

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 11A

JUDGES

CHAPTER 13

Judges 13:5, *“For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”*

INTRODUCTION

Chapters 13 to 16 record the last judge of Israel in the book of Judges. All together 12 judges are presented in the book, beginning with Othniel, followed by Ehud, and then Shamgar. The fourth was Deborah, the illustrious female judge, followed by Gideon, Tola and Jair. The eighth judge was Jephthah and after him were three judges, namely, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon. The twelfth and final judge was Samson. Many people, not just Christians, know about the life of Samson — a man who had supernatural strength and was cunningly betrayed by Delilah to the enemy. From the Biblical standpoint, Samson’s life was a failure. But it is significant in that the failures of his life are instructive. There are many

great men and women in the history who think that they are too clever and important to be bound by standards of morality. Samson’s life, therefore, is especially instructive in this regard.

The children of Israel had sinned against the LORD by intermarrying, which was forbidden by the Law of Moses. Although they professed allegiance to the LORD God, they turned to worship the gods of the Canaanites, thereby incurring the anger of the LORD. When oppressed they cried to the LORD who raised a deliverer and judge to free them from their oppressors. Then they enjoyed a period of peace, though not for long because they gradually forgot God and went back to their sinful ways. This had been the cycle during the period of the previous 11 judges. By now the children of Israel had hardened their hearts. When we hear the Word of God, we either receive and obey God or harden our hearts in disbelief and disobedience. There is no such thing as a static or neutral response — we either obey or disobey. Each time we disobey, the heart gets a little more harder, until finally it is beyond help. However, in this study of the life of Samson, there is one reassuring truth about the LORD God. Whilst He gives the individual freedom to make his own choices, be they right or wrong, wise or foolish, God in His sovereign will accomplish His plan and purpose despite man’s wrong doings. God will always keep His

covenant. This we will learn in the life of Samson.

OUTLINE

1. The Promise (13:1-14)
2. The Birth (13:15-25)

COMMENTARY

The Promise – 13:1-14

The previous judge in Chapter 12 is Abdon, the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite who judged Israel for eight years (12:14, 15). When he passed away, the children of Israel once again backslided and sinned before the LORD. In this general opening statement, it is mentioned that the LORD let the Philistines subjugate Israel for 40 years. Then we are introduced to Manoah and his wife, who lived in the town of Zorah situated in a low-lying country of Judah which was given to the Danites. Zorah was just outside the boundary line which separated the Philistine territory and that of Israel. The couple had no children because Manoah's wife was barren.

The Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and promised her that although she was unable to bear a child, she would now conceive and bear a son (13:3). The Angel solemnly directed her not to drink wine and eat any unclean food. Furthermore, the son she would bear must not have his hair on his head shaved at all for he should be a Nazarite unto God from the womb

(the moment when she conceived). Samson was made a Nazarite before he was born.

The Angel of the LORD also revealed the mission of her son: to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. One could imagine how happy Manoah's wife would have been after hearing this wonderful news, as in those days for a Hebrew woman to be barren was deplorable and disgraceful. Naturally, she quickly broke the wonderful news to her husband. She said that "a man of God" came to her. She was not sure whether the "man of God" was a prophet but she described the Angel as one who was likened to an "angel of God" and was very fearsome. She admitted that she did not ask the Angel for His name. She also shared exactly everything that the Angel declared to her. She said that their child would be a Nazarite from the womb to the day of his death (13:7).

Manoah prayed to the LORD pleading for the reappearance of the "man of God" to them so that they could be told what to do with the child that should be born. The LORD heard his prayer and the Angel of the LORD appeared a second time to Manoah's wife. She was then sitting in the field and ran and "shewed" her husband that the angel of God had come again to her. It seems that Manoah could have been in another part of the field and probably within sight of the Angel of the LORD for his wife to show him. Manoah wasted no time and "went after his wife". Manoah straightaway

ascertained from the Angel of the LORD whether He was the man who spoke to his wife previously. Then Manoah asked Him how they as parents should bring up the child (13:12). The Angel of the LORD said to him that he should do exactly as He had said to Manoah's wife previously.

The Angel of the LORD did not add anything new. The Angel of the LORD repeated His solemn charge to them and to faithfully do all that He had commanded them to do. We observe that Manoah and his wife were a godly couple. When the majority of the children Israel, probably also those in positions of leadership went whoring after other Canaanite gods and covetously craved for more material gains, Manoah and his wife remained faithful to the LORD. Soon to be parents, they showed a natural concern for the son whom the LORD was about to give them. They also had a hunger to obey God's instruction. They wanted to raise and nurture the child the way the LORD wanted them to.

Indeed, this genuine God-fearing couple was a fit vessel for God to use. Their son would be a Nazarite (Hebrew word "nazir" means "to set apart", "to separate"), and that was the vow they had to keep. Either a man or a woman could take the vow of a Nazarite, one who was specially separated (consecrated) unto the LORD. It was only for a period of time; when he had fulfilled his vow he would be released of it with the prescribed ceremony before

the LORD. In the case of Samson, his Nazarite vow was for life. Besides taking the vow as a voluntary act of complete dedication to the LORD, there were three other visible things, which he must fulfill. Firstly, he must abstain from the fruit of the vine — no wine, grapes, or raisins. It is not that this was sinful, but they were signs of luxurious living, which were inconsistent with a simple life. More importantly these were probably intoxicants that the Nazarite was to abstain from to keep himself sober to do the work of God. This was what the vow was all about i.e. to serve God.

Secondly, he must not cut his hair, a public sign of his vow. Again, it was not wrong for people to cut their hair. This external sign was to show other that he has made a Nazarite vow and they must not tempt him. At the same time faithful friends and family will also encourage him now that they know that he has made a Nazarite vow. He has to refrain from all spiritual contaminants. Thirdly, he was not allowed to come into contact with a dead person or animal. This was the sign of the preeminence of God in his life, as such contacts made him unfit for service in the tabernacle (see Numbers 6:1-21). This means that he is not allowed to participate in the embalming of his own parents or loved ones when they died. The dead animals here refer to dead unclean animals not clean animals or else he would not be able to eat at all.

The Birth – 13:15-25

Manoah wanted to extend his hospitality to the Angel of the LORD, and requested Him to stay while he made ready a kid, meaning to have a feast. The Angel of the LORD replied that if he detained Him, He would not eat a meal with him. Moreover, if he intended to offer a burnt offering, then he must offer it to the LORD. At this point, Manoah still did not know that He was the Angel of the LORD. This shows that the Angel of the LORD appeared in the likeness of man with, nothing unusually special about his appearance. Then Manoah asked for His name. A name, to the Hebrews, would indicate the character of the person. The Angel of the LORD replied that His name was “secret” which should read “wonderful” (in the original Hebrew). The Angel used the same name which was prophetically given by Isaiah 9:6 “Wonderful, Counsellor.” He is Wonderful! Manoah then took the kid and offered it as a burnt offering on the altar of rock. When the flame of the burnt offering went upwards to heaven, the Angel of the LORD performed an amazing feat by ascending up to heaven in the midst of the flame of the altar (13:20).

As Manoah and his wife looked at the Angel of the LORD, they were overwhelmed by the majesty and awesomeness of the phenomenon. They both bowed with their faces down to the ground in

worship. The Angel of the LORD did not appear to them again.

The conversation between Manoah and his wife was interesting. Manoah said to his wife that they would surely die because they had seen God (13:20). But his wife responded and said that if the LORD had the desire to kill them, He would not have received the burnt offerings. Furthermore He would not have shown them all these things, neither would He have shared with them everything that had been said. Manoah’s wife proved that she was the more sensible and intelligent of the two.

No less than nine months later, Manoah’s wife gave birth to a son, as promised. They named the child “Samson” which means “like the sun.” He grew up and the parents made sure that the Nazarite vow was observed according to what the Angel of the LORD had ordered. The LORD blessed Samson. The Spirit of the LORD began to stir his heart as a young man in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.¹ Samson can be considered a very unusual child. He was born by God’s miraculous intervention; his birth was

¹ **Eshtaol** narrow pass or recess, a town (Jos 15:33) in the low country, the She-phelah of Judah. It was allotted to the tribe of Dan (Jos 19:41) and was one of their strongholds. Here Samson spent his boyhood, and first began to show his mighty strength; and here he was buried in the burying-place of Manoah his father (Jud 13:25 16:31 18:2,8,11,12) It is identified with the modern Yeshua, on a hill 2 miles east of Zorah. – (Easton Bible Dictionary, s.v. *Eshtaol*).

announced by the Angel of the LORD Himself,² and the purpose of his life was announced. He occupied a very special place in God's plan. His life was full of promise.

PRACTICAL VALUE

A very comforting truth about God's dealings with His people is borne out at this juncture in Israel's history. The children of Israel had been doing evil before the LORD. When their neighbours oppressed them, they would cry to the LORD in repentance. The LORD then raised a judge who would deliver them. During the life of the judge there was peace and prosperity in the country. This pattern was repeated beginning with the judgeship of Othniel until that of Gideon. In the case of Jephthah, the LORD did not choose the deliverer. The people chose him. The LORD condescended and gave them victory through Jephthah. This time it was different. The children of Israel were so hardened in their sinful ways that they seemed not to care. While professing to be the chosen children of LORD God, in practice they worshipped Baalim believing that these Canaanite gods would bless their land, sheep and cattle. They were satisfied and comfortable and

did not mind the oppression of the Philistines. This is a very sad reflection of Israel's hardened state that 40 years of captivity had so little or no impact at all. They had completely forgotten their spiritual heritage and responsibility. But the LORD God would never forsake His covenant promise to Abraham, and no one, not even His chosen nation could thwart His plan. The children of Israel did not cry to God nor repent as before. So the LORD God acted sovereignly and supernaturally to intervene to deliver His people by raising Samson. Thus the unusual escapades of Samson were done, unlike the previous judges who delivered an Israel who asked to be delivered.

God has made a covenant with us in Christ Jesus. When we persistently sin against Him, He will either act to remove us so that no further damage will be done by us, or to restore us on His terms.

Manoah and his wife were the remnant few who remained faithful to the LORD God. This is encouraging because when many of His professing people go astray He will keep a faithful remnant for His glory and sake. Today, much of mainstream Christianity have fallen away from the faith once delivered unto the saints. Let all of us examine ourselves and remain ever faithful to God — to fear Him and do His will.
AMEN

² The Angel of the LORD was the Second Person of the Godhead, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate appearances. The fact that He ascended and accepted the burnt offerings, which might only be made to God, revealed that He is God.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 13:1-7; Luke 1:26-38.

TUESDAY: Judges 13:8-14; Numbers 6:1-8.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 13:15-25; Ephesians 3:20, 21.

THURSDAY: Judges 13:1-25.

FRIDAY: Judges 13:1-25.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the Angel of the LORD'S message to Manoah's wife?

2. What similarities and differences do you see between the Nazarite's vow in Numbers 6:1-18 and the Angel's words to Manoah's wife?

3. How would you describe the relationship between Manoah and his wife?

4. Can a Christian possess a hardened heart where even the chastisement of God has little or no impact?

5. Is it possible for a believer to get used to sin and shame that he would make sinning a part of his way

of life? Cite Bible verses to support your view if you disagree.

6. What is the significance of asking for the offering?

7. What can you learn from the different responses of Manoah and his wife to the Angel of the LORD'S appearance?
