

SAMSON'S DEATH

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Reading: Judges 16:23-31

When Samson was captured, the Philistines put him to work in the prison. There he had to grind their corn so that the Philistines could make it into bread. They had a heavy mill-stone which usually would be pulled round and round by an ox or donkey or camel. As the big round millstone was pulled over a lower flat stone, the grains of wheat would be crushed into a fine flour. This was very hard and heavy work, and the Philistines used Samson in the place of the ox to punish and humble him.

As Samson worked, day after day, he began to think of the things that he had done that were wrong. He hadn't always obeyed the Lord. He had certainly disobeyed when he told Delilah that his hair could be cut off to make him weak. And he had been severely punished for his evils. He was blind, in prison, and forced to work very hard. He prayed to the Lord for help, and we are told that the Lord heard his prayer, and Samson's hair began to grow again.

The Philistines were delighted that they had overcome Samson. They thought that their god, Dagon, had given Samson into their hands. Of course, Dagon had no power. He was an just idol, an image made of stone. He had the body of a fish and the head and hands of a man. But the Philistines called for a day of celebration. They went into the temple of Dagon to give thanks. There were three thousand men and women of the Philistines—all of their leaders, generals, and great soldiers. They all went into the temple to celebrate the capture of Samson. While they were celebrating they called out, "Bring Samson to us so that we may look at him and see his strength, and that we may mock him." They wanted to laugh at him because now he was weak, helpless, blind, and their prisoner. So they sent for him, and a boy brought Samson into the temple. As he led him in, the people started to laugh. They jeered at Samson and mocked him.

Then Samson said to the boy, "Take me to the center of the temple where the two pillars hold up the roof, so that I may lean upon them and rest." And the boy did so. And Samson reached out his right hand and felt one pillar, and he reached out his left and felt the other. Then he prayed to the Lord. He asked that the Lord would give him strength one more time so that he might break down the temple of the Philistines and destroy their leaders. He prayed, "Oh Lord God, remember me, I pray, and strengthen me." Then Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the temple stood, and he said, "Let me die with the Philistines." And he bowed himself with all his might and the house fell down upon the people so that all the rulers of the Philistines died, and the Lord set Israel free. So this last act of Samson's life did more to free the Children of Israel, and killed more of their enemies than all the other earlier acts of his life. And Samson was buried in the burying place of his father Manoah.

This story teaches us many important things. The most important thing to remember is that we should obey the Lord, and despite any teasing and coaxing from other, we should not give in to evil. But, just as Samson did foolish and evil things in his lifetime, so do we. Everyone at some time or another has done something that he is sorry for. We have hurt others, told lies, and not kept all of our promises. And when we have done something to hurt others or that is against the Lord's Commandments we must ask the Lord's forgiveness. We must say to Him that we are sorry and ask Him to help us to overcome our bad habits and evil deeds. If we do this, and truly mean it when we ask his forgiveness, then our spiritual strength will grow. Thus will we be prepared for the life of heaven so that we may live there in happiness and usefulness to eternity.