

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 15- "The Most Unique Judge"

Key text: Judges 13:1-25

Suppl. texts: Is. 9:6

Introduction: Last time, we heard harsh accusations & murderous threats from Ephraim against Jephthah & his men. They threatened to burn Jep's house down with him in it & to battle the exhausted army he led. The battle that ensued was brother against brother, & they used their words to taunt & insult Jep & his men. God hears our careless words; He always hears. God judged & disciplined Ephraim as 42,000 men fell to the sword of Jephthah. Jep only judged Israel for six years & then died. Following his short reign, three more minor judges ruled: Ibzan, Elon, & Abdon, but the bible didn't have much to say about their characters. After thirty-one years of lackluster leadership, the stage was set for the most infamous judge to rise: Samson. Tonight, we focus on Samson's origin story.

Outline: read Judges 13:1-25.

1. A childless wife

- The seventh time a familiar phrase is used in the book of Judges.
- **Vs. 1:** *"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."*
- Israel sinned & God delivered them into the hands of a constant foe, the Philistines.
- This is the longest period of oppression listed in the book of Judges.
- **What phrase is missing?** There's no record of the Israelites crying out to the Lord (?).
- **Vs. 2:** *"A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless."* Zorah is in Dan, close to Philistia.
- The Philistines were originally Greeks (Crete) who sailed & settled near the coast.
- The word 'Philistines' literally means: sea people or people from the sea.
- They had five major cities: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, & Ekron. **Map pic.**
- God sees the barren. Other biblical examples are **Sarah**, who bore Isaac; **Rebekah**, who bore Esau & Jacob; **Hannah**, who bore Samuel; the **Shunammite woman** (Elisha) & her unnamed son/raised to life; & **Elizabeth**, who bore John (the Baptist). **6 total.**
- God works through the barren. Each of these children, except for the Shunammite woman's son (to our knowledge), played a vital role in redemptive history.
- God meets us in our brokenness. To be barren in those days was to be seen as broken, as useless. A wife's value & worth was closely tied to childbearing.
- God redeems the barren. God meets us in our brokenness, our state of uselessness & makes something beautiful in His timing.

- **Vs. 3:** *"The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, 'You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son.'" The reproductive problem is clear.*
- The promise is for an extraordinary child. Because of this, there are stipulations.
- **Vs. 4-5:** *"Now see to it that you **drink no wine or other fermented drink** and that you do not **eat anything unclean**, because you will conceive and **give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.**"* Mom is under an involuntary vow during pregnancy, as well as the boy.
- The purpose is also clear; he will begin the deliverance but not finish it.
- This is the first & only child commanded to be a Nazirite by God in Scripture. John the Baptist seems to be the only possible N.T. example, tho Nazirite isn't mentioned.
- **Numbers 6:1-12** gives the details of a Nazirite vow which was voluntarily taken, not gender specific, & usually for an allotted time. Eat, drink, hair, & ceremonially clean.
- The word 'Nazirite' means: separated one, to consecrate.

2. Guess Who's back?

- **Vs. 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 conceive and give birth to 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 birth until the day of his death.**' "*
- The Hebrew word translated awesome is 'nora' & it can mean fearsome, terrifying, deep awe, or reverence.
- Quote: *"When God wants to do something really great in His world, He doesn't send an army but an angel."* An angelic visit often delivers gospel news.
- However, for some unstated reason, Manoah's wife's words are not enough (?).
- **Vs. 8:** *"Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: 'O Lord, I beg you, 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.'"*
- What Manoah heard was not sufficient for him, but God hears & honors his prayer.

3. A repeat appearance

- I can't help but laugh here. The Angel comes again, but again to the wife.
- **Vs. 9:** *"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."*
- I love that she's alone & Manoah is absent!
- **Vs. 10:** *"The woman hurried to tell her husband, 'He's here! The Man who appeared to me the other day!'"*
- At this point, both Manoah & his wife only believe this to be a man from God, possibly a prophet. He looks different, but they see him as just a man.

- **Vs. 11-12;** *"Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said, "Are you the one who talked to my wife?" "I am," He said. So Manoah asked Him, "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" Let me make sure that I understand what you've said.*
- **Vs. 13-15;** *"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.' Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you."*
- The basic response: I already told your wife what to do; there's nothing more to add.
- On the other hand, it was ultimately the father's **responsibility** to rear the child correctly when it came to all things spiritual. How different is that from today?
- Maybe Manoah wanted to confirm, but he quickly shifts to **hospitality** mode.
- Common to the Middle East is the practice of hospitality to strangers.
- **Vs. 16;** *"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.)"*
- The Angel **accepts** worship but will not eat the meal with Manoah.
- Interestingly enough, both Abraham & Gideon offered a young goat to the AoTL.

4. We're **going to die!**

- **Vs. 17-18;** *"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."*
- It is beyond understanding can be translated as it is too **wonderful** to understand.
- This is the same **word** & **adjective** used to describe Jesus in **Isaiah 9:6;** *"And He shall be called Wonderful Counselor..."*.
- **Vs. 19-20;** *"Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. 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.**"* Together, they realize that the Man is Yahweh.
- **Vs. 21-22;** *"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. '**We are doomed to die!**' he said to his wife. "**We have seen God!**"* They had been **covered** by **grace**.
- The couple was right to assume that they should die. No sinner can stand before a holy God on their own merit. God accepted their sacrifice & the bloodshed.
- **Vs. 23-25;** *"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.' **The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. 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."***

- The name Samson means: sunny. Will he be a light to God's people?
- We are told that God's blessing is upon Samson's life & the Spirit of the Lord stirred him often.
- God's people have hope for one more major judge to arrive, but he will need to grow up first.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 15

Last time, we heard harsh accusations & murderous threats from Ephraim against Jephthah & his men. They threatened to burn Jep's house down with him in it & to battle the exhausted army he led. The battle that ensued was brother against brother, & they used their words to taunt & insult Jep & his men. God hears our careless words; He always hears. God judged & disciplined Ephraim as 42,000 men fell to the sword of Jephthah. Jep only judged Israel for six years & then died. Following his short reign, three more minor judges ruled: Ibzan, Elon, & Abdon, but the bible didn't have much to say about their characters. After thirty-one years of lackluster leadership, the stage was set for the most infamous judge to rise: Samson. Tonight, we focus on Samson's origin story.

1. A _____ wife

- The _____ time a familiar phrase is used in the book of Judges.
- God delivered them into the hands of a _____ foe, the Philistines.
- This is the _____ **period of** _____ listed in the book of Judges.
- Zorah is in _____, close to Philistia.
- The Philistines were originally _____ (Crete) who _____ & _____ near the coast.
- The word 'Philistines' literally means: _____ people or people from the _____.
- God _____ the barren.
- God _____ through the barren.
- Played a _____ role in _____ history.
- God _____ us in our _____.
- God _____ the barren.
- The _____ problem is clear.
- The promise is for an _____ child.
- Because of this, there are _____.
- **The _____ is also clear;** he will _____ the deliverance but not _____ it.
- This is the _____ & only _____ commanded to be a Nazarite by God in Scripture.
- **Numbers 6:1-12** gives the details of a Nazarite vow which was _____ taken, not _____ specific, & usually for an _____ time.
- The word 'Nazarite' means: _____ one, to _____.

2. Guess _____ back?

- The Hebrew word translated awesome is '*nora*' & it can mean _____, _____, deep _____, or _____.

- An _____ visit often _____ gospel news.
- Manoah's wife's _____ are not _____.
- What Manoah heard was not _____ for him, but God _____ & _____ his prayer.

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- At this point, both Manoah & his wife only believe this to be a man from God, _____ a _____.
- On the other hand, it was ultimately the father's _____ to rear the child correctly when it came to all things spiritual.
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- The Angel _____ worship but will not eat the meal with Manoah.

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- It is beyond understanding can be translated as it is too _____ to understand.
- This is the same _____ & _____ used to describe Jesus.
- They had been _____ by _____.
- The name Samson means: _____.
- We are told that God's _____ is upon Samson's life & the Spirit of the Lord _____ him often.
- God's people have _____ for one more _____ judge to arrive, but he will need to grow up first.

Small Group Questions:

- 1.** Do you know anyone who has struggled to conceive? How could you gracefully speak into their barrenness & assure them of God's love & concern?

- 2.** Perhaps Manoah is behind his wife spiritually. She immediately received & was willing to follow the instructions of the Angel of the Lord. So often, in church these days, we notice the wife being the spiritual leader of the home. Why is this? How can we encourage men to take their God-assigned leadership roles in their homes & within the church?

- 3.** How gracious is the Lord? To twice visit this couple. To give them clear instructions. To receive their worship. For this couple to see the face of God and experience His presence. Talk about the grace & goodness of God which we can easily miss & overlook?

- 4.** God uses the barrenness of women for His redemptive purposes in the Word of God. How has God used your brokenness for His glory & purposes? How can we encourage others when they are going through disappointments to trust in the hope which only God can bring?