

Judges Chapter 13

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[0 : 00] So, Judges 13, page number 256. We'll start in verse 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. A certain man of Zorah named Manoah from the clan of the Danites had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth.

The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean.

You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazarite, dedicated to God from the womb.

He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines. 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.

[1 : 17] I didn't ask him where he came from and he didn't tell me his name. But he said to me, You will become pregnant and have a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean because the boy will be a Nazarite of God from the womb until the day of his death.

Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, Pardon your servant, Lord. I beg you to 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.

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. The woman hurried to tell her husband, He is here, the man who appeared to me the other day.

Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, Are you the man who talked to my wife? I am, he said. So Manoah asked him, When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule that governs the boy's life and work?

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.

[2 : 35] 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 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.

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. 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 towards heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground.

[3 : 35] 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.

But his wife answered, If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things are now told as 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 Manoah, while he was in Mahanadan, between Zorah and Eshter.

Well, we're continuing the theme of miraculous births.

And so last week we saw the birth of Isaac, and we saw God's perfect timing in that birth. And this week we're going to be looking at Samson, who is a judge in the time of the judges.

[4 : 50] And why are we looking at these birth stories in the Bible? Well, actually there's a few of these examples of barren women giving birth throughout the Old Testament.

But ultimately we want to look at them because they point to Jesus and the ultimate miraculous birth in not being born of a barren woman, but a virgin woman.

And we see actually right from the very first pages of the Bible, in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, there are prophecies throughout the Bible pointing to this Messiah who would come.

But the first one we'll look at is Genesis 3 verse 15 says this. Speaking to the serpent in the garden, God says this, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. And so what we want to say is that ultimately this seed of the woman, this offspring of the woman, would be the Messiah, would be the one who would ultimately defeat, the devil would defeat evil once and for all.

[6 : 09] And so we're looking at Samson as a very faint picture of this. And actually Samson, he's not a good role model is he, he's not someone you'd look up to. But actually by contrast almost we see he's not the true Messiah, but Jesus is the true Messiah.

So this idea of the seed of the woman. Well why is this strange, this prophecy, the seed of the woman? Well Genesis is a patriarchal book and so the genealogies would always be the seed of the man, the offspring of the man.

And so we see something strange here and it's the seed of the woman. So that's why we're looking at this topic. So who was Samson? Well Samson was the final judge in the book of Judges before they were kings in Israel.

And the role of the judges was partly to rule the nation of Israel before they were kings. But actually more than that, they were saviour figures, they were deliverers.

And so in Judges 2.16 we read this and it's almost a definition of the judges. It says this, Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them, saved Israel, out of the hands of these raiders.

[7 : 26] So Israel during the time of the judges they were establishing the kingdom but they hadn't defeated all of the enemies in the land. They were still conquering the land.

And time and time again they would turn away from God and God would send these occupying nations from all around who would, Israel would again and again come into captivity.

But the people would cry out to God and God would send them a saviour. God would send them a deliverer. God would send them a judge. And Samson, he's the final of the judges. In a sense he's the most supernatural of the judges.

If anyone grew up in Sunday school you'll know the story of Samson. He had this supernatural strength, this supernatural power. The spirit of God would come upon him and he could defeat armies.

He could lift up giant gates. He was almost like the Incredible Hulk. This superhuman man. And so he's this supernatural judge. He's the final judge.

[8 : 29] And he's the judge that the most, the biggest portion of scripture is dedicated to. But actually we see he's a very flawed man in his character.

He was sent to deliver Israel from the Philistines. But actually time and time again he would go, he had a weakness for Philistine women.

And so the people that he was sent to deliver Israel from he was even wanting to marry. He was wanting to get involved in their lives. He didn't really have God's heart for the nation.

He didn't really care about the idolatry of the Philistines. And actually the only time we ever see him fighting you know enacting his role as a deliverer it wasn't in obedience to God but it was actually in anger.

It was in retribution. It was in response to what the Philistines had done to him. So we see a man of very flawed nature a man of very selfish nature. So you might think it's funny that we're looking at Samson in light of Jesus.

[9 : 41] But actually all of the men in the Old Testament whatever office they were in whether they were judges prophets, kings they were all flawed men. But Jesus was the only perfect judge he was the only perfect saviour who was the only perfect prophet he was the only perfect king Jesus fulfilled all these offices of the Old Testament but he did it perfectly he fulfilled them.

And so we see Samson a flawed man yet a picture of Christ nevertheless perhaps in some ways by contrast we see he's not the true saviour but a great one was coming that was Jesus.

So the first thing I want to look at is how does the birth story of Samson how does it point to Christ's birth what are the similarities we see?

Well we read in verses 2 to 3 Judges 13 verses 2 to 3 A certain man of Zorah named Manoah from the clan of the Danites had a wife who was childless unable to give birth the angel of the Lord appeared to her and said you are barren and childless but you're going to become pregnant and give birth to a son.

So two things I want to point out first of all Samson's mother we don't know her name was a barren woman she was childless she couldn't give birth so as we've already said it was a miracle that God had to open her womb that she would be able to give birth we see that time and time again we saw that last week with the birth of Isaac and ultimately it points to the virgin birth so that's the first miraculous thing we see in the story the second miraculous thing is the announcement of the birth it's announced by the angel of the Lord Noah the judge is announced by the angel of the Lord so there's clearly something special about Samson but actually if we look in Matthew chapter 1 verse 21 this is very similar to the birth of Jesus Jesus' birth was announced by the angel of the Lord by the angel of the Lord to Joseph and by Gabriel it says to Mary so in Matthew 1 verse 21 we read this this is the angel of the Lord speaking to

[12 : 09] Joseph after he Joseph had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said Joseph son of David do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit she will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name of Jesus because he will save the people from their sins and so we see just like Samson Jesus his birth was announced by the angel of the Lord and what was his role what was he to do he was to save his people save his people not just from their physical enemies not from the Philistines Jesus came into the world to save his people from their sins and so who's the ultimate saviour the ultimate saviour is Jesus now carrying on with the birth of Samson in verses four to five we see that Samson was to be dedicated to the

Lord from the womb and it talks about the Nazarite he was to be a Nazarite now what was a Nazarite a Nazarite vow was a special vow that those in Israel could take to dedicate themselves for a certain period of time to the Lord so there are three things they couldn't do they couldn't touch dead bodies couldn't touch anything unclean they couldn't they had to abstain from alcohol and they weren't to cut their hair and so they would have been easily set apart from everyone else they'd have had long hair they were to abstain in one sense from the joys of life from alcohol from the good things why because they were to be holy they were to be dedicated to the Lord for a time now this was something that could be done by anyone in Israel but usually only for a short period of time the difference with Samson is that he was to be dedicated to God from the womb and what do we see with

Jesus well he was truly dedicated to God from the womb wasn't he not just with a vow but by his very nature by who he was in one sense it's ironic that Samson has that said about him that he would be dedicated to the Lord from the womb because although he did amazing things for the Lord although God gave him special strength although much favour was upon him he had power from the Lord actually in his own life in the way he lived his life he didn't show any dedication to the Lord he actually showed complete disregard for God we've already mentioned a few things haven't we his weakness for women he didn't he didn't go for Israelite women as they were commanded to in those times but he would time and time again fall for Philistine women those who he was sent to deliver Israel from his Nazarite vow did he care about his

Nazarite vow well we see through the story him touching unclean animals you might know the famous story of him eating honey out of the carcass of a lion that would be unheard of among the Jews to eat food from an unclean animal a dead animal and ultimately we see him his life ending in shame he's taken by the Philistines and he ends up breaking his vow he ends up his hair is cut why because this woman whom he falls for from the Philistines she tricks him and his life is it's a really sad story he although he can conquer enemies physically he struggles to conquer sin he struggles to show any real dedication to God but by contrast

Jesus lived life perfectly from the womb from a child he would obey God he was God in the flesh and why could he deliver us from evil from Satan from sin and death well he he was God himself wasn't he and he as the perfect man as the one who lived life perfectly he was the true ransom the true savior from the ultimate enemy from evil from death so we've seen Christ Christ is the ultimate savior isn't he he's the ultimate deliverer who was sent to save us from our sins well I want to continue looking at how Christ is the ultimate savior for us and more similarities with Samson who did

[17 : 38] Christ come to save what did he come to save us from well the world that Samson entered it was a dark period in Israel's history and if you look if we read it we read in verse one this phrase again Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years and so it was a time when Israel were under oppression from the Philistines and you'll know if you've been coming to the Bible studies on a Wednesday that this phrase is the refrain throughout the judges and so what happens throughout the book of judges is that Israel sins they fall away from God God sends an oppressor but then Israel cry out to God and God sends them a deliverer but in this ultimate final judge we see a difference and it's this that Israel no longer cry out to God in one sense you could say

Israel are in their darkest period spiritually in the whole of the book of judges they don't care about the oppressor they've made peace with the enemy and they've forgotten the God who loves them they've forgotten the God who saved them time and time again and they don't cry out to God but we see God is merciful and grateful in that in this time he still sends Samson he still sends a deliverer now why does that remind us of Christ well Christ came into the world after a period of 400 years of silence from God the last book in the Old Testament is the book of Malachi there's a 400 year span between the book of Malachi and the book of Matthew it's a period where God hasn't spoken there's been no word from God to Israel for the last 400 years Israel have been in captivity the temple's been destroyed there's been a new temple not as glorious and

Israel in one sense they're trying to follow God in their own strength they become very religious but there doesn't seem to be a sense of the spirit of God moving and there's no word from God and so Jesus enters into Israel at that dark period in their history in the darkest period for a long time he comes into the darkness and world and John 1 chapter 4 sorry John chapter 1 verses 4 to 5 says this about Christ in him was life and the life was the light of all mankind the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it and so who is Christ Christ is the light of the world he came into a dark world and the incarnation the coming of Christ into the world it shows that God is not a distant God but he entered into the mess of mankind he humbled himself he became a man and that's not just true for

Israel but that's true for our day that's true for us Jesus is the light of the world today he enters into darkness and he came to deliver us from darkness it says the darkness has not overcome it if you're in a pitch black room you can't see a thing but you shine a torch the light overpowers the darkness doesn't it light always overcomes darkness whatever darkness you think you're in Christ can overcome it and so we've been speaking about the election haven't we we we know the country is in chaos at the moment but what's the answer to the world's problems well it's not a great political leader all political leaders will be flawed but the answer to the world's needs is Christ he's the light of the world and he came to save each one of us he's the answer to our personal needs and maybe in your own life your own family your own situation you think you know this situation's too dark how can there's no light that I can see well Christ came into the darkness he comes into the darkness of our own life there's no darkness too great that

Christ cannot deliver us out of there's no person too hard that God cannot save them perhaps you come to church and you look at those around you and you know you think you know Christ is good for these people I think even as Christians we can all feel like hypocrites a lot of the time we can all feel like all of you know the body of Christ our brothers and sisters they're all in a sense more spiritual than us and we no one feels our weaknesses like ourselves no one knows our weaknesses like us and but Christ didn't come for good people Christ came into a passive world he came for broken people he came for people he came to heal the sick and he came to bring light into darkness so if you contrast Samson and Jesus in their saving work we we've already mentioned

[23 : 29] Samson's anger haven't we and when the spirit comes upon Samson when he delivers his people what do we see we see death we see chaos we see Samson's motives they're not of love but they're in response to anger but Christ is the opposite Christ came in meekness Christ came in compassion and what do we see when the spirit comes upon Christ we see people being healed we see the lame walking we see demons being cast out of people Christ came to shine light into darkness he came to deliver he came to deliver not just physically with sicknesses these all point to the ultimate deliverance he came to deliver us from sin now what's the act of deliverance how did Christ save us from sin how did he overcome darkness well ultimately it's on the cross isn't it it was through his death and so perhaps the ultimate comparison we see with Samson's life and the life of Jesus is that it's through the death of Samson that he delivers Israel finally and it's from the death of Jesus that he delivers all of mankind and so what's what am I talking about when I say

Samson's death well I've already said Samson he broke his Nazarite vow didn't he his hair was cut he was betrayed by his lover and ultimately his denial of his ignorance of God's God's ways his passiveness towards God it had a result and he ends up being the power of God is taken away from him he no longer has the strength he's imprisoned by the Philistines and he's he's put into their pagan temple the temple of Dagon and he's chained up we don't know how many years but probably a long period of time in the prison of his enemies but on the last day of his life he's brought out in the temple in a feast before the the rulers of the Philistines and we see in one sense here repentance from him we see him turning back to

God and he says this in chapter 16 verse 28 he prays this prayer to God and he says sovereign Lord remember me please God strengthen me just once more and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes so the Philistines had also taken out both of his eyes they so he you know he was in not just spiritual darkness he was in physical darkness in a prison cell and he cries out to God and God for a final time gives him his strength back and you'll probably know the story he's placed between two pillars in the temple and the Philistines think he's weak they bring him out just for entertainment but he prays to God he pushes the pillars apart and the temple falls upon the leaders of the Philistines and it says that Samson killed more in his death than in his life and so it was through this ultimate act of sacrifice that Samson ultimately delivered his people or began to deliver them but what do we see what's the phrase he says he says let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes and I want to contrast that with the attitude of Christ we see even in Samson's last day his motive in one sense it's still anger it's still revenge but Christ the true deliverer is meek he's humble he doesn't open his mouth before the trial he's beaten he's put on a cross tried as a criminal but what do we see when he's put on the cross what's his response to his enemies well it's not one of revenge but it's one of compassion it's one of love and he says these words father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing to me and so what does Jesus what is Jesus's heart for his enemies it's not one of revenge he delivers out of love he delivers out of compassion he's the ultimate deliverer he's the ultimate savior and so what has salvation what has the cross brought for us well it's the ultimate victory not from a physical oppressor he didn't come to deliver

Israel from the Romans Christ came once and for all to deliver us from sin from death as we read at the beginning in Genesis 3 15 to finally once and for all to crush Satan the serpent under his feet he was the true deliverer the true seed of the woman so Colossians chapter 2 verses 13 to 15 says this speaking of us when you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh God made you alive with Christ he forgave us all our sins having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us he has taken it away nailing it to the cross and having disarmed the powers and authorities he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them on by the cross so what's Christ's ultimate victory what's his ultimate deliverance what's his ultimate triumph over evil over sin over death over powers over authorities it's his death on the cross on the cross he takes our evil upon himself he takes the wrath of God upon himself and he is crushed by God in our place he delivers us from death he's the ultimate deliverer and so finally just briefly I want to talk about a final form of salvation you see we've seen how the Bible anticipates this ultimate deliverer this ultimate savior and we've seen how that happened we've seen that Christ delivered us through his death and we've seen that that saved us from the penalty of sin but actually Christ not only came to save us from the penalty of sin but he came to save us from sin now sin in our own lives in our walk with God and I think this is often neglected a neglected aspect of Christ's deliverance he came to save us from sin now as Christians we should hate sin and we should want to put it to death he came to make us holy and one thing you'll see as you look at

Samson's life he had this amazing amazing physical strength to conquer the Philistines but ultimately he had no power it seems to conquer the enemy within to conquer his sin he was he lived a fallen life didn't he but you contrast that with Jesus he's the one that was truly dedicated to God from the womb he was the one who truly lived a sinless life and he came to make us holy he came to save us from sin not just not just the results of sin in eternity but the results of sin now Jesus is the one who is tempted in every way as we are it says in Hebrews yet he did not sin he experienced every temptation that we that Samson faced that we face and he probably faced it more intensely than any of us he was tempted by Satan himself in the wilderness and in one sense the the level of temptation that he would have to face would be infinitely above any temptation that we would ever face because Satan would test him to his maximum because he would never give in we all fail we all give in at some point Christ was tested to the limit he never gave in yet he did not sin and so he can sympathize with us but he's also the true deliverer isn't he he's the true savior from sin now and if we're Christ if we're Christians then that same spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the spirit that lives in us not to not for power to you know fight physically like Samson but to fight sin and and we all have sins that we fall into we all have weaknesses we all have weak spots don't we and if you're anything like me what do you do when you sin because we all feel weak at times well if you're anything like me when you when you fall into sin when you fall into temptation when you do sin when you do fall my response is often one of shame it's to it's to run away from God and it's to try in my own strength in a sense to you know make myself right and then I'll come back to God and maybe tomorrow or maybe in a few hours time that's the mindset we so often have that we wouldn't put it in those words but we learn anything from the life of Samson is that in our own strength we're powerless we're weak so what should we do when we sin when we fall well we should come straight to our deliverer we should come straight to

[34:13] Christ and he gives us help he won't neglect us he knows the depths of our sin yet he dealt with it on the cross we need Christ as our deliverer every day don't we every hour every minute we need Christ we need to come to him following on from what we read of Christ our high priest the sinless life he lives it says this in Hebrews 4 16 and it's because because Christ has been tempted in every way as we are what's the confidence we have well it says this let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need and so when we're tempted as Samson was as we all are it's in those moments that we we're not to try sort ourselves out but we're to come to Christ our deliverer we're to come and we will find help it says in our time of need and also when we do fall because we all do when we have fallen we're to come to our deliverer again we're to find help in our time of need he wants to deliver us now he wants to deliver us from our sins not just future but now we will be perfectly clean one day we will be perfectly holy as Christ is but now we live in the now and the not yet don't we we live in the time and where we still struggle with sin and perhaps one of the biggest encouragements from the life of Samson is God's mercy to Samson in that ultimately God didn't neglect Samson though he lived the life of sin ultimately he was granted repentance although God's power was lifted from him for a time God was merciful to him his strength came back to him and he used him one final time and the amazing thing that you see in the New

Testament is that Samson though he's such a fallen man he's not a good role model but actually he's in Hebrews 11 and he's listed as one of the heroes of faith one of the men we look up to God says he's a man of faith and perhaps all of well yes all of the heroes in the Old Testament even those we do look up to guys like David they're all fallen people weren't they they're all sinful people but God is merciful to us time and time again but there's no sense in that the sin that these guys commit brought them any joy brought them any victory but it only brings sorrow only brings shame for Samson it led him to a prison cell it meant that his his final days with it were you know languishing in a prison with his eyes plucked out God had to deal with him and sin never gives us the joy never gives us the pleasure we think it will and so although God is merciful we're to strive to put sin to death aren't we we're to strive to be delivered from sin now

I need Christ's strength now and it's only then that we'll have a true victorious life a life of joy so Christ is the ultimate deliverer is the ultimate savior he's the one that was anticipated throughout the Old Testament throughout the stories the prophecies of the Old Testament and even in the heroes in Samson and David in all of the people in the Old Testament the ultimate savior was that who was anticipated was Christ Christ is the one who defeated death he's the ultimate savior he defeated Satan he defeated sin he saved us from the penalty of sin but finally he's also saved us from sin right now he's we're to look to him as our deliverer from sin in this life so we're going to close by singing a final hymn by faith we see the hand of God and it speaks of the anticipation of the Old Testament to God and Christ is the

Messiah he's the savior of the Old Testament people just as he is of ours and it speaks of the daily life of faith the daily trust that we to put in Christ well I'll just close with these words from Romans chapter 15 verse 13 may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit Amen thanks so much for all of you in the army Amen