

Judges 13:1-25  
Samson – Part 1

Introduction

1. We now come to the last judge in the book of Judges: Samson--He is not the last judge, however, as Eli and Samuel follow him (1 Samuel)
2. And like most of the prior judges, he comes after a difficult time of oppression

A. Israel does evil again (13:1)

1. Israel continues the pattern of wickedness laid out in the introduction to the book (13:1): **“Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD...”**
2. Once again, the Lord chastises Israel: **“...so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.”**
3. But, this time there are at least three things that make this time different than the previous episodes of apostasy:
  - a. The First Difference: The length of the oppression before God raises up a judge: 40 years, which is twice that of any previous time (20 years under the Canaanites prior to Deborah)
  - b. The Second Difference: No cry for help: each prior oppression resulted in a cry for help; there is no such cry recorded here
    - 1) Why is there no cry for help from Israel?
    - 2) With each generation, Israel appears to be progressing further and further into paganism (something the author foretold in Judges 2:19)
    - 3) We even see a digression in the moral quality and character of the judges with some returning to their Canaanite ways (Gideon made an ephod, Jephthah sacrificed his daughter)
    - 4) Could it be that Israel had become so pagan, so distant from YHWH, that God was no more than a distant memory at best?
    - 5) One also has to ask if they had resolved themselves to their situation, living under the oppression of the Philistines (see 15:11)?
  - c. The Third Difference: The Philistine oppression never really ends completely: it will continue through the judgeship of Samuel and into the reign of David

B. The Angel of the LORD promises another deliverer – the next and final judge in the book (2-8)

1. Just as there was something different about Israel’s apostasy this time, so there is something different about this next deliver—God begins with his conception
2. The Angel of the LORD appears to the wife of Manoah, a man from the tribe of Dan (2): **“Judges 13:2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children.”**
  - a. She is anonymous—we are never given her name
  - b. She is barren – an oft repeated Biblical theme
    - 1) Sarah, Abraham’s wife (gave birth to Isaac)
    - 2) Rebekah, Isaac’s wife (gave birth to Jacob and Esau)
    - 3) Rachel, Jacob’s wife (gave birth to Joseph)

- 4) Hannah, Elkanah's wife (gave birth to Samuel)
  - 5) Shunammite woman (gave birth to a son after Elisha promised her a son for her service to him)
  - 6) Elizabeth, Zecharias' wife (gave birth to John the Baptist)
- c. In each of these cases, the use of a barren woman serves to indicate the miraculous nature of the birth—God's unmistakable hand in what is about to take place
3. The Angel of the LORD informs her that she will give birth to a son (3): **"Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.'"**
  4. He gives instructions for raising the child (4-5): **"Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. 5 'For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.'"**
    - a. She was to abstain from three things while she was pregnant:
      - 1) Alcohol
      - 2) Unclean foods (those banned by the Mosaic Law)
      - 3) Cutting his hair
    - b. This was because Samson would be a **"Nazarite to God"**:
      - 1) A Nazarite was someone who was consecrated to the service of the LORD, either as a personal vow or parental dedication (as in this case and that of Samuel)
      - 2) According to the Law, they were to abstain from three things (Numbers 6:1-21):
        - a) Alcohol
        - b) Cutting their hair
        - c) Touching or going near the dead
      - 3) There appear to be two kinds of Nazarites:
        - a) Temporary: 7 day or 30 day as part of making a vow to the Lord (i.e. Paul in Acts 18:18 and 21:22-24)
        - b) Perpetual: lifelong (i.e. Samuel and Sampson)
      - 4) Samson's designation as a Nazarite means that he was consecrated by God to God for His service (i.e. as a deliverer)
  5. The Angel of the Lord declares Samson's purpose (5b): **"and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."**
    - a. Notice that the LORD says that Sampson with only **"begin"** to deliver Israel from the Philistines
    - b. Sampson's deliverance would be only temporary (as stated above, the Philistine's were a problem into David's reign)
  6. Finally, the woman relays the encounter to her husband (6-7):

C. The Angel of the LORD confirms the promise to Manoah and his wife (8-14)

1. Manoah's response to his wife's news is to pray (8): **"Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born."**
2. God responds by answering Manoah's prayer (9-14)
  - a. Manoah's first question is whether the man is the same one who spoke to his wife (11)
  - b. His second question is related to how Samson should be raised and what his vocation (i.e. career) should be (12):
    - 1) Notice Manoah expects the LORD's promise to come true: **"when your words are fulfilled..."**
    - 2) NET: **"how should the child be raised and what should he do?"**
  - c. The Angel answers by repeating the instructions given to Manoah's wife (13-14)

D. The Angel of the LORD reveals His identity (15-23)
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1. Manoah offers to feed their visitor, but the LORD instructs him to make an offering instead (15-16)
2. When Manoah asks the LORD for His name (contrast with his wife's lack of doing so), the LORD refuses because His name is **"wonderful"**—the Hebrew is better understood as incomprehensible, beyond human understanding (17-18)
3. He does, however, reveal His identity by performing 'wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on' and ascending to heaven in the flames of the burnt offering (19-20)
4. It was at this point that Manoah and his wife realized the Angel of the LORD and God Himself (20b-23)

E. Sidebar: Comparisons and contrasts between the Gideon story and this one
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- A. There are a number of similarities between this story and the Gideon story:
  1. The angel of the LORD appears in both
  2. Both prepare an offering to the LORD
  3. The LORD consumes both offerings with signs and wonders
  4. In both stories, the response is one of awe and reverence
  5. Gideon, as well as Manoah and his wife, realize they have just seen the LORD
  6. In the Gideon story, the LORD tells Gideon he will not die after seeing the LORD, while in this story the wife tells Manoah that he will not die
- B. There are also some difference, though:
  1. The obvious difference is that in the Gideon story, the LORD appears to the deliverer, Gideon—in this story, He appears to the parents but never to Samson himself (at any point in his life)—why is this?
  2. Another difference is in the apparent purpose of the visits from the LORD:
    - a. In the Gideon story, the visits by the LORD are designed to encourage and strengthen Gideon
    - b. In this story, the visits by the LORD are designed to announce God's plan and reveal Himself

## F. Sampson is born (24-25)

1. Samson is born just as the LORD promised (24a)
2. The LORD blessed him as he grew up (24b)
3. As he entered adulthood, “the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Hananeh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol” (25)

## Conclusion

1. Why are we given so many details regarding Samson’s conception and birth?
  - a. We know very little, if anything, about most of the judges (only their names are given)
  - b. In the other cases, we are introduced to the judges as adults and get more information/interaction
  - c. Why is it different with the Samson narrative?
2. In his commentary on Judges, Davis suggests that the author may be indicating that there was no one in Israel that God could raise up to deliver Israel so God had to “grow one from scratch” with Samson:
  - a. Up until this point, God has selected someone from within Israel to deliver them from their enemies
  - b. We have seen the character and morality of these judges diminish from one generation to the next, just as each generation of Israelites became more and more pagan
  - c. By the time we get to the last couple of judges, we see them stained with or heavily influenced by their Canaanite culture
  - d. Is it possible that God could not find even one man from within Israel at this time to deliver them?
  - e. Was it possible that God had to begin in the womb and consecrate (i.e. Nazarite to God) the next deliverer from day one?
3. It’s also possible that the story of Manoah and his wife reflects what was happening in Israel at the time:
  - a. Israel had descended deeper and deeper into idolatry and paganism, so much so that in this time of oppression they didn’t even cry out to God
  - b. When we first are introduced to Manoah and his wife we know nothing of their spiritual heritage
  - c. There seems to be a progression in the narrative from ignorance to knowledge regarding YHWY
  - d. Manoah and his wife initially only refer to the Angel of the Lord as a “**man of God**” and they seem clueless as to His real identity (four times they call him this)
  - e. In referring to God, they both use the generic terms “elohim” and “adonai” (lord, teacher, master)
  - f. It isn’t until the Angel of the LORD performs His wonders during the sacrifice and ascends into the heavens that they realize they were standing in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel
  - g. Manoah and his wife’s ignorance may serve as a picture of the ignorance of Israel—they had so departed from God that they no longer recognized Him

4. It's interesting how this reflects our world today, including that of the Church:
  - a. Jesus said that in the days before His return, the world would resemble the days of Noah (Luke 17:26)
  - b. But what about the Church? What will happen to it as the world races toward more and more paganism and rebellion?
  - c. Could it ever happen that the Church becomes so much like the world or other religions that we become useless to God?
  - d. Look at the churches in the first few chapters of Revelation—six of the seven are chastised and warned of having their lampstands removed
  - e. Could it be that a time will come when God will look down upon His Church and it will look much like Israel at the time of Samson?
  - f. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that Jesus wouldn't return until the apostasy (defection or revolt) comes first (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
  - g. Paul warned Timothy of that day in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8
  - h. In many respects we are already there:
    - 1) False teaching is rampant in the church
    - 2) Many churches have abandoned the Bible as their source of authority when it comes to teaching and preaching, and replaced it with human wisdom, mysticism, pop-psychology and teaching to felt-needs
    - 3) Many churches have become nothing more than human enterprises or big businesses using slick marketing tactics and secular means to attract the masses
    - 4) Many wouldn't recognize Jesus if we walked in the door and stood behind the pulpit
  
5. There is hope, however:
  - a. Even when Israel didn't recognize God, God sent them a deliverer: Samson
  - b. Today, we await the return of the Great Deliver Jesus Christ
  - c. No matter how bad it gets, no matter what we face—from outside or even inside the Church--our Deliverer is coming
  - d. The only question is will we be prepared?