

JUDGES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Judges chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Tonight we will begin looking at the 13th and final Judge in the book of Judges, Samson. And Samson also ministered in the western portion of Israel.

Now Samson is a very interesting man who will start out with great potential as God calls him to a work before he is even born, God calls him when he is in the womb! And yet, he fell far short of all that God had for him because he was controlled by his bodily appetites instead of by God. In fact, as we will see, Samson will destroy more of the enemy, the Philistines in his death than in his life. You see, he was a man that played with fire and he truly got burned. With that said, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 13, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word!

JUDGES 13**VERSE 1**

1. Here again we see Israel turn away from the Lord, fall into apostasy and God brings judgment upon them to draw them back to Him. And this judgment came at the hands of the Philistines who were the perennial enemy of the children of Israel. And this oppression lasted 40 years, the longest period of judgment we find in the book of Judges and these Philistines will rise up again against Israel and they are really not defeated until the book of Samuel, but they still remain a thorn in the side of Israel.

2. Who are these Philistines? They originally came from the Island of Crete somewhere around 1200 BC and they organized five cities primarily on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. These five cities were: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron. The area of land that they occupied was about 50 miles long and some 15 miles wide. And now they were oppressing Israel.

VERSE 2

1. Now keep in mind that much of the tribe of Dan moved northward because they could not drive out the Amorites. Thus, they moved to the area of Laish, by the headwaters of the Dead Sea, by Mount Hermon. But some of the Danites remained in the land, as did Manoah. He lived in Zorah, which is about 14 miles west of Jerusalem.

2. And we find out that this man, Manoah was married but his wife was barren, she was not able to conceive a child. This was a disgrace in Israel. In fact, if you as a woman could not bear children, that was grounds for divorce. This is not what God said, but it is what the children of Israel came up with because children were so important in the society they lived.

3. And folk's, we may go through times of barrenness in our lives where we see no fruit being born, but don't give up. Draw close to God and wait upon Him and see what He will do in your life, as He was about to do in the life of Manoah and his wife. Now please understand, I am not looking for any more children, but I am looking for fruit that is born out of a relationship with God!

VERSES 3-5

1. Here once again we see an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ or a Christophany. And Manoah's wife is there but Manoah is not around at this time, he does not see this Angel of the LORD! And the LORD tells this barren woman that she will have a son and he will be special, he will begin to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression brought upon them by the hands of the Philistines. Can you imagine what was going through her mind as the LORD tells her these things and then what she needs to do? She needs to take the vow of a Nazirite during her pregnancy. For Manoah's wife, that meant she was not to drink any wine or similar drink. And again, this child that was to be born to her and her husband was going to be special!

2. And then when her son is born, he is to follow this vow of the Nazirite all his life! Now what is this vow of a Nazirite all about? In Numbers chapter 6, verses 1-21 we are given the rules of this vow of the Nazirite. You see, when a person took the vow of a Nazirite he was dedicating himself to the Lord. In fact, the Hebrew word for "**Nazirite**" is NAZIR and it means to "set apart." In other words, he was setting himself apart from this world and focused on the Lord. You were consecrating yourself or dedicating yourself totally to the Lord and both men and women can take this vow that could last for 30 days or your entire life. For the most part, the vow was a short one, maybe lasting 30 days or so, but again, like in the case of Samson it was to last his entire life! It was a time where you would draw close to the Lord and fellowship with Him. And the only woman we see taking this vow in the Scriptures was Manoah's wife when she was pregnant with Samson, (Judges 13:4), but that does not mean that other women didn't take this vow.

With this vow there were three main things that the person needed to do or abstain from. First of all you were to abstain from anything that came off the vine, not just wine but the grapes that make the wine! Why? It is possible that God wanted their joy to be pure and not artificial in nature. He wanted them alert to His voice as they were spending time with Him! Also, you were not to cut your hair but let it grow during the time that this vow was taken. The long hair was just an outward symbol of your dedication to the Lord. And lastly, you were not to touch anything that had died for then you would be unclean! This was just showing the purity we are to have before the Lord.

3. Now look again at what we are told in verse 5. It says that Samson will, “**begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.**” Samson, as we shall see, was a one-man show. And he did not destroy the enemy for the nations sake, but because they did something against him. In fact, it is not till the time of Samuel that we see a large-scale victory against the Philistines. You can read of this in I Samuel 7:3-14, but lets just look at what we are told in I Samuel 7:11-14, “**And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us.’ So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.**”

VERSES 6-8

1. As the LORD finishes speaking with her she tells her husband Manoah of the wonderful blessing that God has given to them, they are going to have a child, a son! Not only that but he was to be a Nazirite unto the Lord from his conception until his death. That is why she was not to drink wine or eat any unclean thing because it will affect her unborn son. What a great lesson for pregnant women, something that God said here and now science backs it up, like it really needed to, and that is what you eat will affect your unborn child!

2. As Manoah here's all this, he wants to really hear it for himself. Yes, he asks how He is to raise this child but the LORD already told his wife, as a Nazirite! So there could be some doubt here on Manoah's part.

VERSES 9-14

1. I'm not sure what Manoah was doing but the LORD appeared to his wife again and bless her heart, she runs to get her husband so he could hear all this for himself. And Manoah asks the LORD, “. . . **'Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?'**” And the LORD basically tells him, “Look, I already told your wife, he is to be a Nazirite, he is to be consecrated unto Me.” You see, I do see some doubt here with Manoah about what his wife told him but now he has the confirmation from the LORD!

2. Now did they know everything that their son would be involved in? Absolutely not! The LORD gave them some information and then they were to walk by faith as they trusted in what the Lord had already told them.

VERSES 15-18

1. Now if this Angel of the LORD or this messenger of the LORD was just a man or an angel, he would never ever ask for a burnt offering to be made but since it is the LORD, He does! Secondly, this is not only the LORD, but it is specifically the pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. How do I know that? Because when Manoah asks Him His name, He says, “. . . **‘Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?’**” That should bring to mind a verse we tend to read every Christmas in Isaiah 9:6, “**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” And if you still doubt that this is Jesus, when we read the next several verses I think you will clearly change your mind.

VERSES 19-22

1. So as this burnt offering is lifted up, the Angel of the LORD ascended up into Heaven as both Manoah and his wife looked on. What a sight that must have been and now they both know for certain that this was the LORD!

2. Now when Manoah sees this happen, what does this man of faith do? “Oh my gosh, we’re going to die! We have seen God and that is it, it’s all over for us. Honey, make sure our will is up to date!” Gideon did the same thing! I’m not sure what is wrong with men but they do go to these extremes at times like with Gideon and here with Manoah. God told both Gideon and Manoah that he was going to do a great thing with them, a great work and they both didn’t believe, they both thought they were going to die because they saw God! Do you really think our God is like that? Of course He is not! God said to Manoah and his wife that they would have a son and He is not going to kill them before this son is even born! And for us, don’t come to your own conclusions about the Lord and what He is doing, listen to what He is saying and it will reduce your anxiety!

VERSE 23

1. You have to love his wife. She basically tells him, “Manoah, chill man! If God accepted our offering and He told us all these wonderful things, why in the world would he kill us?” Folk’s, I am so thankful for my wife that the Lord has blessed me with. She has helped me many times by basically saying, “Joe, chill! God is in control!” Did I skip that verse in my reading? No, I just needed to be reminded because I lost the perspective because of the things that were happening around me and my help mate did help me to put things into the correct perspective. And it doesn’t have to be your wife, but another Christian can do the same, pointing you back to Jesus and what a blessing that is!

VERSES 24-25

1. So the LORD fulfills His promise to Manoah and his wife and they have a son and call him Samson! I like that because his name means, “Sunny” and maybe they called him Sunny because he brought sunshine into their lives every time they saw him, he was a blessing to them. But I think also he was to be a light to the children of Israel, to deliver them from the oppression they faced at the hands of the Philistines and turn the people back to God, at least that is what he was suppose to do!

But, as we will see, he was a man of contradiction. He fought the battles of God by day and succumbed to the flesh by night you might say! Samson had great potential but fell far short of what God desired in his life. And the same is true for us. God wants to use us but are we willing to sacrifice our lives unto Him and surrender to the Holy Spirit’s leading in our lives? Or, are we going to succumb to the flesh and not reach that potential that God has for our lives? It truly is a choice we have to make!

2. Now when you think of Samson you probably think of this strong, muscular man, a kind of Charles Atlas or Arnold Schwarzenegger! I don’t want to burst your bubble, but I have the impression he probably looked a lot like me! Sorry! I know, we have seen the pictures in the Sunday School books, the tee shirts, even in the movies of this big, strong, muscular man, but again, I don’t see it that way. You see, the reason I say that he was just an average person is because he could not do the things he will do no matter how strong he was! It is not possible.

Then how did he do it? Look at verse 25 again and I think that explains the power that this man had and the reason he was able to do these things. We are told, “**And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.**” It was the Spirit of God that empowered him for this work. That is what made him so strong. That is where his strength came from. That is why the people wondered where his strength came from because as you looked at him, he was not that impressive looking!

3. One last point before we move on. Samson lived just north of the Philistine boarder and it is there that the Spirit of the Lord began to work in and through Samson, empowering him for the work that God had for him!

JUDGES 14**VERSES 1-2**

1. Notice the progression here. First of all Samson went ***DOWN*** to Timnah. When you read of someone going ***DOWN*** in the Scriptures, it usually is not a good thing. You can look at Jonah and you will see over and over again that he went **DOWN** and each time it was bad. In Jonah we are told, **“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. . . . Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.”**

Jonah 1:3, 5. And finally we are told in Jonah 1:17, **“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”** In other words, Jonah wanted to go down and the Lord took him down as far as you can go, in the belly of a great fish! And the idea is this, when you go ***DOWN*** you are moving away from God instead of reaching up towards Him! Jerusalem, the city of God is set on a hill and thus, to go to the city of God you had to go up!

2. Now the city of Timnah was located about 4 miles into Philistine country and thus, he went into the camp of the enemy! Again, do you see the downward progression as he was moving away from God, doing his own thing! And as he walks into the camp of the enemy he sees a woman, a Philistine woman that catches his eye. Keep in mind the open immorality that was going on in Timnah and it peaked his interest. It aroused his flesh so much that he wants to marry this woman that caught his eye and he doesn't even know anything about her except that she is HOT! Now let me say this, I think we should be attracted to our spouse but if that is as far as it goes, then it is superficial and it won't last!

3. Here's the problem for Samson. First of all he should have never placed himself in the camp of the enemy. Secondly, he was not to marry outside of the children of Israel, especially a Philistine! In Deuteronomy 7:3-4 we are told, "**Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.**" And yet, for Samson, he demands that his parents get this woman for him, he wants her as his wife! Samson let the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life control his life instead of the Spirit of God!

4. How does this apply to us today? First of all we are not to hang around the enemy or the camp of those who are not saved. In other words, don't go looking around for something that you should not be looking for! It isn't that we are not to talk with sinners or go where sinners are to share our faith. In fact, as you read the Scriptures you will see that Jesus went to them and ministered to them. He did not condone their sin or join in it but He brought them to God. But we are not to go after things that God has warned us not to go after!

Secondly, we are not to date or marry an unbeliever. I know, not popular but that is just what God has said and it is important that we listen. In II Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul tells us, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”**

Why does God tell us that? Because the most important person in your life needs to be Jesus, that is important to establish. Thus, if you date or marry an unbeliever you have two people moving in opposite directions, one towards God and the other way from God and that does not work! That is just what God says and I think He knows what He is talking about more than the way that you feel!

Now, if you are married to an unbeliever you are to stay married and let your conduct draw them to Christ. Be a witness to them. It is what Paul tells us in I Corinthians 7:10-16, **“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”** But do not date or marry an unbeliever because that relationship will more than likely draw you away from the Lord instead of you drawing them to the Lord!

VERSE 3

1. Here we see his parents try to tell him not to marry this woman but to find a woman that is from the children of Israel. But he refuses on the basis that this woman was attractive and he wanted her! This is not only sad to see what Samson is doing but then his parents cave in and make the arrangements for this marriage as we will see. Parents, don't compromise what you believe for your children because they are pressuring you about something. Why is that so important? Because you are not helping them, you are hurting them! As a parent, you are not their friend. I know, that is not politically correct or it is old fashioned. Really, how is this working that you are a friend to your children? I look around and it is not too good. Yes, there are times where your relationship is great with your children, as long as you allow them to do what they want. But when you don't, look out! Don't cave in, you still need to be the parent and do what is right! We as parents are to **TRAIN UP** our children not let them do whatever they want! And yes, Samson was older, but it would seem that they caved into Samson's requests even when he was younger and he just played that card once again, pressuring his parents into something he wanted but should not have had!

VERSE 4

1. Some may read this and come to the conclusion that God made Samson do this, I disagree! Yes, God did use the sin of Samson for good as he will kill some of the Philistines, but that does not justify his actions. God can take and use the evil of men for His plans and His purposes but I wonder what He could do with those who are obedient to Him?

2. And let me say this. Do not try to justify marrying or dating a non-Christian with the idea that some good may come out of it, they may get saved. Yes, that may happen but most of the time it doesn't, but even if it did, it doesn't justify your sin, it just shows that God is gracious and merciful! But you can check with Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa and see how many counseling sessions they have regarding this issue of marrying an unbeliever. You see, before you get married the unbelieving partner will agree to anything, even go to church. But as soon as that ink dries on the marriage certificate, it is over and they are not interested in God anymore. Be wise, listen to what God is telling you!

VERSES 5-7

1. So as Samson and his parents go down to Timnah, Samson takes a little detour, heading down a back road and he is traveling through some vineyards. He knew better, he knew his life was to be consecrated to the Lord but he liked to live on the edge of serving God and falling into sin! And I am sure as he was passing through these vineyards he had some grapes to eat and that is ***STRIKE 1*** for Samson!

2. For us the danger comes when we are complacent in our walk for Peter tells us, “**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**” I Peter 5:8. And who appears before Samson, a lion.

Now I don't care how strong you are, you are not going to rip a lion apart, he may do that to you but you are not going to do that to him. Then how did Samson do this? The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and only then was he able to kill this lion with his bare hands! And as he finishes that, he heads back down to Timnah and he is well pleased as he sees this Philistine woman.

3. Isn't that interesting. He just kills this lion with his bare hands, and he has to know it is only by God he was able to accomplish this, and now he is back in sin! Folks, be careful. We can only defeat Satan, that roaring lion by the power of God, as we draw close to God the Devil will flee. Don't make the mistake of Samson and go back into the camp of the Devil and play with sin!

VERSES 8-9

1. So after some time he returns to get his wife, after the arrangements have been made, and he once again goes by himself, no accountability here in case he does something that is wrong. No one to correct him, to help keep him on track and that is why for us as Christians; we need each other to keep each other accountable. Yes, we have the Lord, but the Lord uses the brethren to keep each other sharp in our walk! And here, Samson goes back to these vineyards and he sees this lion that he killed but now some bees have made a nest in its carcass. So Samson reaches in to this carcass and takes out some honey and eats it and brings some to his parents. But he does not tell them where he got this honey from, why? Because he was consecrated to the Lord and he was not to touch a dead body, and thus, ***STRIKE 2*** for Samson!

2. Now let me say this. Wasn't Samson empowered by the Holy Spirit? Didn't the Holy Spirit come upon Samson? Of course he was, that is what we are told. Then how can he do these sinful things? Just because you are empowered by God doesn't mean you are a robot, you have a free will. God gives to you the resources to live a life that will please Him, a holy life but He doesn't overtake you and make you do these things. A good lesson for us to learn!

VERSE 10-11

1. Here we see this party for this seven-day marriage feast. The marriage itself was not consummated yet, that would take place at the end of the seven days. But this feast, literally a drinking party for seven days, was once again something Samson should not have been involved in. He was not to drink wine and thus, ***STRIKE 3!*** In other words, Samson is out! And since Samson had no friends in Timnah, they provide for him 30 Philistine young men for what we might call a bachelor party, but they are not really his friends as we will see!

VERSES 12-14

1. Pride is a horrible thing and that is what we see here with Samson. He tells these 30 so-called friends this riddle and there is no way they can figure it out on their own and Samson knew it. And these guys figure out what Samson is up to and you can see that as we look at the next verse.

VERSE 15

1. Nice guys! They give this bride-to-be a little incentive to find out what the answer was to the riddle Samson gave them. They tell her if she does not find out what it means and tell them, they will burn down her house and her father's house and I get the idea that they would be inside when these homes burned to the ground! I don't think you can call them friends. In fact they were evil!

VERSES 16-18

1. Here we see Samson's Philistine wife nag and nag even with tears to find out what this riddle was all about. First of all he should have never married this woman and secondly, don't let nagging or tears cause you to do something that you should not do!
2. Now here is the problem that many don't even try to answer. It seems like what was said in verse 15 contradicts what we read here in verse 17. In verse 15 it says that these 30 Philistine men came to her and asked her on the seventh day to go and pressure her husband and find out what this riddle was all about and yet, here in verse 17 it says that from the first day of the feast she was asking. What is that all about? I like what Keil and Delitzsch wrote in their commentary on this subject and I tend to agree with them. They wrote:

This statement is not at variance with that in v. 15, to the effect that it was only on the seventh day that the Philistine young men urged her with threats to entice Samson to tell the riddle, but may be explained very simply in the following manner. The woman had already come to Samson every day with her entreaties from simple curiosity; but Samson resisted them until the seventh day, when she became more urgent than ever, in consequence of this threat on the part of the Philistines.

- Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition

That seems like it is the best explanation and it does flow with what these verses are saying.

3. So the tears broke Samson down into doing something he probably should not have done and he tells her the riddle and she goes and tells it to these young men. I guess she trusted these men more than she did her own husband here. And for Samson, when he finds out that they figured out this riddle, he knows that his wife must have told them and he goes and speaks to these men and tells them, “. . . **‘If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!’**” Not really terms of endearment towards his wife! I guess the love he had for her was very superficial!

VERSES 19-20

1. Obviously this is not a fruit of the Spirit, this anger! Samson lost the bet, he had to get these guys 30 changes of clothes and he does this by going to Ashkelon, some 40 miles away and kills 30 Philistine men and brings their clothes back and gives it to these 30 young men that he lost the bet to! Now, did God’s Spirit come upon Samson to avenge the hurt feelings of Samson or to repay this bet? Absolutely not! God was going to use this to come against the Philistines and that is the only reason Samson was able to defeat these 30 men. It was not in his strength or for his own purpose. God used it for His plan and purpose.

2. And because of what his wife had done, before they even consummated their marriage, Samson goes back home mad; full of anger and his wife was given to his best man and Samson does not even realize this! Can you imagine the marriage counseling on this one! What is truly tragic is that the Spirit of God came upon Samson but He did not listen and he did his own thing and how did that work out? Not too well! May we learn the lesson. David said in Psalm 32:8-9, **“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.”**

God wants to direct our lives, we need to not only listen but also obey, it is for our own good! And folk's, what a joy it is to know that God wants to guide us, He wants to teach us, but how does He do it? He says that He will do it with His eye. That means we have to be looking at Him, our eyes have to be focused on Him, it speaks of fellowship, it speaks of being in His Word. The other way God directs us is by bit and bridle, as a wild animal is directed with pain in the way he should go. But God does not want to direct us this way, but if we refuse to look to Him, He will lead us like a wild animal, by inflicting some pain in our life, to get us to go in the right direction. I don't think Samson was listening, what about you?