

JUDGES

We continue our study of Judges by beginning a multi-lesson look at the life and role of Samson. What terrific examples of what to do, and what not to do, will surface as we look at the life of one of the Bible's wildest characters: the sometimes hero, the sometimes fool, Samson.

In this lesson, we will look at his birth and his parents, and learn a great deal about God and ourselves through our examination of these relationships, as they related to God's call. Please use this study as an opportunity for introspection. As you contemplate the story in the scripture references, ask yourself how would you have reacted and what you would have done. Seek to understand what Judges 13 reveals to us about the God of the universe, our creator, who loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for us.

Read Judges Chapter 13 and answer the following:

1. What was the condition of the people of Israel, as described at the beginning of this chapter? (Judges 13:1)
 - a. ANSWER: Once again, we see the recurring theme of the Israelites doing evil in the eyes of the Lord; and He delivers them into the hands of an enemy—in this case the Philistines—for forty years.
2. What happened to Manoah and his wife, as recorded in Judges 13:2-3?
 - a. ANSWER: Manoah has a wife who is childless and unable to bear children. She is visited by an angel and told that she will have a child.
3. Whom did the Angel of the Lord visit? (Judges 13:3-5)
 - a. ANSWER: The Angel visited Manoah's wife.
4. What did the Angel of the Lord tell her? (Judges 13:3-5)
 - a. ANSWER: The angel told Manoah's wife not to drink wine or any fermented drink; beer, for example, was a common drink at that time. She was told not to eat anything unclean. She was also told that the child would be a deliverer and would take Israel from the hands of the Philistines. Lastly, she was told that her child was not to have his hair cut or to shave, and that he would be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb.
5. Read Numbers 6:1-8, and fill in the blanks below.
 - a. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:3)
 - i. ANSWER: Abstain from wine or other fermented drink, including not drinking grape juice or even eating grapes or raisins.
 - b. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:4)
 - i. ANSWER: Abstain from eating anything that even comes from the grapevine, include the seeds or skins.
 - c. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:5)
 - i. ANSWER: Not allow a razor to touch their head, thereby enabling their hair to grow long.
 - d. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:6)
 - i. ANSWER: Not go near a dead body.
 - e. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:7)
 - i. ANSWER: Not even go near a member of their immediate family who has died, in order to not become ceremonially unclean.
 - f. A person who takes a Nazirite Vow will _____ (Judges 6:8)
 - i. ANSWER: Understand that they are consecrated to the Lord during the entire period, with no exceptions.
6. What was Manoah's reaction to the message from the Angel of the Lord, after it was relayed to him? (Judges 13:8)
 - a. ANSWER: He realized the responsibility that he and his wife would have to raise the child in strict accordance with God's instructions. He prayed that God would send the angel back to tell them how to do this.
7. Whom did the Angel of the Lord visit the second time? (Judges 13:9)
 - a. ANSWER: This time the angel of the Lord visited both Manoah and his wife.
8. What did Manoah then want to know? (Judges 13:12)
 - a. ANSWER: He asked for guidance on how to raise the boy and what the instructions were for the boy once he became a man and had work to do. The Angel made it clear that the boy was to be raised by following the instructions in the Nazirite vow; and that once grown, he was to continue to follow that vow.
9. Is this a question that we should be asking of God ourselves?
 - a. ANSWER; Yes, clearly this is how we should be with God regarding our own lives. Understanding how important it is to live a life pleasing to God, we should always be asking God for help in making it so.

10. What instructions did the Angel give Manoah? (Judges 13:13-14)
- a. ANSWER: Again, the Angel made it clear that the boy was to be raised by following the instructions in the Nazarite vow and that once grown, he was to continue to follow that vow.
11. What was Manoah's response to these instructions? (Judges 13:15-18)
- a. ANSWER: Manoah was glad that the Lord had sent further instruction and wanted to repay the man's kindness with a meal. He did not realize at first that it was the Angel of the Lord.
12. What was the name of the Angel of the Lord? (Judges 13:17-18)
- a. ANSWER: The Angel would not give Manoah his name. Manoah would not have understood it; and it did not matter as long as Manoah understood that God had sent this messenger to his wife and him for this purpose.
13. What did the Angel of the Lord then do, which amazed Manoah and his wife? (Judges 13:19-21)
- a. ANSWER: The Angel of the Lord ascended up toward heaven as the flames were burning—in fact he ascended up inside the flames themselves.
14. So who in fact was the Angel of the Lord? (Judges 13:22)
- a. ANSWER: Clearly this was the pre-incarnate Christ, the Lord. Even Manoah and his wife recognized this immediately, "We have seen God!" he exclaims in verse 22.
15. Consider for a moment what we have just read and what we might be able to learn from it.
- a. Did God know how Samson would eventually turn out before Samson was born?
 - i. ANSWER: God is omniscient and knew how Samson would turn out, even before He created Samson in the womb of his mother. Similarly, He knows how we will turn out. Nothing is a surprise to God, and yet he loves us in spite of knowing this.
 - b. What did the woman, Samson's mother, do to deserve such an honor?
 - i. ANSWER: As far as we can tell, nothing she did earned her this honor; this was all done by the grace and unsearchable knowledge of God.
 - c. After reading Judges 13:22-25, would you consider Samson's mother a wise person or a foolish person?
 - i. ANSWER: Clearly she was a wise woman.
 - d. What conclusions can we draw from this story about God, the Nation of Israel, Samson, his parents, our salvation, and making commitments or vows to God?
 - i. ANSWER: We can see from this story that, just like Israel who constantly fell into sin, we also fall short time-after-time; and yet God in His great grace, mercy and love for us, sent a deliverer—Jesus, His only son. We see in the story of Samson how important it is to take our responsibilities as parents seriously, acknowledging that every child we have is a gift from God that we are to raise to honor Him. We also see from this story that God takes vows seriously, we should never enter into a vow with God unless we're also serious.
 - e. What can we learn from this about living a Holy life?
 - i. ANSWER: We can learn that living a Holy life takes commitment; we have to be intentional if we want to live a life pleasing to God. We can also see that asking God for help in living that life is something that pleases God, and he will answer our prayers when we ask Him for his wisdom and help in honoring Him through the life He has given us.
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Thus God, out of His great love for Israel, his chosen people, commissioned, or dedicated, Samson to the task of beginning the process for their delivery from the hands of the Philistines. He did this even before Samson was born and during a time when Israel was doing evil continually.

It was also evident that, even during times of great sin and rebellion, there is a remnant of the faithful that God will use to deliver His people and accomplish His will. Manoah and his wife were faithful in their commitment to obeying God's commands concerning their son; and that they raised him up in accordance with God's instructions.

At the end this lesson, we see a dedicated set of parents who obediently and without question follow God's commands, and we also see a God who loves us so much that he will deliver us from the evil and sin which results each time we disobey Him.

In the lessons to follow, we will observe, however, that in spite of that upbringing, and in spite of God's commissioning of his life before he was born, Samson will be a rebellious man, who does not live the holy life which God commanded. Perhaps we will be able to draw out some parental truths as well, regarding our children, their upbringing, and their rebellion.

May God's love so shine on you this week that His glory is seen in you by all those around you. And may He continue to richly bless you as you continue to faithfully study His Holy Word.

In Christ, **Wes**