



Samson's Early Years and Marriage Judges 13:6-14:20

Introduction

What bright promise a baby gives, in the perpetuation of a family, the hope of the future, even the destiny of a nation. A child is a tiny bundle of potentiality. How the parents glow with delight at who this child is and anticipation of who he or she will become! Sometimes, such hopes are fulfilled, potential is reached, and dreams become reality. However, too often the story is one of dashed hopes, unfulfilled potential, and broken dreams. This is due to the sinfulness of every person. There are many pitfalls in a person's development and most important are his or her own choices. Samson illustrates a blighted life. His became a tragic ending to a brilliant future due to his unwise, and in the end, disastrous choices. His choices reflected his lack of self-discipline and self-control.

Samson is a composite of dust and destiny. God in His sovereignty fulfilled Samson's destiny, but it was amidst the tragedy that Samson's own choices brought upon himself.

Outline of Judges 13:6-14:20

- I. Samson's Supernatural Preparation - Judges 13:6-25
- II. Samson's Self-indulgent Marriage - Judges 14:1-20

I. Samson's Supernatural Preparation - Judges 13:6-25

A. Angelic Appearance Reported to Manoah - Judges 13:6-7

- 1. Manoah's wife's description of the Angel - 13:6

The wife of Manoah reported to her husband what she had seen and heard. *A man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome.* She was too stunned to ask where He was from, and He did not tell her his name. He later says it is *wonderful* (meaning secret or incomprehensible). This noun, *wonderful*, is used only one other time, in Psalm 139:6. It is used in another form in Isaiah 9:6.

- 2. Manoah's wife's report of the message - 13:7

She repeated what the angel had said, that she would

conceive and have a son, that she was to drink no wine or strong drink and eat no unclean foods for the child would be a Nazirite to God from before birth until his death.

Israel's dietary laws, prescribed in Leviticus 11, have been observed in varying degrees by the Jewish people down through the ages. The foods allowed, as well as the ones forbidden, still constitute a healthy and safe diet.

It is interesting to note that the unborn baby would have an identity as a Nazirite - one dedicated to God - and a particular diet *from the womb*. What does this say about life and identity before birth? According to God, Samson's life was significant from conception. Who he was to be would be influenced by his earliest nutrition through his mother's umbilical cord. Today expectant women are cautioned in similar ways about what to do and eat, and what not to do and not to eat, for the baby's well-being. The Bible speaks truly on any subject it touches. It goes beyond the knowledge of its day. It is true at all times and in all places (Psalm 119:130,140).

B. The Angel's Return at Manoah's Request - Judges 13:8-21

- 1. Prayer for parental instruction - 13:8

Manoah's feelings were like that of many parents who are inexperienced and overwhelmed at the responsibility of a new life. Manoah did the wise thing; he confessed their need to God and cried for help.

Oh my Lord,...teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born. This is a model prayer for every parent. It has everything - reverence, humility, dependency, and expectancy. Have you prayed it in your role as a parent, grandparent, teacher, or friend? If you are a young person, perhaps your parents prayed this prayer for you. One day you may pray it for your own children.

- 2. God's answer - 13:9-14

The Angel reappeared to Manoah's wife. (God appeared to women in Genesis 21:17, Luke 1:26-27, and John 20:14.) She ran and told her husband, *The Man who came to me the other day, has just now appeared to me!* Manoah followed her and, seeing the Man, said, *Are you the Man who spoke to this woman?* The Angel answered, *I am.* Manoah then asked what the boy's life and work would be. Many parents would like to have this information.

The angel repeated the instructions given to the woman concerning her diet while pregnant. She was to abstain from wine and strong drink and to eat only foods called clean by God. Nothing was mentioned about training the child.

3. The Angel of the Lord - 13:15-25

a. The Angel's identity discovered - 13:15-22

When Manoah invited the Angel to stay for dinner, He refused. Instead, He told Manoah to offer the goat as a burnt offering, an act of worship, to God alone. Manoah obediently complied (Leviticus 1:10). Before their astonished eyes, the Angel ascended in the flame, revealing His identity. Awestruck, both Manoah and his wife fell on their faces. When the Angel did not return Manoah knew it was the Angel of the Lord and expected to be struck dead for having seen God.

b. Accepting the discovery - 13:23

Manoah's wife used common sense and logically interpreted the event. If they were to die for having seen God, why did the whole thing happen? She gave three reasons. God would not have accepted their offering. He would not have appeared in the first place. He would not have given them the message of the child to come. Therefore, He did not come to destroy them. If we would pause to think, we might understand God and His ways better than we do.

C. Samson's Birth and Boyhood - Judges 13:24-25

1. Birth - 13:24

So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. How did God bless him? God blessed him with godly parents who would teach him about God and His word, with general well-being, and with a pleasant boyhood.

2. Boyhood - 13:25

And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol. God was faithful and did His part. How we wish Samson had done his part a little better. God will be faithful to us, but He will not do for us that which we can do for ourselves, nor will He make for us the choices we can make for ourselves.

Samson was a Danite, born in an area dominated by the Philistines then and by the Palestinians today, the Gaza strip. The Philistines were fierce and entrenched.

Nevertheless, Samson felt stirred in his soul as the Holy Spirit moved him toward his destiny. He knew his life had purpose. Perhaps his parents had shared the Angel's message with him. He knew he was a lifelong Nazirite, one specially dedicated to God and he felt exhilarated.

Are you intrigued by what God is doing in your life? Have you asked Him for instruction as to how to live so that you may accomplish all He intends for you? Jesus, when He was on earth, *offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered* (Hebrews 5:7-8). If Jesus cried to God to save Him from those things that would interfere with God's purpose for Him, how much more do we need to cry to God? He is with you and hears your cries. Do you practice His presence, consciously aware that He is with you right now? Do you talk over your moment by moment situation with Him?

II. Samson's Self-indulgent Marriage - Judges 14:1-20

A. Samson's Ups and Downs - Judges 14:1-9

As a young man Samson began to make choices. It would be wonderful to say he was guided by the word of God but that would strain the truth. Instead, he followed his fleshly feelings and urges. When he should have controlled them, they controlled him. Rightly the Psalmist says, *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word* (Psalm 119:9). There is nothing as helpful as the Bible for instructing young people concerning life, their bodies, emotions, and the influence of others.

1. Down to the Philistines - 14:1

Four times in this chapter visiting the Philistines is described as *going down* (14:1,5,7,10). Samson goes down three times and his parents go down once. Unfortunately, when we "go down" we often drag loved ones with us.

Samson ignored danger signals when he looked at a girl who was one of the enemy. The inevitable happened. He was attracted to her and wanted to marry her. Samson said to his father, *Get her for me for she pleases me well.* The lure to involvement has not changed since Eve saw the tree that was *good for food,....pleasant to the eyes....and desirable to make one wise.* She *took of its fruit and ate* (Genesis 3:6). To look at something which is against God is to open oneself to temptation. The first temptation is to think, "I can handle it." The next temptation is to become further involved. Few people

can look and then walk away. Even if they do, they may be corrupted by that first look and find they are unable to erase it from their mind. Innocence has been lost. It was a short road down to the Philistines.

2. Up to his father's house - 14:2

Twice, Samson went *up* to his father's house (14:2,19). The road home may be an upward climb but it is in the right direction. Our direction should be *Looking unto Jesus* (Hebrews 12:2) who is seated at the right hand of the Father.

The first time, Samson went home to ask for the girl in marriage. The second time was after things had gone badly at his wedding feast. He went home in anger, betrayed by his bride. But we are ahead of the story.

3. Parental advice - 14:3

Samson's parents responded by asking why he could not find a nice Jewish girl, meaning one who believed in the God of Israel. The chance of success in marriage is still greatest when both know God. Samson was violating God's basic command to be separate from unbelievers, especially in marriage, where the consequences are so great (Deuteronomy 7:3). But he continued to go against both God and his parents.

His parents did not know that God would use Samson's headlong plunge into disobedience to begin to bring about victory over the enemy. When people stubbornly disobey God we can ask God to turn it to good. (See Genesis 45:8, 50:20; John 19:10-11; Acts 2:22-23; Romans 8:28-29.)

B. Samson's Marriage - Judges 14:5-20

1. The lion killer - 14:5-9

Samson had his way. His parents went down with him to visit the intended bride and arrange for the marriage. On the way, a lion attacked Samson. The Spirit of the Lord empowered him to kill it with his bare hands. God continues to protect His children even when they are straying from Him.

On a later trip, when Samson went down for the wedding, his curiosity led him to go back and look at the carcass of the lion. He discovered a swarm of bees and honey in it and scooped up some of the honey to eat. He also took some honey for his parents but was careful not to mention where it had come from. Samson intentionally deceived his parents, probably because he did not want them to know he had violated the

Nazirite law by coming in contact with the dead carcass (Numbers 6:1-6). This shows once again that Samson cared nothing about God and His law. He cared only for his own foolish pleasure.

2. The riddler - 14:10-17

The marriage feast was held at the bride's home and all the guests were Philistines. To entertain the men in the wedding party, Samson presented them with a riddle to solve. If they guessed the riddle, Samson would give them thirty sets of clothing. If they did not solve it, they would have to give him thirty sets of clothing. Samson had not only violated the law of the Nazirite but he turned the incident into a bad joke and potentially profitable scheme. There was no way the riddle could be solved since it involved the incident with the lion and the honey which nobody but Samson knew about. Again, we see Samson's open disrespect for God and His ways. He had become involved in the lusts of the world and those lusts now controlled him.

The Philistine men went to Samson's wife to get help in solving the riddle. They threatened to burn her and her father's house if she did not bring back the answer to them. She wore Samson down with her tears until he gave in and told her the answer.

3. The loser - 14:18-20

When the Philistines gave Samson the answer to the riddle, he was furious. He knew what had happened. *If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!* He went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty Philistine men and took their clothing back to Timnah to pay off his bet. Then he went home. After he was gone, his wife was given to his best man.

Application

Samson tried to gratify his lusts and find pleasure outside the will of God. He disregarded God's laws and his parent's rebukes. He was fully bent upon "going down" when he should have been looking up! God had blessed Samson in many ways, but Samson showed total indifference.

How has God blessed you? How do you show gratitude to God for His blessings? Do you strive to live in a manner pleasing to Him or do you show contempt for God by indulging your own selfishness? The one who continually "goes down" to the world's way of living is always the loser. Will you look up and move forward with God?

QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. Who was the Angel of the Lord?
2. What was God's purpose for Samson?
3. From the notes, what other young man killed lions and stood up to the Philistines?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 15:1-8.

4. a. When Samson went to visit his wife, how did his father-in-law welcome him?
Give three points from verses 1-2.
 - ①
 - ②
 - ③
- b. What was Samson's response in verse 3?
5. a. What "weapons" did Samson use to take his revenge?

b. What damage did he do with these weapons?
6. What did the Philistines do after this? Why?
7. How did Samson take revenge? Give verse:_____

DAY THREE: Read Judges 15:9-11.

8. Why did the Philistines go up to Judah? Give verses:_____
9. How did the men of Judah respond? Write T (true) or F (false) next to each answer below. Correct the false statements and give verse for each.
 - a. T or F vs._____ They sent 300 men to arrest Samson and deliver him to the Philistines.
 - b. T or F vs._____ They told Samson that the Philistines ruled over them.
 - c. T or F vs._____ They asked Samson, "What is this you have done?"
 - d. T or F vs._____ They let Samson go when he said, "I have obeyed the command of the Lord."
10. a. What agreement did Samson make with the men of Judah?

b. What did the men of Judah do to Samson?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 15:14-20.

11. a. What did Samson do with:
the ropes?

the jawbone of a donkey?
 - b. ? (Thought Question) Why do you think God gave Samson this miraculous power?
 - c. To whom did Samson give the glory?
12. a. What did Samson ask from God?
 - b. How did God answer?
13. How long did Samson judge Israel?

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 16:1-31.

14. a. How did Samson sin in verse 1?
 - b. How did his sin lead to tragedy for him?
15. a. What did Delilah receive for selling Samson's secret?
 - b. What did Esau receive for selling his birthright? See Genesis 25:29-33.
 - c. What did Judas receive for selling Jesus into the hands of the chief priests?
See Matthew 26:14-16.
 - d. ? (Thought Question) What do you learn from these things?
16. a. Who did the Philistines credit for capturing Samson?
 - b. Use the Judges 16:21 and 25 to tell what the Philistines did with Samson.
17. a. What was Samson's prayer in verse 28?
 - b. What was Samson's last prayer?
 - c. How did God answer these prayers?
18. 🎓 (Senior Question) Write Samson's epitaph. (An epitaph is a statement written in memory of a person who has died)