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“The Lion, the Wife, & the Wardrobe”

JUDGES 13 & 14

Introduction

Tonight we'll see raw animal passion... a lion attack... a stag party... a nag... and a heifer. ***It must be the story of Samson!***

Judges 13:1 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

The Philistines were a strong sea-faring folk who originally came from the island of Crete. Settling in the southern coastal area of Israel, there were five kings who built five cities that dominated the area for several hundred years.

The physical enemies of Israel often represent the spiritual enemies of the believer. The Philistines represent our struggle against the flesh. For example: Much is made of their five cities. We recognize five physical senses by which we experience the world.

Judges 13:2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.

Judges 13:3 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Judges 13:4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean.

Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

The Angel of the Lord is an appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament, before He took on a human body in His birth. We'll see Him clearly id'ed in a moment.

In the midst of their national oppression, and of the personal depression of Mr. and Mrs. Manoah, **Jesus had been waiting for just the right moment.**

The term Nazarite comes from the word *nazir* meaning *consecrated* or *separated*. The Nazarite was a Jew who took a vow described in Numbers 6:1-21. The regulations which apply to him actually agree with those for the High Priest and for the priests during worship, as described in Leviticus and in Ezekiel. This vow required the man (and in the Hellenistic period the woman too) to observe the following:

1. Abstain from wine, vinegar (which was made from wine), grapes, raisins, and all things intoxicating.
2. Refrain from cutting one's hair and beard;
3. To avoid corpses, even those of a family member.

The vow was usually for a fixed period of time — from 30 to 100 days. At the end of that time, the man would immerse in water, cut his hair, and make an offering that included a lamb, a ewe, a ram, and a basket of bread and cakes.

Samuel was a lifelong Nazarite; so was John the Baptist. Samson was to be a lifelong Nazarite.

In the case of Samson, *God actually made the vow for him!* It can remind us that our children are known to God, and we should desire His will for their lives.

Judges 13:6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name.

Judges 13:7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

God spoke to Mrs. Manoah first. Would your wife feel comfortable sharing a revelation with you?

She went to her husband, to get his counsel. Would you feel comfortable going to your husband for spiritual counsel?

Judges 13:8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

He trusted his wife's revelation. He also prayed about it, seeking further confirmation and counsel from the Lord.

Judges 13:9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her.

God heard the man; but He returned to the woman. I don't want to read too much into it, but it seems that the Lord is treating them as if they were one; united in heart and purpose. If you spoke to one, you were speaking to both. Manoah was the head; his wife, the helper. It was all in a unity and oneness that honored the Lord.

Judges 13:10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!"

Judges 13:11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I *am*."

Don't keep secrets – especially spiritual ones. And don't be suspicious of the things the Lord might be showing your spouse. Check it out together.

Judges 13:12 Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass!* What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?"

Again, note the emphasis on discovering God's path for their son. If God was going to give them such a gift, they wanted to do their part.

Judges 13:13 So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful.

Judges 13:14 She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

Mrs. Manoah was given a prenatal prescription to follow. When you have kids, you should make the necessary sacrifices in order to raise

them with godly influences. I'm talking more about your *spiritual* diet – in terms of limiting or eliminating the things of the world.

Judges 13:15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You."

Judges 13:16 And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LORD.)

Judges 13:17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What *is* Your name, that when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?"

Judges 13:18 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?"

Mr. and Mrs. Manoah did not realize they were talking to Jesus! They wanted to show the proper hospitality. The Lord was not being rude by refusing their food. He was simply letting them know that everything He had promised was from grace, not to put them under any obligation.

If they wanted to express their thanks, it should be as an offering. In other words, they should prepare the food, but then 'waste' it through worship.

There can be an element of waste in worship – at least, from a certain point of view. You might remember Mary breaking the costly vial of perfume to anoint Jesus. But you don't care, because God has given you so much more than you could ever give back to Him.

Whose name is Wonderful? Isaiah 9:6 lists Wonderful as one of the names of Jesus.

Judges 13:19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on -

Judges 13:20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar - the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Judges 13:21 When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD.

It's great that both husband and wife were witness to this wonder. I think husbands and wives should be together more at spiritual functions.

Judges 13:22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"

Judges 13:23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time."

Manoah could share his spiritual fears with his wife. She could console him and counsel him. They had a great relationship in the Lord.

Judges 13:24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

Judges 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

We can safely assume Mrs. Manoah followed the prenatal prescription. Still, with all her preparation, Samson needed the Spirit of God upon him. His mom and dad could only do so much. It was a lot; but he must walk with God for himself.

That brings us to the postpartum fears of Samson's parents. But first, as we take our first look at Samson, erase the picture of a huge, muscle-bound guy strolling along, flexing. We'll see that he could stroll through Philistine cities relatively anonymously. He was very average, very ordinary. Everything extraordinary was as a result of the Spirit of God upon him.

The thing to bear in mind, as we see Samson, is that God intended him to be a lifelong Nazarite. He was to be separated unto the Lord. Instead – he was on his way to party in Philistine territory.

Judges 14:1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

Judges 14:2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

It was lust at first sight! A Philistine woman was simply out of the question for a Nazarite.

There was no dating, as such, in that culture. Arrangements were made by the parents. Mr. and Mrs. Manoah were not happy.

Judges 14:3 Then his father and mother said to him, “*Is there* no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”

This was godly counsel from dad and mom. Too bad it was ignored.

Samson’s literal words were, *she is pleasing in my eyes*. That might sound familiar to you. The repeated phrase in the Book of Judges is that everyone did what was pleasing in his own eyes. Here was Samson, the separated Judge, acting just like the people.

This is your great fear as a parent – that your son or daughter, even with the best beginnings, will fail to follow the Lord. There’s no doubt Samson fell short. But you know the end of this story – how that God was with Samson as he repented in the end and defeated the Philistines. It’s an example of training up a child when he is young, that when he is old, he will not depart!

Judges 14:4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD - that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Was it God’s plan for Samson to desire this Philistine woman? No. Samson was a Nazarite. A relationship with her compromised everything.

What this verse teaches us is that God will overrule us to accomplish His purposes. God was determined to use Samson to judge the Philistines, no matter how poor a Judge Samson was.

Admittedly, this blows my mind. I’d rather God not use Samson. But the truth is, I still fall short, and always will, until I am face-to-face with Jesus, in my glorified body, in Heaven. Samson is just a more exaggerated version of ourselves. He is what our flesh longs for.

Judges 14:5 So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him.

Judges 14:6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though *he had* nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

Think of the mountain lion attacks in the Southern California foothills. The cougar, true to its stealth, took Samson completely by surprise. It probably had Samson's throat in its powerful jaws. The Spirit of God gave him supernatural strength.

Think back on the open spiritual communication between Mr. and Mrs. Manoah. Doesn't it seem strange that Samson would say nothing to his parents about this amazing feat? We can't be certain why he kept quiet, but it may be that he was embarrassed by spiritual things.

Judges 14:7 Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

Judges 14:8 After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey *were* in the carcass of the lion.

Judges 14:9 He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

He should not have turned aside to see the carcass. It was yesterday's victory. We need to be seeking the Lord for today's battles.

Samson gave in to his sweet tooth. The significance of this is that a Nazarite was not to touch anything that was dead. That included roadkill! To say that Samson took being a Nazarite lightly would be an understatement.

Let's say you were Mr. or Mrs. Manoah. Would you, as parents, rather hear about some Spiritual triumph... Or be brought honey? Yet too often we raise our kids to value things in the world more than the things of God.

Judges 14:10 So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so.

Judges 14:11 And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

Judges 14:12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.

Judges 14:13 But if you cannot explain *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."

And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it."

Judges 14:14 So he said to them:

"Out of the eater came something to eat,
And out of the strong came something sweet."

Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

The word for **feast** indicates there was alcoholic wine. In just a few verses, Samson has broken two of the three vows of a Nazarite.

It's instructive that he wanted changes of clothing. Samson was all about dressing up his flesh, rather than denying it.

Judges 14:15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? *Is that not so?*"

Again I remind you of the great relationship between Manoah and his wife. It might be unfair to compare, seeing as Samson had just met her. But that's part of the problem! There was no real relationship, based on a mutual love for the Lord. Their relationship was based on the flesh – on outward things. As a result, she could be intimidated to betray Samson.

Judges 14:16 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained *it* to me."

And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained *it* to my father or my mother; so should I explain *it* to you?"

Judges 14:17 Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.

The woman rusted away his resistance with her tears. Samson's comments about not revealing it to his parents are noteworthy. God intends a man to leave dad and mom, and to cleave to his wife in a new bond. Samson still considered his relationship to his folks more intimate, more important. Until you cut those ties, you cannot know the intimacy God intends and commands in marriage.

Judges 14:18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down:

“What *is* sweeter than honey?
And what *is* stronger than a lion?”

And he said to them:

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,
You would not have solved my riddle!”

This was the woman of his dreams. He saw her, and she pleased him. He had to have her. Seven drunken days later, she was a **heifer!**

It isn't about long engagements so much as it is about values. Look beneath the surface and be certain of the values and character of a potential spouse.

Samson needed thirty changes of clothing to pay his debt.

Judges 14:19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes *of clothing* to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house.

God got him out of trouble! He paid Samson's debt; He got him out of a bad relationship; He even used him as a Judge.

Instead of repenting, Samson's **anger was aroused**. He didn't see the Lord working graciously in his life.

Look at it this way: We have a three strikes law. Samson was on his second strike in terms of the 'law' governing a Nazarite. One more strike and he would be a prisoner for life. **And that is what will happen, in chapter sixteen, when he allows his hair to be cut.**

Conclusion

(Verse twenty is a segue into the next chapter...)

Back up for a moment. Samson, empowered by the Spirit of God, killed a cougar with his bare hands... And thought nothing of it!

We have power over the roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour. I'm speaking of the devil. We have power over the flesh.

Let's not underestimate it or take it for granted!