**The World in Darkness—Examples of Rejection (Part 2)**

**Samson**

Samson was consecrated to God as a Nazirite from conception and he was to remain so for life [Jdg 13:3-5]. Although there were other prohibitions that came along with this consecration [Jdg 13:4], it primarily meant that Samson was never to cut the hair on his head. It was as though he was in a covenant with God as long as he did not cut the hair on his head.

Samson was filled with the Spirit [Jdg 13:24-25] and was gifted with extraordinary strength by the Spirit of God upon him. The Spirit of God would not forsake Samson on any account even when, against the Nazirite regulations, he just ate honey from a dead lion [Jdg 14:8-9]. Samson’s enemies, the Philistines, whom Samson on several occasions had singlehandedly humiliated, sought ways to disarm Samson and sadly they succeeded.

Samson quite foolishly revealed the source of his strength to his enemies who wasted no time in cutting off his hair while he was asleep [Jdg 16:19]. Once his hair was cut, the result of his wayward lifestyle, his consecration to God as a Nazirite was broken, his strength left him and he became as weak as any other man. Samson however did not realized that Yahweh *(the Spirit)* had departed from him until he was so easily overpowered and captured by his enemies the Philistines [Jdg 16:20]. His enemies quickly put out both his eyes and made him a prisoner employed in slave labour [Jdg 16:21] and entertainment [Jdg 16:25].

The Philistines naturally wanting to humiliate their terrible foe, left their blind slave unkempt and with time Samson’s hair grew [Jdg 16:22] which meant that he could be restored to his consecration to God. Samson called on God who restored his supernatural strength to him, his eyes were however still blind and he needed the aid of someone to use his strength against his enemies.

**What Changed with Samson’s Rejection?**

* **Having the Holy Spirit**: The LORD *(the Spirit of God)* departed from him
* **Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**: He lost his extraordinary strength and was overpowered by his enemies
* **Freedom**: He became a slave to the enemies of Israel
* **Sight**: He was made blind by his enemies

**What Remained the Same In Spite of Samson’s Rejection?**

* **Condition for Consecration**: His hair consecrated him to God; Samson could still call on God after his hair grew back.

**Relevant Lessons**

The fact that Samson’s Nazirite relationship to God was restored once his hair was restored highlights a very important fact and that is that every relationship is established upon certain conditions. The relationship is broken if the condition upon which it is built is destroyed and can be restored anytime the condition is restored, if it is one that can be restored.

Also, we can see from Samson’s story that even when the condition upon which a broken relationship was built is restored, it does not mean that the broken relationship will be automatically restored. Though Samson’s hair had grown back, he still had to pray to God before his strength could be restored to him [Jdg 16:28].

As we can see from Samson’s story, no sin, except it destroys or limits the basis of the relationship,is by itself sufficient to bring about estrangement.

**The Rejection of Israel and Judah**

The people and nation of Israel had a special covenant with God by which God alone was to be their God and they were to be God’s people [Gen 17:7]. This meant that Israel was to worship Yahweh alone and never an idol or any other god [Exo 20:2-5*a*]. Not only was Israel to worship Yahweh, but they were to worship him in the way he prescribed. They were also to live righteously and in holiness among the other nations testifying of God’s righteous and holy character to the other nations around them.

Israel as a people was truly blessed of God and were indeed unlike other nations. God gave them his Spirit, spoke with them through his prophets of which they had many, gave them priests and expressly made his will known to them through the Law.

Israel however sinned so many times against God and did not observe their consecration to him and though God often punished them, he never rejected them as his people, he never withdrew from them those special privileges that made them different from others. Nevertheless, after much repeated offences against him, God dealt the severest of blows on his people and rejected them.

**Two Nations**

Sometime in its history, God split the nation of Israel in two—Israel and Judah—[1Ki 11:30-32] along preexisting geopolitical fault lines. He did this basically to reduce the dominion of Solomon and thus punish him. This split meant that each half had a different history in its relationship to God and so, though both nations were eventually rejected by God for their rebellion, the details of their rejections are not the same.

**Rejecting Israel**

Israel in the north was the first to pervert the worship of God, first, by worshiping him contrary to the stipulated regulations of the Law of Moses—they worshiped Yahweh God through images, in temples of their own design, locations of their own choosing [Deut 12:5-6] and used priests who were not Levites [1Ki 11:28-33]. This was bad enough but they went further still, worshiping the gods of the surrounding nations [1Ki 17:7-20]. For this, God rejected Israel completely exiling them by the hand of the Assyrian king from his land, the land of Israel [2Ki 18:9-12]. They became foreigners in foreign lands and the king of Assyria ensured that they could not return to their land by settling other peoples in the land.

**Rejecting Judah**

While Israel went astray, Judah remained faithful to God and so remained in God’s favour much longer. Nevertheless, Judah too fell into the terrible sins of idolatry and bloodshed and broke God’s Law at many points. The Sabbath, which was the sign of the Old Covenant between God and Israel [Exo 31:13] was desecrated, thus breaking the Covenant, they even desecrated the temple of God by offering unclean animals upon the altar, worshiping idols and other gods in it. For all of this, God rejected them.

Like Israel in the north, Judah too was exiled—they were exiled to Babylon. At this point, the rejection of Israel and Judah is similar but Judah’s rejection involved even more because of the greater favor she had enjoyed from God. Of all the towns and cities of Israel, God had chosen Jerusalem and Zion [Psa 87:1-2; 132:13-14] which were in Judah, and in Jerusalem was God’s earthly temple. In Judah also reigned the kings from David’s line. Judah upon exile lost all of this—God destroyed his temple which was in Jerusalem and put an end to the reign of kings in Judah.

The exile of Israel and Judah is described as casting them out of God’s presence [Jer 23:39]

**What Remained the Same In Spite of Israel and Judah’s Rejection?**

* **Still Children Of Their Fathers**: They were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’s descendants
* **Care from God**: God still cared for them even in exile [Eze 11:16]
* **Worship of God**: They were still to worship God [Deut 4:26-29]

**What Changed with Israel and Judah’s Rejection?**

* **God’s Presence**: They were cast out of God’s presence
* **Land of Promise**: They lost possession of the land of promise
* **Foreigners**: They were foreigners in foreign lands
* **Became Subject to Other gods**: They became subject to other powers [2Ki 25:24; Jer 5:19] and foreign gods as God had long warned them [Deut 28:36; Jer 16:13]—since they will not serve Him, he gave them over to serve others to see the difference [2Ch 12:8].
* **Understanding of God’s Word**: Their minds and hearts were cursed—they were made spiritually blind and deaf, so that they are unable to truly understand the things of God [Isa 6:9-10].

This stops them from being fully restored to God and from being saved [Isa 6:10*b*]. This is why they could not recognize Christ when he came and murdered the very one they had for so long been waiting for. This aspect of their rejection has not been overturned but is still in effect and is to continue till the second coming of Christ. This is a punishment for them, a retribution for their sins [Rom 11:7-10].

For this reason, though Israel is so blessed and unlike other nations has the light of God—the Law of Moses and his words to them through his prophets—they are in the dark having been made blind [1Co 3:14-15; 4:3-4].

* + The spiritual institutions were weakened

This darkness was partly accomplished by weakening the spiritual and religious offices that promoted the will and ways of God among the people. The prophetic ministry was greatly affected, the prophets who were the spiritual eyes of the people became blind, they no longer received visions from the LORD, they inquired but there were no answers [Isa 29:9-10;Mic 3:6]. Priests and pastors who were the teachers and leaders of the people failed in their office and could not properly understand the word of the LORD [Isa 29:11-12 *cf.* Rom 11:9-10]. This was however not absolute for there were still prophets among the people, however they became more and more few till they became such a rare occurrence among the people.

* + God gave them a spirit of deep sleep [Isa 29:9-12]
  + God’s glory departed from the temple [Eze 8:6; 10] and his temple was destroyed
* **Presence of God’s Glory**: God’s glory departed from the temple [Eze 8:6; 10] and his temple was destroyed

**Relevant Lessons**

As we read through scriptures, we can see that not all who suffered along with Israel and Judah were personally guilty; some of these men and women were extremely pious and faithful to God and to his Law. Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and others like them suffered along with Israel in her rejection but were certainly not personally guilty of the sins for which God rejected Israel.

**The Spirit in Israel’s Story**

God did not reject any of both nations without warning but over and over again, he warned them [1Ki 17:13-14] through the prophets by his Holy Spirit in them but they were rebellious and rejected the Holy Spirit [Neh 9:30]. The consequence was that he turned and became their enemy [Isa 63:10; Act 7:51]. So the Israelites had the Spirit of God among them [Neh 9:20; Isa 63:11-14]

**Judah’s Return from Exile**

Judah’s exile lasted seventy years after which they were restored to the land. God nevertheless has not fully restored them for their return to the land was only partial. The seventy year exile of Judah particularly atoned for one sin—the desecration of the Sabbath [2Chr 36:19-21 *cf.* Lev 25:1-5; 26:32-35]. It did not cater to other sins such as the blood that had been shed [2Ki 24:3-4] which cannot be easily atoned for but by the blood of the one who shed it [Joe 3:21 *cf.* Num 35:33-34]; they were still paying for these bloods even long after Jesus’ atonement [Mat 23:35-38].