

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 39 (September 18-24, 2016)

We recently saw that David's eyes caused him to lust and then to commit adultery, ultimately bringing much heartache into his life. This week we will begin a study of Samson, another of God's chosen vessels who struggled with the same problem.

Sunday, September 18 (read Judges 13:1-5)

The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son." (Judges 13:3)

Like so many of the people in the Bible that are used by God, Manoah and his wife have been waiting a long time for a child (v. 2). Their country, Israel, is in need of a godly leader, because God has allowed the Philistines to hold them captive for the past forty years as a result of their evil behavior (v. 1). At this time, an angel appears to the woman and promises her a son who will be a Nazirite. The complete set of requirements for a Nazirite is given in Numbers 6:1-21, but the one that will come into play later on is the command that "no razor may be used on his head." From birth, this child is set apart by God to begin the deliverance of Israel from her longtime enemy (v. 5). We will follow the story in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday, September 19 (read Judges 13:6-14)

Then Manoah prayed to the Lord: "O Lord, I beg you, 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." (Judges 13:8)

I printed the verse above to show the tremendous faith of Manoah. The angel comes to his **wife** with the good news, but **he** has enough faith to believe the message and to go to God in prayer when he hears the story (v. 6-8). Answering the man's prayer, God sends the angel back to the wife who goes immediately into the field to get her husband (v. 9-10). Manoah follows his wife and asks the angel (v. 12), "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" Notice that the man does not challenge the truth of the stranger's message either in his prayer (v. 8) or his direct question (v. 12). The heavenly messenger repeats the instructions to Manoah who is probably in awe at this point. Wouldn't it be great if all parents would pray for their unborn children, asking for guidance to raise them according to God's plan? We will see his reaction in tomorrow's devotion.

Tuesday, September 20 (read Judges 13:15-24)

The woman gave birth to a boy and named his Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him . . ." (Judges 13:24)

Manoah wants to honor the messenger, but the angel will not accept his offering. Wisely, he tells the couple to make their offering to the Lord, not to him. The heavenly messenger will not even disclose his name, because it is too wonderful for a human to comprehend (v. 15-18). When Manoah makes his offering, the angel ascends back into heaven in the flame (v. 19-20). The man finally realizes that his visitor is an angel and fears for his life (v. 21-22). His wise wife reassures him that the Lord sent the messenger with great news, not to kill them (v. 23). The woman conceives and gives birth to Samson, a child who has the Lord's hand upon him from his mother's womb (v. 24). A chosen child of God is born, but we will see tomorrow that this child will carry the treasures of the Lord in a very sinful, human vessel (see 2 Corinthians 4:7).

Wednesday, September 21 (read Judges 14:1-9)

*When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have **seen** a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." (Judges 14:2, emphasis mine)*

King David's eyes got him in trouble on the roof of his palace. We are about to see another of God's men have the same problem! Purely by sight, Samson is drawn to a woman from the enemies of the Jews, the Philistines, so he demands that his parents arrange a marriage (v. 1-2). They protest because of her nationality, but their spoiled son wins the argument (v. 3). Behind the scenes, the Lord is using Samson's sin nature for His own advantage (v. 4). On his way with his parents to see the woman, Samson, empowered by the Spirit of God, tears a young lion apart with his mighty hands, but he doesn't tell his parents (v. 5-7). Later, when Samson returns to marry the woman, he finds a swarm of bees have made honey in the lion's carcass. He enjoys some and gives some to his parents who were unaware that it came from the carcass of a lion. This sets the stage for the events that bring about a confrontation with the enemy.

Thursday, September 22 (read Judges 14:10-20)

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. (Judges 14:19a)

Read this entire text today as it gives an account of a foolish riddle Samson gives to his attendants for his wedding (v. 10-14). Notice how his wife-to-be nags him into telling her the answer to the riddle after the men threaten to burn to death her and her father's household. She then, in turn, reveals the answer to the attendants (v. 15-18). I love Samson's response: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle" (v. 18b). Even though Samson has been foolish in this entire account, the Spirit of the Lord still allows him to fulfill his foolish vow; however, he loses his wife in the process (v. 19-20). God is so great that He can use even our weaknesses for His glory (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)!

Friday, September 23 (read Judges 15:1-8)

He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam. (Judges 15:8)

The adventures of Samson continue as he goes back to the house of his father-in-law only to find out that his wife has been given to another man (v. 1-2). He rejects the offer of marrying her younger sister and decides to take his wrath out on the Philistines (v. 3). When I see him in heaven, I want to ask him how he caught three hundred foxes and tied them by their tails in sets of two. He then puts a torch between their tails and sets them free to burn up the fields of his enemies (v. 4-5). When the Philistines learn that Samson has done this, they retaliate by burning to death Samson's wife and father-in-law (v. 6). This causes Samson to attack them, slaughtering many of their men before retiring to a cave to get some rest (v. 7-8). We will conclude this portion of the story in tomorrow's devotion.

Saturday, September 24 (read Judges 15:9-20)

As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. (Judges 15:14)

Read the entire story that tells of the Philistines entering Judah to look for Samson. The men of Judah negotiate with Samson because they fear for their lives (v. 9-12). Samson agrees to allow them to tie him up and to deliver him to his enemy (v. 13). As the Philistines rush toward him, Samson experiences another visitation of the Spirit of the Lord, and the ropes that bind him drop from his hands. Picking up a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he kills a thousand of them, "for nothing is impossible with God" (see Luke 1:37). Even after this victory, the spoiled Samson gripes about being thirsty (v. 18). Miraculously, God meets this need as well (v. 19). He will lead Israel for twenty years, but his sin nature will finally lead to his physical death, as we will see next week.