

The Truth About Delilah

by Lynn Andrew

In *The Day and the Hour*, the retelling of Samson and Delilah has it that Delilah truly loves Samson and her betrayal is not essentially an act of treachery. Yes, ironically, she is the cause of Samson's capture. But that was not her intention. Due to circumstances beyond her control she becomes the fatal link between Samson and his enemy. Actually it goes further: Samson's enemy would not be his enemy if it were not for her.

If you take all the information about Samson in the book of Judges and put it together, you can arrive at this interpretation without contradicting the text. A superficial reading of chapter 16 in isolation from the rest of Samson's story leads to the traditional view where Delilah appears to be willfully siding with Samson's enemies.

The key is simply the fact that Samson was dealing with the enemies of Israel in a provocative fashion. He was an exceptional person in several ways, and the responses he drew from the Philistines were inevitably contentious because he was born to be a provocative protector of his people. His first recorded provocation was to choose to marry a Philistine in a city occupied by Philistines. This unfortunate girl, who is not named in the Scripture, is the real cause of the conflict that eventually put Delilah in a delicate position where a single misstep would be fatal to her lover. And

that is the point where interpretations diverge.

At first glance, one notices the similarities between Samson's wife and Delilah: both were members of the enemy tribe; both were freely chosen by Samson and he obviously loved them; both were pressured by Samson's enemies and both made mistakes that led to death. But the contrast between Samson's wife and Delilah is most revealing: Samson's wife was threatened with death; Delilah was bribed with money. This is where the traditional interpretation goes wrong. The assumption is made that money (the sum was very large) trumped love. That is reasonable, but it may be opposite to the moral of the story, for it leaves Samson's strange response unaccounted for.

By the end of the story, the great contrast between Samson's wife and Delilah is that his wife died as a result of her mistake while Samson went free; and on the other hand Samson died as a result of Delilah's mistake and Delilah went free.

Why is this important? Samson is widely recognized as a type of Christ. The problem with Delilah being intentionally treacherous is that it makes Samson a fool. Furthermore, his foolishness is explained as a result of moral weakness. Typology does not demand perfect images, but to have Samson's character thoroughly besmirched as it is in the traditional interpretation is unsavory and makes him seem unworthy even to be a shadow of the Savior. There may be ways of bending this around—for example, seeing his failings as imputed unrighteousness—but why not take the straight road?

There is a splendid allegory hiding here with Delilah being a type of the church. The retelling of their story in *The Day and the Hour* preserves and even extends the allegorical level.

And so there is a double meaning in the title of this essay: The second meaning in "The truth about Delilah" takes the word "about" in the sense of surrounding. The truth surrounding Delilah is the story of our Savior. It has been said that every page of the Old Testament proclaims Christ, and it is not too difficult to see it here. Samson is known for his physical strength and sensational exploits, but there is much more that is noteworthy about the man. His mother, who had been barren, was told by a heavenly messenger that she would give birth to this exceptional savior of Israel and that he was to be dedicated to the service of God. The evidence of that followed him everywhere. A spring of water broke out in the desert in answer to Samson's prayer. It was the Spirit of God, not natural ability, who gave Samson his extraordinary abilities. In fact, his exploits were instigated by the Spirit. He became a judge of Israel in the era before there were kings, and that office, as the title suggests, made him adjudicator of disputes among his people. Samson was no fool. The evidence is clear: Samson was a wise and Godly man. Delilah had the privilege of knowing this most outstanding servant of God. She was a pagan, not one of God's chosen, yet Samson chose her, and from him she came to know the God of Israel.

