

Samson - Part 1

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[0 : 0 0] So tonight we are carrying on with our series and judges and tonight and for the next two weeks and we're going to look at Samson The last judge in the book, but maybe the first one that comes to mind when we think of the judges and from Sunday school all the way up and His life story is a favorite and it's a story Although being a favorite that I think maybe Confuses us ahead the older that we get and the more that we read it and his relationship with his parents and his wife His relationship with Delilah and his superhuman strength and the riddles that he tells he's he's one of the more unforgettable and figures in the Bible, so in chapter 13 which we have just read and We are at the beginning of a new cycle the Israelites are Worshipping false gods They're worshipping foreign idols left right in center and They are again oppressed and made slaves, but again God raises a judge

And he raises a savior a deliverer who is going to come and deliver them from their enemy and in this case Tonight we're not really introduced to Samson. We're just introduced to his his parents. They are childless and but the angel of the Lord appears in this chapter and Tells his mother that she will soon have a son who will live by a certain code who will live by certain rules and Who will save the people from the Philistines who are ruling over them? She tells her husband about it He praised the gods that this this mysterious figure would appear again and the angel does come back tells him to make a burnt offering and When they make this offering the angel disappears in the flames Up into heaven and it's not until all of that is passed that we are at last introduced to Samson the judge If you've been here for the rest of the series or you even read this book yourself

Looking back over the past 12 chapters one of the recurring themes is Is the people of God crying out? Whenever the enemy oppresses them so they worship false idols God gives them over to the enemy. They cry out and then God comes and saves them through through a judge That doesn't that doesn't happen in chapter 13 and No one cries out It says in verse 1 that they were ruled over by the Philistines for 40 years. They live in misery and they live in trouble And they are not free, but they do not ask God to save them There is very much a sense that this is the way it is and so the problem in chapter 13 the problem in Samson's day is that the people are self-dependent When they are dealing and facing trouble They look everywhere apart from God to have their needs met They give all their attention to idols that they have made for themselves and they are self-dependent and inward-looking

When life really gets miserable They don't cry out And yet God in chapter 13 Sends Samson. He sends the judge. He sends the deliverer still a question and you can ask yourself when reading judges 13 a question that we can ask ourselves tonight is Are we self-dependent?

Even if you're a Christian you can ask this question. Am I am I self-dependent and the answer likely at times is going to be yes. It's got to be yes if we are being honest When I am upset and even miserable. Am I the first port of call?

[3 : 58] Do I have the answers to my trouble? Am I the one who will conquer my fear and worry about the next week month? year If your relationships with your friends and family bring pain if if you dread going into the workplace And every every week if you find that the plans you want to work out are not working out Are you self-dependent in that situation? Are you the one who will fix it? If you ask yourself that and the answer is yes God gives you relief in chapter 13 to the self-dependent God still brings hope That is what happens in chapter 13. And so just two ways Tonight to think about how he does that to the self-dependent God still promises to bring hope He does that firstly by taking the initiative He God moves first before anyone else does in the day of trouble and then secondly

God he reveals himself And not necessarily his plans So firstly God he takes he takes the initiative if you're a Christian and and you get up every morning And wondering if you could fix your circumstances or if for this past week You've just been accepting that that life is just the way it is and there's no getting about it And the truth is that God takes the initiative God moves towards you To bring joy into your life look at verse two there was a certain man of Zora Of the tribe of the Danites whose name was Manoa and his wife was barren And had no children Manoa and the father here is a nobody And his wife she doesn't even get named. She's even more of a nobody In in this chapter and all we're told about her is the fact that she cannot have children

It says that she is barren the only two people we meet in this chapter apart from God himself Are of really little significance and They have their status or their role completely Minimised when you when you look at every scene that Manoa appears in in this chapter and The commentaries have different views in this but some some would say and it's quite likely that the writer of the book of judges He minimizes Manoa's Character he shrinks his character Deliberately in this chapter so in verse two he's only a certain man. It's not that important And then when he eventually meets the angel of the Lord Everything he says is downplayed or rejected And in verse 12 he asks the angel what his son's mission is going to be the angel Dismisses that question completely and just talks about Manoa's wife instead in verse 15

It seems that Manoa wants to cook for the angel that that offer is declined Verse 17 he wants to know the angel's name The angel doesn't give it or not directly at least and then when the angel disappears in the flames up to heaven He is in complete fear And it's his wife that talks him Back to his senses his fear is lacking her faith. So in the little we know about Manoa And in the little we know about Samson's father and his failed attempts At having some control over what is happening in this chapter And Manoa is very much a diminished or a dwindling Figure in this story And then there's his wife. She's not even named and We don't she is completely unknown and the most the most agonizing aspect to her life the most agonizing aspect to their lives in this story is that She is bad and she cannot she cannot have children and in this time in history and this ancient history and in this culture

Being unable to have children is very shameful and It wasn't until the likes of sara or rebecca and genesis or manoa's wife here It's not until they are able to have children that they have any sense of honor In the culture that they are living in So the role or the status that manoa and his wife hold Is completely reduced in chapter 13. That's that's what the writer here is getting at for 40 years And this land that is being controlled by the philistines Their hands are in the lives of their enemy for most of their lives if not all of it they're living every day in trouble And they are part of the self dependent inward looking people and it's in that very moment In that very place Where we have to ask how does god bring deliverance?

[9 : 13] Well, he takes the initiative it's it's him who works before they could even think of how that would happen It's him who moves to bring joy Before it's even a thought in their minds One writer says this god often begins precisely there And human obscurity and hopelessness where there is no human energy or ability to serve as a starter God will bring salvation out of nothingness In in that nothingness twice the angel says To manoa's wife behold you shall conceive and bear a son words that were impossible yesterday Are absolute certainty today For manoa's wife where manoa and his wife are nobody's god begins to work right in that place In that situation he moves to give joy and hope to his people he moves first

To bring peace to them The outcome for you The outcome for us Is that god still works he still moves in the same way You might be anxious that how the next three months of summer are going to look for you you could be unhappy in your job despite having to spend five out of seven days in that place You might be finding your relationships with your friends or family extremely difficult To work out to the point that maybe you do not know what to do If you find that you are self dependent in in that place If you find that you are the one who who can fix your trouble god says no He says that's his job in your life He is the one who moves to bring joy paul says this in in romans 15 it's the god of hope uh who brings peace

To your soul the truth is that whether there is no hope where you look forward And see no joy whatsoever But it's in that situation that god moves first god takes the initiative he is the one who moves For the self dependent and judges 13 for the self dependent today and god comes to you He creates hope out of nothing he frees you he brings joy he takes the initiative when you can do Nothing So god god moves first secondly and god god reveals himself To manoa and his wife and not not his plans not down to the finest detail so When we are looking at manoa And the way in which he tries to control this interaction with the angel And the writer uses that to show us how insignificant this man is really

Um and in verse 12 is this question that he asks the angel which which gets ignored it gets completely Bypassed the angel comes to his wife tells her how her son is supposed to live He tells her that our child will eventually free the people or begin to free them How that is done the specific details of that?

And that's the question that manoa has He says in verse 12 now when your words come true What is to be the child's manner of life and what is his mission?

[12 : 52] and the angel's answer to that Is to talk about manoa's wife the angel's answer to that is not to answer it at all And you can ask why not you can ask why that is the case Until you see what he does reveal God reveals himself not completely but he reveals something of himself And who he is and what he is like so The main point here is that it's the angel of the Lord who appears to the couple um It's the angel of the Lord and the the keyword In the Hebrew the keyword in the original language is messenger The messenger of the Lord so in one way this is a messenger sent from God and in another way this messenger this angel is unlike any other angel Um in the bible he first appears in Genesis 16 to haigar a slave woman

Who who falls pregnant by her master Abraham? and she is treated awfully by Abraham's wife sara and so she runs away she flees she has to get away And the angel of the Lord appears to her and tells her that Her descendants from from this from this time of trouble her descendants are going to be more than she could ever number He tells her that good will come from this and after the angel says this She asks the question Have I really seen him?

Who sees me Is she's asking if she's actually seen God physically? Is the messenger divine is the question has he been sent by God?

Or is this God appearing in physical form to manoa's wife? What what is vague? um in the old testament becomes clearer When jesus appears in the new in john's gospel. He says what I say Therefore I say as the father has told me Jesus the son of God who is God Speaks as he has been sent by God the father It's high it's highly likely it's it's most likely in the early church and the church throughout history has supported this view That the angel of the lord who appears in the old testament Who appears in judges 13 is jesus?

He is pre-incarnate. This is the physical the visible existence of jesus Before he became human God the father sends out the message and god the son brings it to the people he is the messenger Manoa and his wife meet with god who reveals himself To them so when Manoa asks god what his plan is for the unborn son. He doesn't answer it. He just shows who he is When Manoa asks the angel his name he doesn't give it. He just says that it's wonderful And all he is saying is that it is it is too much to take in his name encompasses too much about him And He is far too holy and just and yet far too kind and gentle that this couple will ever fully understand it

[16 : 32] God's concern and love towards nobody Like Manoa and his wife and every other human is impossible to fully understand Manoa doesn't get his name But he begins to work out who he's speaking to He will not be fed but he asks for the sacrifice. He doesn't tell him his name In other words, they can never fully know his character And he disappears in the flames of the sacrifice and Manoa says in verse white two we have seen god God god does not tell them How the next 20 years of their lives are going to work out looking after this child He doesn't tell them how their son will begin to save the people from the enemy. He tells them that it's far more important that they know him And what he is like and know what the future is if if you are desperately trying to work out How the rest of the year is going to look at if if you want the answers right now god

God calls you to be satisfied and knowing him And not Simply his plans it's far more important That you wake up in the morning and remind yourself that god is so gentle and so caring towards you that they That you will never fully understand it The next few weeks and months of your life are completely outside of your control But god thinks so much of you in that place And he loves you so much that he protects you in ways that you will never know To the self-dependent god says it's far more important that you know him than know his plans And so the question is the question from that is Do you know him?

And not just know about him not just know often, but do you actually know him? It is his love and gentleness real real towards you or do you reject it because you are the one who's in charge of your life Are you so self-dependent that it's enough to know about god and not really know him?

God calls you to trust in him so that you can really know him And not just about him When you prepare for the rest of the week when when you want to fix the trouble that's in it God says be satisfied and knowing him rather than his plans see how gentle and loving he is towards you Towards those who trust in him so loving and so gentle that it's too wonderful for us to fully understand So to the self-dependent God moves first he brings hope where there is nothing And he wants you to know him Before you know his plans. Lastly, this is a sound that I want to hear from you Before you know his plans lastly this this is a samsung series So we should we should probably say something about samsung. There are so many parallels here between the sending of samsung and the sending of jesus

And at the end of the chapter samson is born and it says that god blessed him as he grew up and the spirit of god stirred him And and it's just telling us that his character is being molded from a young age. Maybe even as he's growing up He realizes that he begins to realize this gift of strength and health that he has so much so much in this chapter It points us to believing that samson really is going to be the greatest judge Where all the other judges appear and deliver the people in some way Their stories usually end in failure of some kind. We think surely not with samson His birth is announced by the angel god himself who appears twice The angel gives his mother strict instructions how to raise her son. He's supposed to be a nazirite um Which just means well it comes from number six Where there is a code or rules given to people who want to live especially close to god

[21 : 04] Who want to have a more intense communion with him? And so they're not allowed to drink from the vine. They're not allowed to have the haircut. They're not allowed to touch any dead body and everything about this chapter tells us that samson is the judge that we are waiting for at last We are supposed to be excited when we read this chapter because Because finally here is a true judge Who is going to save the people properly And yet we read the next three chapters and we are let down in almost every way When we look at him Maybe possibly more so than every judge before him samson fails it just about every turn Even even thing of the rules that he's supposed to live by the rules that are given to his mother um He he kills a lion He kills a 30 men and then a thousand men and then thousands at the end of his life His head is cut

Who knows what he did when he walked through the vineyard? One writer summarizes samson quite helpfully he says samson will prove to be the judge who is the least interested In being a deliverer that the last hope of israel in judges is a judge deliverer who chases women instead of enemies and who avenges And who avenges personal grievances instead of delivering his nation from the oppression Because he fails Because he only begins to save his people from the philistines Because he only partly saves them from their trouble another judge needs to be sent and 1400 years later one is sent And his birth is announced by an angel too many And she is told that he will really be the savior Offer people who are oppressed and where samson was controlled by his impulses Where he chased every woman who came across his way

And killed out of rage samson walks into the wilderness and though he is tempted he gives up all the power in the world Where samson gets so angry and kills samson asks the father to forgive those who are torturing him Samson is supposed to deliver these self dependent people who have no problem living with the philistines and yet he fails and he dies samson went to the cross and he died not out of rage Not out of revenge But to deliver to save to really save everyone who would believe in him Are you are you self dependent? Do you get up in the morning and immediately think how you're going to fix your trouble?

God took the initiative 2000 years ago When he sent samson When you go into this week your hope the hope that god gives you this week is the fact that the perfect judge died and yet rose again God took the initiative and the hope that he gives you Is the fact that samson died and rose again for all who would believe no matter how weak they are Just to finish two things you could do this week After after reading judges 13 We at times tend towards being self dependent if we're being honest we think we can fix our trouble when really we cannot And yet god promises deliverance For that very pain God promises to relieve us from that And we can't do that Pain and god promises to relieve us from that two things you can do Do not do not be passive the the opposite of self dependency

Or self dependency is one extreme being passive is the other extreme and proverbs 16:9 answers that The heart of man plans his way But the lord establishes his steps You can plan you can prepare for How this week is going to look You can think and pray about how to be active in your trouble, but you need to do that in a way that pleases god In a way that acknowledges that his way is best his way is so much better than yours That he might redirect your steps Do not be self dependent going on what you think is best do not be passive either And and said watch that your ways align with him secondly Pray pray really specifically what what we read earlier or what we quoted earlier from paul and romans 15 Pray that the god of hope would give you peace

[26 : 08] Pray that god would make jesus resurrection your greatest hope god takes the initiative he moves first he did it by sending his son Your greatest hope is the resurrection telling you that nothing in your life is going to separate you from the life that you have with jesus And telling you that everything broken will be fixed so paul encourages us in romans 15:13 to pray that we would be filled with peace The simplest the the best thing you can do this week is pray that god would fill you with peace in the day of trouble If you're self dependent pray and realize like samson's parents did That your hope comes from someone else who someone who took the initiative someone who chooses to reveal himself to you every day Though not necessarily his plans Let's pray Our lord and god we thank you for your word

We pray this week as we head into that we would be satisfied knowing you And maybe not necessarily knowing the specifics of how it will look But even in trouble even in our self dependency lord we pray That we would turn to you and Find hope in the fact that your son came and died for us so help us we ask for jesus' sake amen