

The Message to Samson's Parents

Judges 13, Hebrews 11:32

Slide 1

Samson was a miracle baby. He was one of a few born to women who weren't able to have children, except by God's direct intervention.

He loved at least three different women who clearly didn't love him and allowed two of these women to annoy him so much that he gave in to what they wanted.

Even worse, he didn't receive anything in return from these women, or anybody else for that matter. And to add insult to injury, his own nation captured him and handed him over to their enemies!

Even though Samson is one of the heroes of the faith found in Hebrews 11:32, he was still a failure. He had the chance to do so much but he didn't accomplish as much as he could have.

Now, the best way to begin the story of Samson is to start at the beginning.

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Samson's parents, Manoah and his wife, are first mentioned in Judges 13.

Judges 13:1-2, "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth."

In these verses we're introduced to Samson's mother who wasn't able to have children. In those days, this was a great concern to women, and most men, too.

But, there's no record of Samson's mother complaining about her problem. She didn't demand children, like Rachel did of Jacob, nor did she suggest that her husband father a child by a different woman.

Regardless of her situation, she had stayed true to the worship of Israel's God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob while most of the nation worshipped idols.

In Joshua 24, you can see that idolatry was a constant source of irritation in Israel. It's there he pleaded with the people to get rid of the foreign idols they still had in their possession!

In fact, it wouldn't be long before the tribe of Dan established a priesthood for false gods. But this doesn't seem to be the case for Samson's mother.

It was probably because of her faith that God sent an Angel to comfort her.

Judges 13:3-5, "The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

Samson's father, Manoah, also had not forsaken God. He wasn't only a man of faith but a believing husband.

This is illustrated in the few verses, because when she told him about the encounter with the "man of God," he didn't mock her or deny her statement.

He not only believed that his wife had seen a “*man of God,*” but the message, too. Listen to verses 6-7...

Judges 13:6-7, *“Then the woman went to her husband and told him, ‘A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn’t ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name. But he said to me, ‘You will become pregnant and have a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from the womb until the day of his death.’”*

Manoah’s belief and faith was displayed in the fact that he immediately prayed to the LORD for guidance.

Judges 13:8-9, *“Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. I beg you to let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.’” God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her.”*

Manoah wanted guidance on how best to raise this promised child. But did you read what happened when he prayed? It said, *“God heard Manoah...”* Aren’t you glad that God answers prayer?

I’m sure that God was pleased to know He still had some who believed in Him, especially during this time when Israel *“did evil in the eyes of the LORD.”*

After Manoah’s prayer, the Angel again appeared to Manoah’s wife who ran and told her husband that the One who appeared to her had returned.

As soon as he heard her words, Manoah went with her to speak with the Man.

But, being unsure to whom he was speaking, his first question was, *“Are you the man who talked to my wife?”* The Angel replied, *“I am.”*

These are the same words which God spoke to Moses in the desert, near the Burning Bush. Apparently, that was good enough for Manoah.

Then he asked for guidance on how best to raise the child. Think about that! Wouldn't our world be better off if more parents sought, and then followed, the Lord's teachings as found in His Word.

Since there wasn't much of the Word available at that time, they were wise to seek guidance directly from this *“man of God.”*

Judges 13:13-14, *“The angel of the LORD answered, “Your wife must do all that I have told her. She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.”*

The Angel repeats the instructions of verse 4 and tells them that the child would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Since their lifestyle seem to be pleasing to the LORD, there was no additional command to repent, offer sacrifices, build, or destroy anything, or even change their location.

The only instructions were for Manoah's wife to abstain from anything that comes from the grapevine, any fermented drink, and any unclean thing.

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Now, one of the customs in the Old Testament was to offer food to a guest.

Abraham did this in Genesis 18 when the Three Visitors came to visit him. Gideon prepared a meal, during a time of severe distress, when he met the Angel of the LORD.

Something to keep in mind is that Manoah and his wife still didn't know who this Visitor really was. They only knew him as a "*man of God*," which was a rare person to meet in the days of the Judges.

The only mention of a prophet, in the Book of Judges, is in chapter 6, where an unnamed prophet gave God's message to Israel before Gideon was called.

The term "*man of God*" only appears twice before this, both in reference to Moses.

Even though Manoah and his wife didn't know the Visitor's identity, they insisted on showing concern and courtesy.

They probably thought he lived some distance away and wanted to provide Him with some comfort.

Judges 13:15-19a, "*Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you.'*"

But they weren't prepared for the Visitor's instructions!

Judges 13:16-19a, "*The angel of the LORD replied, 'Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.'*" (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.) *Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, 'What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?' He replied, 'Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.'* *Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD.*"

At first, the Visitor said, in so many words, *“If you fix it, I won’t eat it.”* Then He instructed them to make *“a burnt offering”* to the LORD.

By this time, Manoah’s curiosity seems to be alerted. He finally asks the Visitor, *“What is your name, so that we may honor you...”* I doubt he expected the answer he got from the Visitor, *“Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.”*

Even though there was no Tabernacle in the vicinity and the Temple was still many years in the future, that didn’t stop Manoah from following the Angel’s instructions.

He sacrificed a young goat and offered a grain offering to the Lord. At which time the Angel did an amazing thing.

Judges 13:19b-21, And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.”

Manoah and his wife must have been surprised! When had anyone, anywhere, jumped onto the flame of a burnt offering, lived, and then went up to Heaven? This Angel did exactly that.

Manoah and wife saw one of the most spectacular events in all history. They realized that they had seen the Angel of the LORD, but Manoah was terrified.

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Judges 13:22, *“We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. “We have seen God!”*

Manoah was scared for their lives. Scripture only records a few people who have heard God speak in an audible voice, i.e. Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joshua.

But there's one thing all of these people had in common: none of them ever saw God personally.

Moses asked God, *"Now show me your glory" but God told him, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you..., But," He said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

No doubt this story had been told from generation to generation and with this in mind, it's no surprise that Manoah and his wife were wondering what would happen to them.

They were among the few who had ever seen an Angel of the LORD! And Manoah was clearly in fear, saying, *"We are doomed to die!" "We have seen God!"* Then Manoah's wife calms his fears.

Judges 13:23, *But his wife answered, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this."*

Manoah was concerned that both of them would die, after seeing who they thought was God.

But his wife simply said that if God wanted to take their lives, He wouldn't have accepted the burnt offerings, nor given them the promises about their unborn child.

Sometimes the man has great faith, sometimes the wife. It's to Mrs. Manoah's credit that she not only believed the words of the LORD but could also speak to her husband without making him feel bad or unworthy.

We can pray that many more believing wives will support their husbands in times of faith and in times of doubt.

In the end, God blessed Manoah and his wife with a son. Judges 13:24, *“The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson.”*

Manoah’s wife named the baby Samson, which means “little sun.”

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Conclusion

This chapter ends with a short synopsis of Samson’s life from birth to manhood, or at least marriageable age.

Judges 25, *“He grew and the LORD blessed him, and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.”*

Originally, Dan settled in a place which was the farthest south in Israel near the Philistine coast, and perhaps as a result, which may have caused them to be less spiritual than the other tribes.

This is why Samson is an excellent example of how God uses the weak things of the world to confound the wise. He used a man that was from a tribe such as Dan and made him a leader of all Israel.

In fact, God can use us no matter what our background is or what social or culture upbringing we’ve had.

God can make the last the first and the first the last. God doesn’t want us to rely upon our own strength, He wants to pour His spirit into us.

We see in Samson a man who started right. He was staying within the borders of where God could speak to him and empower him spiritually.

We too, like Samson, have the ability to stay connected to God. We have the full Word of God to set our boundary and help us know our borders.

We can pray and praise that precious Word of God over our lives. We can be moved by the Spirit of God as we abide in that boundary.

Remember the psalmist David as he wrote in Psalm 91:1, *“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”*

What a place to be! What a privilege you and I have! We’re living in temporary homes. Our real residence is *“in the secret place of the Most High... abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.”*

Before we leave chapter 13, I want you to hear a key phrase in verse 5. It says Samson *“...will take the lead in delivering Israel...”*

As we go through the story, we’ll discover that in reality he never did any delivering, because he never delivered himself. Yet, Samson was set apart by the Spirit of God.

He had everything he needed to accomplish his task. He was both energized and equipped. Compared to other Biblical heroes, he had more than anyone else. And yet, he let it all slip away.