

The Preparation of a Saviour

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[0 : 00] Well, friends, do you remember where the book of Judges is found in the Bible? Let's turn to it together. It's on page 213, our reading tonight, which is chapter 13.

It's a few months since we were in this book together, and I think Jephthah was our last judge that we looked at.

There are three more minor judges who are mentioned at the end of verse 12, but we shall leave them in their minority for tonight. We'll get on to Samson. So Judges chapter 13.

And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.

There was a certain man of Zorah of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and had no children.

[1 : 00] And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, Behold, you are barren and have not born children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Therefore, be careful and drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Then the woman came and told her husband, A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God. Very awesome.

I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name. But he said to me, Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.

[2 : 15] And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah, her husband, was not with her. So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.

And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, Are you the man who spoke to this woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission?

And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, Of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing.

All that I commanded her, let her observe. Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you. And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, If you detain me, I will not eat of your food.

But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord. For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, What is your name?

[3 : 36] So that when your words come true, we may honor you. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to the one who works wonders. And Manoah and his wife were watching. And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar.

Now Manoah and his wife were watching, And they fell on their faces to the ground. The angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife.

Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die, for we have seen God. But his wife said to him, If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not

have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.

And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the Lord blessed him.

[4 : 49] And the spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahanedan, between Zorah and Eshto. Amen. This is the word of the Lord.

And may it be a blessing to us. Well, let's turn up our book of Judges, chapter 13, page 213. And my title for this evening is, The Preparation of a Savior.

Savior with a small s, which is Samson. I'm just looking around at the physique of the men here, in the congregation tonight.

Let me put it like this. If you're a small, slender kind of man, perhaps less than average height, less than average weight, with thin arms and thin legs, you're probably built like Samson.

[6 : 05] If you were to look at an illustrated children's Bible, and turn to the story of Samson, almost certainly you will see a man pictured there, who looks like a Rugby International second row forward, about six foot seven inches tall, weighing about 18 stone, with very long hair.

But the only thing right about that picture, is the very long hair. Now the reason I say this, is that the story of Samson, covers four chapters in the book of Judges, chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16.

But there is not one word, in any of those chapters, that suggests that Samson was big, or muscular. The story tells us, that whenever he performed some great feat, requiring great strength, he does it not because of the strength of his muscles, but because the spirit of the Lord, rushes upon him, and enables him.

Look for example, at the first of his deeds of strength, in chapter 14, verse 5. Chapter 14, verse 5, he's grown up now. Then Samson went down, with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah, and behold a young lion, came toward him roaring.

Then the spirit of the Lord, rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion to pieces, as one tears a young goat. It was the power of the spirit, you see there, not the power of the man's muscles.

[7 : 29] No man on earth, has the muscle power, to tear a roaring lion to pieces. You might be the strongest man in Scotland, but if you were to meet a lion, that was determined to have you for his dinner, you would not have a chance in a million.

It's the Lord's power, that strengthened Samson's hands, with that particular business, and with everything else as well. Now we're going to be studying this story of Samson, over the next few Sunday evenings.

It's a very colorful story, but we need to have it clear in our minds, from the word go, that this is not a story about the power of a man, it's a story about the power and grace of God, who raises up Samson to be a savior of Israel.

Now Samson is the 12th and last of the judges, whose stories are told in the book of Judges. And the way that Samson is introduced here, in the book of Judges, is remarkable.

And you will have noticed tonight, how different it is, from the way that any of the other judges, are brought into the action. All the other judges, all the other 11 of them, whether they're famous ones, like Deborah, or Gideon, or Jephthah, or the less well-known judges, all of them suddenly appear in the story, as ready-made, grown-up people.

[8 : 45] But when Samson is introduced, we have a whole chapter, that tells the story, of his miraculous conception and birth. And you soon realize, that this is not the only chapter in the Bible, that tells of a childless couple, who are given the gift of a son, after years of childlessness.

And this son proves, to be somebody very significant, in the working out of God's purposes, for his people. So just think back, quite a few centuries, to Sarah.

Sarah was barren, and very old, and yet the Lord, enabled her to conceive, and bear Isaac. Look forward a little bit, to Hannah, and Elkanah.

Hannah was barren, and she was enabled, to bear Samuel. Look much further ahead, Elizabeth and Zechariah, were elderly, and childless, and the Lord, enabled Elizabeth, to conceive John the Baptist, and bear him.

And in each of those cases, we're given, a long and detailed account, of the childless parents, and the way the Lord, brought about the birth, of their significant sons. In fact, it's worth turning, to Luke chapter one, just for a moment here, if you wouldn't mind.

[9 : 52] Luke chapter one, on page 856. It wasn't many weeks ago, that you were preaching, on this very chapter, so many of you, will have that sermon in mind, but I just want to point out, a striking parallel, between the arrival of Samson, and the arrival of John the Baptist.

Luke chapter one, is a long chapter, 80 verses in all, and it intertwines, the story, that leads up to the birth, of John the Baptist, with the story, that leads up to the birth, of the Lord Jesus.

But look at verse 80, the final verse, of chapter one. And the child, this is John the Baptist, the child grew, and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness, until the day, of his public appearance, to Israel.

So just one verse, that verse, is given to the account, of John's boyhood, and youth. All the interest, in John the Baptist, in this first chapter, is in his miraculous conception, and the prophecies, the messages, that come from God, concerning him.

Now it's very similar, if we turn back, to Judges 13, the same pattern. There's only one verse, in this whole chapter, verse 24, which is given, to the account, of Samson's actual birth, and his growth, to adulthood.

[11 : 11] All the interest, in chapter 13, is in the boy's, miraculous conception, and the prophecies, the words of the angel, which teach, Samson's parents, how they are to bring up, this boy.

So this means, that Samson, is one of, a very select, and very small group, of Bible figures. Isaac, born to Sarah, we should mention, Jacob and Esau, whose mother, Rebecca, was barren.

Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and of course, the Lord Jesus himself. Nobody else, in the whole Bible, is introduced, in this fashion. In each case, the mother is, unable to have children. In Mary's case, of course, it wasn't because she was old, but because she was a virgin. And in each case, the Lord God, shows just how significant, this child is going to be, by speaking prophecies, about his future.

Prophecies given, by angels, or by people. And what this shows, is that these individuals, have been raised up by God, to do something, very significant.

[12 : 14] Each of them, has a very special role, in furthering, God's purpose, for his people, in some way. So Isaac, is the promised son, through whom the people of Israel, begin their growth, into a distinct nation.

Jacob, next generation down, he becomes Israel, that's his name. He's the father, of the twelve tribes. Then Samuel, much later on, becomes the prophet, who anoints the line, of the kings of Israel.

First Saul, and then David. John the Baptist, he is the immediate forerunner, of the saviour of the world. And then there comes Jesus, who is the saviour, the son of God, and the son of man.

So where does Samson, fit in with, with this group of people? How do we categorise Samson? Roughneck? Womanizer?

Well, he was rough, and he was briefly married. I think his marriage, lasted a week. And then it was followed, later on, by wretched sexual adventures. But we can't just dismiss Samson, as a Bible lightweight.

[13 : 21] Because he is mentioned, with great honour, in Hebrews chapter 11, as a man who persevered in faith. In fact, he's mentioned in Hebrews 11, in the same breath, as David and Samuel.

So while Samson, was deeply flawed, and we'll look at, some of those flaws, over the next couple of weeks, we've got to take very seriously, a man whose arrival, is introduced, in the same way, as the arrival of Samuel, or John the Baptist.

This is a man, for whom God has, great purposes. And if we, if we want one verse, to hold together, all our thinking, about Samson, look with me, at verse 5, in chapter 13.

Verse 5. You shall conceive, and bear a son, no razor shall come, upon his head, for the child, shall be a Nazarite, to God from the womb, and he shall begin, to save Israel, from the hand, of the Philistines.

That final phrase, of verse 5, that is the key, to Samson's role. He shall begin, to save Israel, from the hand, of the Philistines. Begin to save Israel. He won't complete the job.

[14 : 25] We have to wait, for Jesus to come, before salvation, is completed. But Samson's, God-given role, within his own time, is to be a savior, a savior of Israel. And he does this salvation, not by the strength, of his muscles, but by the power, of the spirit of God.

This is a story, about a powerful, gracious God, not about a strong man. And with that in mind, let me point out, something about the way, in which we tend to read, the Bible.

There's an inbuilt, perversity in us, that makes us, over interested, in the achievements, of men and women, but sometimes, half blind, to the power, and grace of God.

But, we tend to read the Bible, in a man-centered way, rather than a God-centered way. And this is partly, because we love to have heroes. We love to lionize people, to make people into lions.

We like to have, political heroes, like Winston Churchill, or warrior heroes, like William Wallace. Did you know how tall he was? Six foot nine.

[15:31] Back in 1299. We like to have, sporting heroes, don't we? A great tennis player, great rugby player. We like to have, literary heroes, like a Shakespeare, or a Robert Burns. So when we read, a Bible story, like this story of Samson, we tend, to lionize him, and to focus, on the daring deeds, of the man.

But the Bible, is consistently written, in such a way, as to focus, on the gracious, powerful deeds, of God. The Bible is always, primarily, about what God is doing.

Even a book, like Esther, which doesn't even, mention God, by name, is primarily, about God. It's all about, the way in which God, was preserving his people, the Jews, from their enemies.

So let's bear this in mind, as we read the story, of Samson, over the next few weeks. Let's look at, how the author of Judges, traces the loving hand, of God, at work, in the events, of Samson's life. Now, as Judges 13 begins, the situation, in Israel, is that we have, a backsliding people, and a tenacious God.

[16:37] In other words, God holds on to them, when they have lost interest, in holding on to him. You may remember, from our study, of the earlier chapters, of Judges, a few months ago, that the key theme, in the book of Judges, is that the people of Israel, at this period, were repeatedly, abandoning the Lord, the God of Israel, and they were starting, to serve and worship, the local Canaanite deities, the Baals, and the Ashtaroth.

And in response, the Lord, again and again, has to discipline his people, by allowing neighboring nations, or the armies of neighboring nations, to defeat them in battle, and then to oppress them. They were oppressed first, by, do you remember, Cush and Rishatham, the king of Mesopotamia, and God then sent Othniel, the first of the judges, to rescue them.

Then they were oppressed, by Eglon, the king of Moab, and Ehud, was sent to rescue them. Then by Sisera, the military commander, of the Canaanites, with his 900 chariots of iron.

And the Lord sent Deborah, and Barak, to rescue them. Then they were oppressed, by the Midianites, and the Lord sent Gideon, to rescue them. Then by the Ammonites, and the Lord sent Jephthah, to rescue them.

And now here, chapter 13, verse 1, the Lord again, gives them into the hand of, this time it's the Philistines, for 40 years. Now the Philistines, incidentally, were going to prove a thorn, in the side of Israel, for many years to come, until David finally, got the better of them, a century or more, after Samson's time.

[18:08] The Philistines lived, in the coastal areas, to the southwest of Israel. And their chief five cities, some of which are still, very much there, were Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza.

The same Gaza, that has had so much trouble recently. Now verse 1, in our chapter, simply tells us, that the Lord, had given the Israelites, into the hand of the Philistines.

Now that states the position, really very boldly, it doesn't tell us very much. But there are moments, as the story of Samson, unfolds, where we get a glimpse, of just how strongly, the Philistines, had gripped Israel, with an iron fist.

Look on to the first few verses, of chapter 14 again. Samson is now a young man, and he casually, pops down to the village, of Timnah.

Timnah was only, three or four miles, from his own home in Zorah. But clearly, Philistine families, are living, as close to the Israelites, as that. They're living there, in Timnah. And Samson, going to Timnah, falls for a girl, that he sees there.

[19:14] And he marries her. Now, it's true in verse three there, that his parents protest, against the idea, that he should marry a Philistine. But their protest, falls on deaf ears, and he goes ahead, and does it.

The Israelites, have become so accustomed, to living with the Philistines, that they are now, even intermarrying with them, against the laws of Israel. Then look at the end, of verse four, in chapter

14.

At that time, the Philistines, ruled over Israel. The point is being, gently rubbed home there. Then look on, to chapter 15, verse nine. At this point, the Philistines appear, on a raid.

And the men of Judah, ask them, why have you come? And the Philistines say, we've come to get Samson, and to do to him, as he's done to us. Samson had just killed, a number of Philistine men. And then what happens? Verse 11, three thousand men, of Judah. That is an impressively, large delegation. Go to Samson, and they say to Samson, do you not know, you dunce, that the Philistines, are rulers over us?

[20 : 19] It's a very revealing moment. Samson has just been, killing Philistines. That's the very thing, that God raised him up to do. And yet men of the tribe, of Judah, men of Israel, remonstrate with him, and say to him, don't rock the boat, Samson.

The Philistines, are in charge around here. We've got to keep, on the right side of them. So what has happened, is that the Israelites, have become so passive, so beaten down, by the strength of the Philistines, that they daren't lift a finger, against them, in case there might be reprisals.

The Israelites, have become putty, in the Philistines hands. Now perhaps you turn with me, back to Judges chapter 3, verse 1. Chapter 3, verse 1.

Which gives a bit more, of an overview, of what's going on. So here's chapter 3, verse 1. Now these are the nations, the Gentile nations, that the Lord left, in the land of Canaan, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel, who had not experienced, all the wars in Canaan.

It was only in order, that the generations, of the people of Israel, might know war, to teach war, to those, who had not known it before. These are the nations. Now who's first up?

[21 : 33] The five lords, of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and so on. So what those verses are saying, is that the Lord's purpose, for Israel, at this point in her history, was that the Israelites, should take up arms, against all these pagan nations, in the land of Canaan, and drive them out, lest they become contaminated, with their godless, and wicked practices.

So the people of Israel, were under orders, from heaven, not to rub along, with pagan values. Just as friends, the Lord's church today, is under orders, from heaven, not to allow, the values of godless society, to creep into our hearts, and get a grip on us.

But the Israelites, in Samson's day, had so completely, rolled over, that they were, intermarrying, with Philistines, and weakly accepting, their overlordship. They weren't simply, compromising, with the standards, of paganism.

They were, gulping them down. It's a painful picture, I guess, of what can happen, to the Lord's church. The Lord has commanded us, the church, not to invite, pagan and godless values, into our hearts, because we are at war, with them.

We are called, not only to be believers, but to be, contenders. Let me ask this question. Have you moved, from being a believer, to being a contender? I won't ask you, to put your hands up.

[22 : 55] It's a very important question. We're called, to be contenders. But where are, all these godless values? Are they all, out there, in the big wide world, in the pubs and clubs, and the glossy magazines, the banks, and the betting shops, and the theatres?

Is this, Fortress Tron, Fort Knox Tron, with its doors, firmly locked, against the trashy values, of the world? No, it's not.

The trashy values, of the world, have insinuated themselves, into this very room. Haven't they? And certainly, in my heart, there's a part of my heart, that loves them. Remember how Paul, puts it in Galatians, the desires of the flesh, are at war, with the desires, of the spirit.

He's talking there, about every Christian heart. And the Bible pattern, is that the Lord, has sent a savior, to rescue his people, from the dominion of sin.

And back then, in 11 or 1200 BC, the Lord sent Samson, to begin to save Israel, from the hand, from the power, of the idolatrous Philistines.

[24 : 02] And then the Lord, finally sent Jesus, to rescue his people, from the power, of the world, the flesh, and the devil. So in Judges 13, this is the sad picture, we have a backsliding people, a people in great trouble, but it's their own fault.

A backsliding people, and a tenacious God. Friends, let us always thank God, for his tenacity. All right, but let's look at the details, of the story, or at least some of them, in chapter 13.

I'd like us to notice, four things, this evening. First of all, something humbling, something humbling. Verse 2, introduces us, to a Mr. Ordinary.

His name is Manoah, he comes from the tribe of Dan, of the town of Zorah. And Zorah, you will see it, on some Bible atlases, but it seems to have been, an insignificant little place, in Judah. It wasn't many miles, from Jerusalem. And Dan, the tribe of the Danites, was one of the least, important of the tribes. You might say, bottom of league two, almost conference. And as for Manoah, he had no impressive ancestry, as far as we can tell.

[25 : 12] And what about his wife? Well, verse 2, simply tells us, that she was barren, and childless. That's a condition, hard enough to bear, in any age. But it was even harder, back then, because unlike today, there was a stigma, of shame, attached to childness, childlessness.

And, do you notice, we're not even told, the woman's name. If Mr. Manoah, is Mr. Ordinary, his wife, is Mrs. Nameless. It's a comfort to know, isn't it, that the Lord, has never been impressed, by wealth, or social status.

He loves to use, very ordinary people. But this woman, this childless, nameless woman, is visited, by the angel of the Lord, and the angel's message, to her in verse 3, is first of all, devastating, and then wonderful.

Devastation first. Behold, he says, you are barren, and have not born children. I know that stranger. It's been a great sadness, to me for a long time. You haven't got to rub it in.

But, and here's the wonderful part, you shall conceive, and bear a son. And immediately, in verses 4 and 5, the angel tells the woman, that this son, is to be brought up, as a Nazirite.

[26 : 25] Now the idea, of the Nazirite, was that he was to be, separated, and consecrated, in a very special way, to the Lord, for the Lord's service. If you want to study up, the subject of being a Nazirite, the book of Numbers, chapter 6, will tell you all that you need.

It'll give a full description, of the Nazirite way of life. But at the heart, of the Nazirite life, there were three prohibitions. No wine, not even grape juice, or grapes, or grape pips.

No touching dead bodies, not even the body, of a close relative. And no visits, to the barber. No razor, no hair cutting. Now the angel, says in verse 5, this child, is to be a Nazirite, to God, from the womb.

Set apart, designated, and destined, to a very special task. Namely, verse 5, he shall begin, to save Israel, from the hand, of the Philistines. That's his role.

Now the fact, that this man, and this woman, are chosen by God, to bring Samson, into the world, tells us something, about God's ways. God does things, in, and from, impossible, situations.

[27 : 38] Remember how Paul says, to the Romans, in chapter 4 of Romans, God gives life, to the dead, and calls into existence, the things that do not exist. And we human beings, could never do anything like that.

We can't call into being, things that don't exist. We can only make use of the things, that are already in existence. So for example, if you want to build a wall, you've got to use, bricks and mortar, provided by somebody else.

If you want to plant a garden, you have to go to the garden center, don't you, and buy the plants.

You can't create, pansies, or rhododendrons, by simply saying, as it were, oh pansy, come hither.

Can you? You try it, it won't. But there are many moments, in the history of God's dealings, with his people, when he does something wonderful, without any help, from human beings.

In the face of impossible odds, he raises up, help and salvation. In this case, he raises up a savior, who foreshadows, the great and ultimate, savior, the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 41] No human being, can proudly claim, that they've had a hand in it, because clearly, they didn't have a hand in it. Our problem is that, by nature, we always want to take, a little bit of credit, to ourselves.

But Manoah, and his wife, his nameless wife, were weak and helpless, they were nobodies, from a little nowhere town, called Zorah. They were not people, as far as we can tell, of energy or ability.

They weren't movers, and shakers. We can't look at them, and say, what fine people, what obvious front runners, for this role. So the result is, that our eyes, are lifted up, from them, to the Lord.

It is he, who brings salvation, out of a barren, and impossible, human situation. It's very humbling, but it's also, very encouraging, for folks like us. Now secondly, something heartwarming.

In verse six, you'll see that, Mrs. Manoah, comes to her husband, and she tells him, the whole story.

It spills out, I guess pretty quickly. She says, a man of God came, he looked like an angel, he told me, I'm going to have a son, and I've got to bring him up, as a Nazirite, I've got to abstain, from all alcohol, and eat nothing unclean, because this child, must be Nazirite, lifelong.

[29 : 55] Now if I'd been Manoah, I would probably have said, darling, pull the other one, it's got bells on it, are you drunk, or simply insane? But he doesn't, he immediately, believes it, he prays a lovely, and humble prayer.

You see that prayer, in verse eight, he says, oh Lord, please let the man of God, he still thinks, it's just an ordinary, human being, perhaps a prophet, please let the man of God, whom you sent, come again to us, and teach us what we are to do, with the child who will be born.

So he doesn't question the truth, of what his wife says to him, he immediately turns to the Lord, and asks for further reassurance, and further instruction. It's as though he's saying to him, this is a big responsibility, Lord, that you're giving us, we need further teaching.

Isn't it heartwarming, that he turns to the Lord like that, and asks to be taught. It's a sign of the grace of God, at work in us, when we turn to the Lord, and ask him to teach us.

But there's something, even more heartwarming, than Manoah's prayer, and it comes in the next verse, in verse nine. And that is, that the Lord, listened, to the voice of Manoah, and answered, his prayer.

[31 : 11] It's the sort of phrase, we can easily skip over, and hardly notice. But it's one of the blockbuster truths, of the whole Bible. The Lord kindly bends his ear, in our direction, and listens to the cries, of his weak, and helpless people.

Human parents, learn, to listen for the cries, of their children. They pick them up quickly. But God is the best of all parents. He listens with infinite understanding, to the cries, and the sighs, to the tears, and the fears, of his people.

If we're ever tempted, to stop praying, let's remember this verse nine. God listened, to the voice, of Manoah. Now thirdly, something wonderful.

The Lord answers, Manoah's prayer. The man of God, who is of course the angel, comes again.

And he simply repeats, to Manoah, what he has said, to Manoah's wife, on his first visit.

Namely, she must drink no alcohol, and only eat kosher foods, because her son's consecration, to the Lord's service, is to begin now, at conception, rather than at birth.

[32 : 21] Manoah, still not realizing, that he's in the company, of an angel, offers to prepare, a meal for his visitor. The angel, declines to eat, but asks that Manoah, prepares a young goat, not for the table, but for the altar, to offer, a sacrifice to the Lord.

Then Manoah says to him, in verse 17, what is your name, so that when your words, come true, we may honor you. And the angel of the Lord, said to him, why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?

Now the angel, is not saying, my name, you ask me what my name is, my name is wonderful. As if you or I, might say my name is Rodney, or my name is Fiona. What he means is, my name is, so wonderful, that it's beyond utterance, it's beyond human understanding.

The authorised version, puts it like this, why askest thou thus, after my name, seeing it is secret? Now this is one of those, lovely moments in the Bible, when we're given, a momentary glance, into things, that we cannot possibly, yet understand.

Remember how David, says in the Psalms, such knowledge, is too high for me, I cannot grasp it.

Remember how Paul says, in 1 Corinthians, and here he's quoting from Isaiah, he says, I has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared, for those who love him.

[33 : 52] There are many things, about the Lord God, which are beyond, our comprehension now. The Lord tells us, a great deal about himself, in the Bible, but not everything. There are wonderful things, things that we cannot see, or know, this side of eternity.

And the very fact, that some of these things, are kept from us now, surely that whets our appetite, to see everything, in the end. We look forward, with eagerness, and expectation.

This angel's name, was too wonderful, for Manoah to understand. But his words, in verse 18, would reassure Manoah, as they reassure us, that this wonderful messenger, had come from the right hand, of God.

Well now fourth, something terrifying. Verse 19, Manoah, having lit a fire, on the rock altar, offers up this young goat, and a cereal offering to, well notice how verse 19, describes him, to the Lord, who works wonders.

Manoah, and his wife, says the passage, were watching. In other words, their eyes were fixed, and focused. This is eyewitness record. The angel, went up heavenward, in the flame.

[35 : 07] And then notice the repetition. Manoah and his wife, were watching. In other words, they weren't dreaming, they were fully conscious, they were there. And what did they do?

They fell on their faces, to the ground, appropriately terrified. Verse 21, it's at this point, that Manoah realizes, that this truly, is the angel of the Lord.

And he says to his wife, we shall surely die, for we've seen God. That's the instinctive, and right response, of a believing heart. But Manoah's wife, is also right.

And like many, believing wives, after her, she's rather quicker, to think things through, than her husband is. And she says, no Manoah, we're not going to die, if the Lord had meant to kill us, why would he have told us, that we're going to have a son, and that we've got to raise him, as a Nazarite.

So something humbling, God does things, in impossible, hopeless situations. Something heartwarming, and that is that God listens, to the prayers of his people. Something wonderful, this mysterious name, coming from the depths, of heaven itself, whetting our appetites, for more such revelations.

[36 : 20] And then something terrifying, the reality of God, as he draws very close, to his servants. Why then? Why this detailed narrative, of the miraculous conception, of a man who, in the words of verse 5, shall begin to save Israel, from the hand of the Philistines?

The reason is this surely, that Samson is one of the most, significant savior figures, in the Old Testament. Despite his flaws, he demonstrates features, of the work of Christ himself.

Indeed, he demonstrates something of Christ. Christ, let's never forget, is the warrior king. He's the one who comes, to do battle, with Satan, and all his works.

And indeed, to have the victory, in the end, over Satan. Christ is the one, who is filled with the Holy Spirit. In the end, the Bible assures us, that he will place his foot, upon the neck, of all his enemies. And Samson too, was sent by God, to save God's people, from their enemies. His moral flaws, will be a warning to us, about the traps, and pitfalls, in our own pathway.

[37 : 31] But his achievements, by the power of the Holy Spirit, teach us about Christ. And his death, which comes at the very end, of the story, his means of, of greatest victory, that's going to teach us also, about the achievement, of the death, of Christ.

Christ. So Samson will speak to us, of God the Savior. And Judges 13, shows us, just how carefully, the Lord was preparing, this man for his role.

This is why, the final verse of the chapter, tells us, that the spirit of the Lord, always the source, of Samson's strength, the spirit of the Lord, began to stir him, in Mahanedan, between Zorah, and Eshterol.

Next week, a roaring lion, and a dangerous riddle. Let's pray together. Dear God, our Father, we think of the hopeless, and dreadful state, of the Israelite people, at this stage, in their history. And how you had to keep on, delivering them, into the hand of, an oppressor. Partly to bring them, to their senses, and to show them, who was the true God.

[38 : 47] And we thank you so much, that in your tenacious love, for your people, and your commitment, to your covenant, to them, you never let them go. We thank you, for Samson therefore.

And we pray, that as we read this story, you will help us, to come to understand, more of the tenacity, of your love, for your people, throughout the ages. That love, which is going to culminate, in the arrival, of all your people, around your throne, in the new heavens, and the new earth. So please, our dear God, keep us faithful, keep us persevering, help us to fight, the battles, that come to us, as we seek to stand, for your truth, in this world.

And we ask it, in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.