is the territory that equates to the land of Canaan that the nation of Israel is in in the Old Testament? Where is that land for us? It is our soul. Our soul is the territory.

We have been commanded to take and hold that territory. Be ye holy for I am holy. Abide in the vine.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me and you will bear much fruit. Maintain a connection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is holy, we have to be holy to be connected to him. If we allow ourselves to be contaminated, we are cut off. God will prune off those branches that are dead and unfruitful and he will bind them in bundles and burn them.

It's not loss of salvation, it's loss of meaning and purpose and function and relevance and fruitfulness and everything else in this life. So we say, all right, so I'm supposed to take and hold my soul against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

Well and faithfully execute the duties that I've been given. How? What does Romans 12, 1 and 2 say? I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. He doesn't say, I beseech you therefore, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

He says, I beseech you by the mercies of God. And he's not invoking the mercies of God like I beseech you by heaven or I beseech you by Jove or I beseech you by all that's holy or whatever. He's saying, by means of the mercy of God, present yourself a living sacrifice.

We can't present ourselves a sacrifice. We can't sanctify ourselves. We can't present ourselves.

We would be bringing an unholy thing. We'd be like those guys bringing strange fire. We're just gonna get incinerated and carried off on what's left of our clothing.

Paul says, I beseech you, brethren, by means of the mercies of God, present yourselves. Israel is to present the land of Canaan as a holy domain, as a holy nation. Each of them have been given an assigned area.

Each of us, we've got different kinds of souls. It's like tribal domains. Some of us have strengths and weaknesses that are diametrically the opposite of other people.

And usually those two people get married. And so it's a tribulation for one to see the

weaknesses of the other and vice versa. Very seldom do people with the same strengths and the same weaknesses, it's usually opposites attract.

And complementary things, when God sanctifies us and when God straightens us out, those things are complementary and the two become one flesh and the two become one whole thing. But not always. Some of us are single.

Some of us, I know people that have been single all their life. Some of us are single in other ways. Some people get widowed.

Some people have to just queue on alone. But whatever the situation is, we have territory in our soul. That is our assignment.

Just like the tribe of Judah, we went and looked at every single border town on the line of the tribe of Judah. That's their assignment. My assignment is different than yours.

I've got Philistines in my soul that need killing. I've got Amorites and Hivites and all other kinds of ites in my soul and it's my job to get in there and exterminate them, eliminate them by the mercy of God. God said, I will go before you.

I will drive them out if you will be faithful, if you will be obedient. If we go in and have an AI experience where we come back and we've lost 30 men and we didn't win, what's happened? Well, we're either trying to win in our own strength or we're fighting the wrong battle. We've attacked the wrong town.

We've gone someplace where God told us not to go. Remember when the people wanted to go on into the land of Canaan after Moses said, God says no? You know, there's a time to go and there's a time not to go. But here's the point.

When you get to Samson and you get to this late date and the people are so apathetic and indifferent, you think, well, okay, it's hopeless. There's never gonna be deliverance in Israel because look at the people. They're like Christians at large today, lost sight of the mission, lost sight of who they are and why they're here, no sense of identity, amalgamating, infiltrating, compromising, being all mixed together and conglomerated with the people of the land.

They're rapidly becoming indistinguishable. So that's it for them. The Old Testament, the end of the book of Judges, it's over.

You will notice, however, that that's not where the New Testament ends. And the deliverance that is gonna be wrought in Israel is gonna take place in spite of them. Now, if you want a good argument for eternal security, you know, you can't lose your salvation.

The people of God are the people of God and it doesn't matter, well, it does matter, but in terms of them being the people of God, they never lose that identity no matter how far into apostasy they go. They're still Israel. God still has a plan and purpose for them and he is going

to beat them into shape.

You know, they will turn their swords into plowshares. Well, God is gonna turn these plowshares back into swords. He is going to heat them and hammer them and turn them into what they're supposed to be.

Now, here is my, here is my thought in terms of application of this. There are believers today, lots of us. I'm talking about believers as a whole, Christianity in general.

A lot of believers, not the first clue, just like this generation. And you think, well, so the plan of God is just dead ended with them. Okay, they're still saved, but they're gonna go forward and it's just, you know, they're just hangers on.

They're just saved by the skin of the teeth and that's it. I don't think so. Because look at what God does with the nation of Israel.

Nation of Israel is a picture of what happens with individual believers, us now, and individual believers in Israel, in the millennial kingdom. All of this stuff is gonna apply to them later on, just as it applies to us now. So what's the deal? You can learn the easy way, or you can learn the hard way.

You can either listen and pay attention and get it, benefit from the experience of others, pay attention and say, well, there's a mistake I'm gonna do my best not to make because look at what happened to him. Or you can be oblivious, you can be indifferent, you can be apathetic and just coast along and you're going to get that beat into you the hard way. You're gonna be put in a situation where you're forced to learn it and it's much more painful, much more uncomfortable, much less pleasant to do it that way.

Think about someone who goes into the service and goes to bootcamp and we say, we're not kicking anybody out. You are one way or another, you're gonna come out of here wearing the uniform right and doing what you're supposed to do. Well, there's people who try hard and pay attention and get it.

And they come out as Lance corporals and they go right on out. There's other guys that have to, okay, another five mile march. We're gonna take an extra week.

You're not gonna graduate with the rest of your platoon, but you are going to finish or you're going to die trying. And guys that go on the fat squad or whatever, well, they didn't make the weight. They were too whiny or whatever.

They just keep working on them and they just keep beating on them until they pass. This is what God does with his people. There's the easy way and there's a hard way.

Everybody is going to be sanctified. Everybody is going to be qualified. Everybody is going to go into the future.

Now, there are people who are never going to be ruling and reigning with Christ. They're never gonna be walking with him in white. They're never gonna be partaking of the hidden manna.

They're never gonna be earning the rewards of the overcomers. The overcomers are the people who wake up and smell the coffee and get with the program and graduate in the top of their class. But the rest of the people, God doesn't say, well, I was really just looking for the top 10% and you other people just gaggle over there and I'm gonna ignore you.

If we belong to God, he is going to make us in the image of his son. That's what's going to happen. There's just gonna be a lot more hammer work and a lot more heat and a lot more fire and a lot more pain.

Whom the Lord loves he chastens and he scourges. That word for scourge, that's a word that was used of the Lord Jesus in his trials. Flays alive with a whip every son that he receives.

Doesn't say the best of the sons that he receives, does it? How many sons does the Lord chasten? How many does he scourge with a whip? Every son whom he receives. Everybody is going to get whipped into shape. Some with many blows and some with few.

Some are gonna be beaten with many stripes and some with few. Jesus told that in one of his parables. So, you know, hands up everybody that wants to be in the many stripes brigade.

I mean, I don't think we do. I think we want to be in the few stripes brigade. And so it's a matter of motivation.

It's a matter of getting with it. God is looking for motivation. He has slammed Samson down here like Hercules in the middle of the land, trying to spark something in these people and it hasn't worked.

So what's gonna happen? He's gonna up the ante. Because these people are going to become a nation ready for a king. That's what God's gonna do.

He's not gonna leave them to disappear and blend into the Canaanites. They're his people. It doesn't matter how bad off they get.

He's not gonna let them disappear. If you are alive and breathing air, God is not gonna let you disappear. You can recover.

You can get with the program. You can start working your way into the few stripes brigade. And my strong encouragement and the encouragement from the word of God to each one of us is let's get busy and do that.

There's no other point to life. What are we doing? Why are we here? Do you want to get to an age and look back over your life and say, well, you know, here's the pictures of when I went to Niagara Falls and here's a picture when I went to the Grand Canyon. And boy, I sure had fun when I went down to Six Flags.

What do you want to show for your life? Well, you know, here's the bank account that I left behind. Here's all the furniture I accumulated. Walk through the antique stores and look at all the furniture that people bought in the past.

It's just plumb depressing to see the detritus of what used to be people's mansions stacked up in a corner with cobwebs and dust all over it because those people are gone and everything they assembled has been dispersed. It's like God reached down and just went, and all their stuff is just like a dandelion, puffed away. Life means more than that.

The time that we are given means more than that. And if you want to invest it in something eternal, now is the time to get with the program. So this is the message that God is sending and Samson is the most unlikely messenger because he reflects that he's just like the people.

Hey, I want what's mine. I'm thirsty, give me something to drink. I want a woman.

You know, it's too bad that old sunglasses there, what was that guy's name? Ah, I'll think of him here in a minute. You know, he sang all those songs. No, he's older than that.

He was from Texas. I can't think of his name. I'll think of it in a minute.

So chapter 16, Samson went to Gaza. Now Gaza is the southernmost of the five cities of the Philistines. It's far away from Timna and the tribe of Dan and everything else.

He's gone down to Gaza. You get the idea that he's become unpopular up north. People are not cottoning to him.

They're not flocking around him. So he goes down to Gaza, but why does he keep going to these Philistine cities? He doesn't go over to Shiloh. He doesn't go up to Ramah.

He doesn't go any place where there's anything spiritual going on. He goes the opposite way. He goes to the Philistines.

He goes to Gaza. He saw a harlot there and he went into her. Well, you know, how many different ways can you break your Nazirite vow? And after 20 years, he's just gone from bad to worse.

Now you remember last time he got ensnared and enamored with a Philistine woman, what did he do? He married her. Father, get me this woman. I'm going to marry her.

He doesn't even bother with that now. It's been 20 years. He's an older guy.

He's just like, woman, here I come. And then he goes in. There's no marriage.

There's no contract. There's no superficial nod to the formalities or anything. He's just, he wants a woman.

He sees one he likes. He goes into her. So the people of Gaza find out about this.

And now I want you to notice the italics. The italics here don't tell half the story. The Hebrew in this little episode is very, very choppy because the narrator is anxious to get to the next part.

Notice we're told is in italics. And if you cross that out, it says, when the Gazites, Samson has come here, they surrounded, and it doesn't even say what they surrounded. Him, the place, the house of prostitution, what did they surround? It doesn't tell us.

It doesn't even tell us that they were told. It's just the Gazites, it's like when the Gazites, and then you've just got this exclamation, Samson has come here. And you get this real abbreviated, you know, we've slowed way down.

Samson is dipping his hand into dead lions and composing poetry. And you have this nice slow motion thing. Well, now it's just like a music video on MTV now.

You just get a flash of this, a flash of that, a flash of this, a flash of that. So Samson's in Gaza, prostitute, Gazites are going, and then Samson has come here. We're just getting these little snapshots.

And it's like, rush, rush, rush. We're in a big hurry now to move the story forward. And I can't impress on you how strange this is in Hebrew.

The Hebrews has been kind of trucking along, you know, left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot. And now we're like hopping along on one foot here. And it's very bizarre.

And it's hard to translate. So I'm going to stick more or less with the New King James here. When the Gazites found out, when they're told, there's not even a verb here.

There's the Gazites, Samson's here. And they surrounded and lay in wait for him somewhere all night. And it says, at the gate of the city.

Are they inside the gate? Are they out? Why are they at the gate? Inside? Outside? Where's the cat house? Is it near? Far from the gate? In the wall? Like Jericho? Nobody knows. It doesn't tell us. It's just very sparse.

But, and the idea is we're not supposed to dwell on the details. It's like Gaza, prostitute, Samson, people. They lay in wait.

They're quiet all night saying, in the morning when it's daylight, we will kill him. Listen, it doesn't even say in the morning when it is daylight. It, I can't even, I can't even translate this very well.

They lay in wait all the night and they kept silent all the night to say, until light of the morning. They kept silent all the night and said, until the light of the morning and kill him. I, it just makes no sense, really.

You just have to string it together. And if you look at different translations, you can see that

they wrestle with this, trying to, trying to smooth it out. But you get the idea that it's dark and they're out there in the dark.

And when it's light, their intention is to kill him some kind of way. They may be waiting for him to leave. And when they see his light, if he comes out with a light, they'll kill him.

There's no way of knowing. So they, in verse three, Samson spent half the night with the prostitute and literally it says, and Samson lay until the middle of the night and got up. It doesn't, I mean, you can see how the New King James says Samson lay till midnight.

Got to cross out low because it's not there. But Samson just took it easy, took a little nap, got up at midnight and got up and took hold of the door. The fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, you go Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Hay.

Aleph is a cow's head. Bet is a house, like Betlehem, Bethlehem. Gimel, Dalet.

Dalet means door. And it looks like a little rooftop with a door hanging down from it. So he took hold of the Dalet, literally, the gate of the city.

This is the Shaar of the city, the door gate of the city and of the two doorframe posts and tore them loose. So here's, as near as I can figure out, this is what it's telling us. Samson has gone into the town.

He's at the prostitute's house. The people of the town become aware that he's there, but they don't want to be confined within the walls in case Samson kind of busts loose. His reputation in the last 20 years has infiltrated all five cities and nobody messes with Samson.

You notice the Philistines haven't sent any more soldiers against him in the last 20 years. So he's got a reputation. They say, well, we'll wait for him and we'll basically pounce on him as soon as he comes out the gate.

And we'll have the ability to retreat if we need to. We won't be confined within the walls, but we can basically attack him. And the most he can do is run back into the city and we'll have him trapped, apparently.

So they're outside in the dark. They don't know when he's going to come out. So he waits till the middle of the night.

Then he goes out and we don't know. It doesn't say the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. It doesn't say he knew they were out there.

But evidently, as he is leaving in the middle of the night, he knows something's up. He's smelled a rat some kind of way. He knows that nobody travels in the middle of the night.

So he's gotten up and he's going to kind of get the jump on these guys. So what he does is he goes, they're outside, he's inside. The gates are shut.

They close the city gates at night. So these gates are shut and they're barred on the inside. So Samson goes, now these gates are 12 to 14 feet wide.

These are iron clad wooden gates, sometimes as high as 10 to 12 feet so that they're not easily scaled and not easily broken in. These are huge. These things weigh hundreds of pounds each.

So Samson goes and some kind of way gets a hold of these things and lifts them out of the ground by their hinge posts. This is a big, heavy, double door, iron bar, iron clad, heavy, you know, you can't beat the thing in with a ram and a few guys. He has lifted this up.

It could easily have been over a thousand pounds. He uproots these 500 pound gates, both at once, one on each shoulder. Apparently there might've been some strapping or something on the inside that he could kind of get his arms through.

And he just squatted down, grabbed a hold of the things and did a, you know, what do they call that? A dead lift and just muscled these things out of the ground. And he's got these great big giant doors. Well, they're like giant shields.

I mean, somebody going to shoot an arrow or hit him with a sword or, you know, lob a spear at him or something. He's got one on each arm. He's got them, they're on his arms and on his shoulders.

And he's got this V-shaped, they're city gates for crying out loud. What are you going to do? What are you going to hit him with? I mean, how big a rock are you going to throw? How big of a spear or anything? What are you going to do? The man is surrounded by, he's like a giant snow plow. And he comes walking out of the city with these gates on his arms and they're impenetrable.

The armies can't break these in. And that's what he's done. So he took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gate posts, pulled them up bar and all, put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Any commentary that you read will tell you that the distance from Gaza to the town of Hebron is 38 miles. Now, I do not believe that he carried these two gates 38 miles. Because if you read the text, and I'm amazed that the commentators don't take note of this detail, what does it say? He carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Gaza is southwest of Hebron. Hebron is 38 miles away. There are some other prominent towns and things in between.

So my question is, Samson carries them outside the city and evidently climbs this hill that is to the northeast of the city. And I guess, plants the gates up there, into the ground, just pounds them down. And he carries them to the top of the hill.

Either that or he just dropped them up there. But here's my question. And you might actually

be able to derive this answer.

Why do we have this detail? Why did he just say he took them to the top of a nearby hill or a hill that faced Ashkelon or a hill that faced anything else? Jerusalem or Shiloh or any other town in Israel. Does it face Timna or the face? Why does it say this? That he carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron. Well, you have to say, what do I know about Hebron? What is the first capital city in Israel? Where's the first place where a King sets up his throne in Israel? What was David's first capital city? It's a little bit of a trick question because Saul reigned out of where? What was Saul's town? He set up on the threshing floor there and under the tree and so on.

He was at Gibeah of Saul, remember? But David's, the first king, his first, he unites all of the tribes and his capital is Hebron before they do the whole capturing of Jebus. So when the Philistine, remember what the angel told Manoah and his wife, actually told Manoah's wife, he will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Who is going to fulfill and culminate and end that deliverance? It's David.

David will slay Goliath. David will pursue the Philistines. David will slaughter Philistines.

Saul is slaying his thousands and David is ten thousands. Who is he talking about? Philistines. David is going to wipe out the Philistines.

The Philistines are never again an entity, a presence or a threat in Israel because David is going to fulfill the deliverance that begins with Samson. Samson and David are polar opposites. Samson is self-centered.

He is a man of the flesh. David is God-centered and is a man of the spirit. The only time David gets in trouble is when he starts going down the Samson Road and getting interested in women when he shouldn't and so on.

But David at his best is a man after God's own heart. When he prays, when he celebrates, when he talks, oh, by the way, you remember that little spring that came out at the end of chapter 15 and Samson named it En-Hakor, which is the spring of the one who calls out? Who was the one calling out? Who was the shouter? He basically named it after himself. I'm the shouting man and this is shouting springs here.

It's for me. Back in Abraham's day when Hagar went out and cried out for what? When she and Ishmael got driven out and they went out in the desert and they were all parched and she cries out to God. And what was the issue there? Water.

And a well was provided and that well got named. What was the name of that well? Bir Lahai Roi. The well of the God who sees me.

The well of the one who sees me. She called out, but she didn't call it the well of the crier, the well of the caller, the well of Hagar. Even Hagar, the Egyptian woman, had enough sense to name the well after God who provided it and not herself who called out for it.

I mean, you can't get worse than Samson in terms of his arrogant, self-centered, it's all about me attitude. So he names the well after himself. Well, but when he, in his physical strength, notice, is there any mention of the Spirit of God rushing upon him as it was when he tore the lion apart or when the ropes burnt off and he slew all these guys with a jawbone? We don't even have that detail here.

Samson picks up the gates. Samson carries them by his own strength. Samson plants them on the hill that faces 38 miles away, Hebron.

The gates of a city, what do they represent? That's its strength, its power, its governors and its judges sit in the gates. Now this Philistine town of Gaza has no protection. And it is as though David in Hebron can look down and see the Philistines are there for the taking.

Samson, the deliverance that God has begun through Samson, it's visible. As the crow flies, you look from Hebron down toward Gaza. Look, here's the city gates.

I've planted them here. And David is just a few decades away. Samson is not that far ahead of David.

Eli is alive. Samson is a small boy at the time that... Or Samuel, rather, is a small boy at the time that Samson is doing these things. And it's near at hand.

But through some unknown inspiration, Samson carries those gates up and plants them in the direction of Hebron because that's the place from whence the ultimate deliverance is going to come. David, figuratively speaking, is going to come through those broken gates and wipe out this plague. So it's a very profound, although very cryptic thing.

Samson went in to sleep with a harlot, but he has come out having devastated the defenses of the city. God worked his selfishness together for good. And it is a reminder that God is going to work in the life of all believers for good.

It may not be near. There may just be a setting of the gates in the direction of deliverance. But deliverance is going to come.

All of the people of God are going to be delivered. Some people later. Some people sooner.

But the mercies of God are there. Some of us take a much firmer blow on the head before we recognize that. But it's there.

And we are God's people. We always will be. Well, this sets us up now for verse 4 where Delilah is introduced.

And that's a good place for us to begin next week. So we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the graphic way that it illustrates truths that pertain to us and our lives before

you in this day and age. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things on us. Help us to remember day by day that we have a calling and we have an opportunity through the mercies that have been provided to us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight, a way that reflects your glory.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.