

Samson And The Christian (Part 2)

Judges 13: Annunciation and Nazirite Vow

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We twenty-first century folk, I think, have a hard time understanding or imagining what it was like to live back in the early eleventh century BC as an Israelite. That was 3200 years ago, and a lot of water has gone over the dam during this period of time.

A lot of things have changed. Life on earth has totally changed since then. And, because we have grown up in a time of plenty, in a nation that is powerful, where we just about think of what we want and just go get it, the way that they lived back in those times is just about beyond us.

Samson's parents—Manoah, and his wife (who is not named in scripture)—were ordinary Israelites of the time. We find out very little about them from scripture. They speak and they act, but very little of their environment and setting is mentioned. We know that they had a field because it says that she was out there when the angel of God came. So, we must assume that they had a house. Scripture does not say anything else, except that they offered a goat. So, they probably had a small flock of goats, and enough grain on hand to give a meal offering. And, that is about it. That is all the detail that we are given about these two people.

So, I would like to fill this in a little bit so we can slide into the story with a bit of background information. We know that at that time, during the period of the Judges, the Israelites were a rather loose confederation of tribes. They were scattered all about the land of Canaan, from the Negev all the way up to the city of Dan north of the Sea of Galilee. Most of the people, wherever they lived, were engaged in some form of agriculture. Whether they were farmers, or had a flock, most of them were involved in agriculture in some form.

There were probably thousands of little farms around the nation of Israel, each with a few sheep, and other livestock; perhaps a donkey if the family was fairly well off; maybe some fowl like chickens, doves, or pigeons.

They made many things themselves—their clothing, furniture, and even their work tools. They had to make almost all they owned. Luxuries were very few and far between. They could not afford it. This is just the way that it was.

And, this is the way that people lived for thousands of years. Most lived by subsistence

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farming—making just enough to feed their families, and maybe just a little bit more in order to buy or barter for something that they might need. As a matter of fact, it worked that way for most of the world until a couple of centuries ago.

Israelite homes would appear to us today as huts. Even if they were made of the local rough-hewn stones you would probably not think that anyone should live there. Many of you might not even put your animals in there! All this in comparison to what we live in today.

The typical Israelite house had four rooms. There was usually a living area, a couple of rooms for sleeping (maybe one for the parents, and one for the children, perhaps), and they had a room for their animals. The animals lived inside their house! Most of the cooking took place outside because these homes were not well ventilated. A fire inside these dwellings most likely would smoke them out.

Water had to come from a spring if you were lucky. You could have fresh water all the time. But, if you did not have one close by, then you had to trek down to the community well, which might be quite a long walk, and then you had to walk all the way back carrying the water (at 8 pounds per gallon). If you had a stream nearby (which was quite rare because of the arid land) it was a wonderful blessing. If you could not do any of those things, you probably drew water from a cistern on your property where you had collected rainwater during the rainy season. But, it was probably stale, and maybe had a bad taste.

Israelite towns were small. Many of them were just a few acres. This place where we have our church building is about 5 acres. And that would have probably been a typical size for a whole town or village.

There were bigger towns.

If you ever had the chance to go to Pasadena, California, and visit the Ambassador College campus, they used to tell us while I was there that this may have been about how big the biggest city in Israel was during this time: basically, the size of one full modern city block. That was the big city. At the time of the Judges, Hazor was probably the largest city in Canaan.

So, their towns and cities were small, their inhabitants were mostly merchants and craftsmen, and the local leadership. You also had religious functionaries, who lived there as well.

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Notice that I did not say, "Levites," or "God's priests," because in the time that we are talking about they were pretty far down as far as the true religion was concerned.

But, during times of peace, towns were places of commerce, and during times of war, they were maybe fortresses—if it was a walled city.

A town of this time period boasted of a citadel inside of which was probably a barracks of some sort for the soldiers and officers. They usually had a stable for any horses they might have; and an armory for their weapons manufacture, storage and repair.

The city would have a market area where they would have a bazaar most days. There would be craftsmen's shops like coppersmiths, weavers, potters, cobblers, carpenters, stonemasons, and often a tanner, among other things.

The city might also have a place of judgment, usually at or near the city gate where the local judge, leader, or elder would sit in judgment when problems came up.

There is usually an inn, or two; and often associated with them was houses of ill repute. (We will see this in the story later on.) These were in Israelite cities too, not just Philistine ones. Just like today.

And, there was usually a couple of small temples or shrines—usually—temples to Baal, Ashteroth, El, Dagon, this god, and that god—in Israelite cities! Remember, they had not driven out the Canaanites.

And so, these things existed among them. That is why it was so easy for them to slide back to these things once the strong judge or leader had died.

And of course, there were homes in the city as well.

Now, under the Philistines the Israelites lived fairly normal (if poor) lives. But, they were under the constant eye of Philistine troops either from a garrison—citadel—or those out on patrol. Unlike the Israelites, the Philistines had chariots of iron, and iron weapons. And so, they had a substantially stronger military force than the Israelites had. They were able to keep the Israelites "in their place" without a great deal of effort.

In addition to being militarily superior, they were materially superior too. That is, they had a culture that was probably half again (or more) advanced than the Israelite culture. They were sophisticated and cosmopolitan because they were a coastal, sea-faring, mercantile people who had contacts with others in various far-flung places. So, they had

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a worldlier outlook than the Israelites did.

Israel was stuck up in the hills. They were in the hill country of Canaan. As a matter of fact, as we go through the scriptures we will talk about certain ones from the hill country of Ephraim, or the hill country of Judah, because that is basically where most of them were.

If you want an idea of the differences in culture, maybe you can think of it in terms of our area in the Southeastern United States within the past three or four generations—that vast difference between somebody living in Charlotte, North Carolina (the Philistines), and the folks who live up in the Appalachian Mountains (the Israelites). Think about the difference in culture. The people in Charlotte had moved into the 20th century—with all the modern conveniences, and modern warfare—whereas the people up in the hills were still living off the land hunting and fishing, and farming with few if any modern conveniences at all. The difference in culture was that big.

In a similar vein, the American settlers coming out west (the Philistines) had modern warfare, and new locomotion for transportation of goods and people (steam locomotives and trains), in contrast to the natives (the Israelites) who only had bows and arrows, spears, and stolen horses and guns. Their material culture was very different.

At the time of the Judges, the Philistines were much superior militarily, and culturally. God wanted it this way. There was a reason for it.

With God on the Israelites' side, it was more than even. Israel would prevail. But when Israel forsook God, the differences became enormous. Israel could not prevail. They would very quickly return to subjugation to the more powerful around them.

In Judges 1, I want to pick out a couple of verses to give you an idea of the Philistines superiority. (This was early, but after the time of Joshua.)

Judges 1:18-19 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. So the LORD was with Judah [remember this]. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron.

Remember, I said that Israel lived in the mountains, and the Philistines were in the lowlands. And, around Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron was where the Philistines were to establish some of their strongholds.

Now, by the time this happens in Judges 1, the Philistines were a minority. The ones who controlled Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron were Canaanites. And, the Philistines had embedded themselves into Canaanite culture at the time, but it shows you that the Canaanites and the Philistines at this time—a couple hundred years before Samson—already had iron chariots, and were already that much superior to the Israelites.

In I Samuel, the situation did not really change very much. This is during the time of Saul, which is probably within 20 or 30 years from the time of Samson.

I Samuel 13:15 ...And Saul numbered the people present with him, about six hundred men.

This was the extent of the Israelite army at this point during the time of Saul—six hundred men.

Now, we will see just how bad it really was.

I Samuel 13:19-22 Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare (actually a plow-point), his mattock, his ax, and his sickle; and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads (a metal pointed stick). So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. But [except] they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son.

What did we just see here? That among 600 soldiers and men of Israel, there were only two swords, and perhaps only two spears. What were the rest of them to fight with? Maybe they were going to throw their shoes at them. I do not know. But, it sounds like they used their goads, mattocks, axes, and maybe even their plow-points—fighting with their farm implements. That is all that they had.

The Philistines had iron or steel swords, and spears. They had iron chariots. Remembering Goliath's armor, they had bronze armor plates and rings, greaves, and were well outfitted. The Israelites had the clothes on their back, and their farm implements. That was the difference in their cultures and warfare.

Now the Philistines had all this equipment because they had a militaristic culture. They were a warlike people. To give you some more background, remember that last time I said that they were from the region of the Aegean Sea, Minoa, and Crete. They were Greek in culture. We do not know why they left for sure. It might have been a volcano, or famine. Or maybe the Mycenaean culture of Dysius, Agamemnon, Achilles, and others was coming apart, because if they have the date of the Fall of Troy correct, 1200 BC, then this was just about the time that the Philistines ended up in Canaan. And that war, if it happened, because we still do not know how much fact and fiction there is in what Homer wrote, the Aegean War left behind a dark age in Greece. It killed the cream of the crop of their leadership, and it would have naturally led to other problems as the consequence of war.

I am not saying that there definitely is a material link between the Fall of Troy, and the coming of the Philistines into Canaan, but it is that sort of thing that ***might have*** driven them out of Greece.

Anyway, this portion of the Sea Peoples (as historians like to call them) became homeless (for whatever reason) and began migrating. First they took out the great Hittite Empire in Asia Minor. But they did not stop there. For some reason, they were not satisfied with that area, so they migrated down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, conquering all the way down to the border with Egypt.

This shows you just how warlike they were. They just rolled over all those people all the way down the coast. They did this in just a few years.

Then they reached the borders of Egypt, and they said, "Let us take Egypt too." And so they got into their ships, and they advanced on Egypt. They invaded the Nile delta. The Pharaoh at the time was named Rameses—a typical Pharaohic name—Rameses III. He was strong enough to repel the Sea People. And, that is about it. The war devastated Egypt's power, but it devastated the Sea People's more.

So, he took them captive—all the Sea People—he settled some among his own people. Remember from last time, the Sea People—the Philistines—were also descended of Mizraim. So, they were a related people. They were of the same ethnic background. Others of them—he did this by tribe as best we understand—he took one tribe and separated them off from the others, and put them in one place in Egyptian territory, and he took another tribe and put them somewhere else in Egyptian territory, far away so that they could not get together and do their normal marauding; and then he took still other tribes and put them elsewhere. He took the Philistines and made them his

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mercenaries to man the garrisons of southern Canaan. And he did that probably because there were already Philistines there. And so he decided to put them all together in southern Canaan in the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the other two of the five cities of the Philistines called the Pentapolis.

Anyway, because Pharaoh did this, the Philistines now were no longer the minority culture, but the majority, and they pretty much subjugated the Canaanites. And who was next? The Israelites. And it didn't take them very long to establish their dominance over the Israelites because they were warlike, materially superior, and militarily superior.

And so, without a strong leader among the Israelites, it was a done deal, especially since God allowed it to happen.

So, the Philistines were used to this level of culture, and they used it to their advantage. So, when they subjugated Israel during the days of Eli—remember the great and terrible defeat because Israel tried to go against the Philistines, and ended up losing the ark of the covenant, and Eli fell backward and died. That was a terrible day for Israel because they lost their leadership, the ark of the covenant, and they lost the battle. And now suddenly, the Philistines were all over them. They had no way to resist.

So, the Philistines took over. And, they had a policy of doing three things when they took over. I am pretty sure that this is something that they thought through and strictly enforced. We saw some of this already in I Samuel 13 (with Saul and Jonathan).

- 1) They confiscated all weapons from the Israelites. Somehow, somewhere, somebody had secreted away two swords and two spears. And, that was about all they had left.
- 2) They monopolized the iron working trade. They would not allow an Israelite to learn iron working. They would not even allow an Israelite to have a blacksmith in their land. They had to go to Philistia to get any iron working done.
- 3) They charged a pim for sharpening any of their implements.

Now, up until a few years ago, no one knew what a pim was. But, they started finding them in the ruins of ancient Israel. And they found out that they weighed 2/3 of a shekel. They were weights. A shekel was also currency besides being a weight. As best we can tell at this time, a shekel for this historical period was about ***a month's wage***.

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So, two-thirds of your month's wage just to sharpen your axe, mattock, goad points, or plow. You just did not do this very often. It was also a very effective measure to control Israel. So, this is where they stood in Samuel's time. They were totally dispirited.

Judges 15 takes place further on in the story, but I just want to pull out the time when Samson had attacked the Philistines, and then the Philistines retaliated by trying to come up against Samson, and...

Judges 15:9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah [far into the land], and deployed themselves against Lehi.

And this is where Samson was. He had put himself up in a rock there.

Judges 15:10 And the men of Judah said [to the Philistines], "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

They were going to kill him.

Judges 15:11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?" [Notice Judah's attitude?]

If we go back to Judges 1, we will see just how far they had fallen.

Judges 1:1-2 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, "Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?" And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand."

So, Judah was the one that was supposed to be the head of the military; they were supposed to go out there and clean up the Canaanites. But, by Samson's day they were giving up their own people to the Philistines in order to keep a little peace—not making any waves. This is how dispirited the people had become.

They were poor. They were facing a vastly superior occupying force. They probably

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were being taxed severely if the price of a pim for sharpening tools is any indication. And, they were downtrodden. They had no strong leaders to speak of.

The whole of chapter 12 speaks of Jephthah, and then it goes on after verse 8 to speak about Ibzan; and then Elon; and then Abdon. But, if you count the years of their judging, Jephthah was 6 years, Ibzan was 7 years, Elon was 10 years, and Abdon was 8 years. Relatively speaking, they had all these different leaders one after another. Jephthah, if you will remember, judged across the Jordan in Gilead in Manasseh. Ibzan was in Bethlehem. He was fairly close to the area of the tribe of Dan. Maybe 10 miles to the north or northeast. But, Elon was a Zebulonite, way up between Mount Carmel and the Sea of Galilee. And, Abdon was from Pirathon in Ephraim, not far from Shechem.

So, what you see here is several judges who were scattered all over Israel, and their judgeships lasted only a few years. None of them lasted the length of time like Deborah and Barak, or Gideon. They had long judgeships in which was some peace and security. But, during this time leading up to the birth of Samson, there was small, widely spread areas of security and leadership. It seemed to be getting worse and worse all the time.

So, God acted to raise up a deliverer for His people. Finally it had gotten bad enough.

So, on into the story of Samson.

Judges 13:1 Again [What a sad word!] the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LOORD, and the LOORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

As I told you last week, this was the longest oppression and subjugation during the Time of the Judges. And, we can see why. They were materially superior, militarily stronger, and Israel was physically and spiritually in the dumps.

Judges 13:2-5 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LOORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver

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Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

Now this scene we have just read about is similar to other biblical enunciations. There are actually more than you might remember. This is very similar to the Angel of the Lord coming to Hagar, and telling her she would have a son. Or coming to see Abraham and Sarah, and telling them that they would have a son of promise; and of course, the one we probably remember the most, the enunciation for John the Baptist, and enunciation for Jesus Christ. There were still others as well—Hannah and Samuel among others. Like I said, it is very similar to them all. It is like there was just this way that these things were done. The angel would come down, he would say that you were barren, and that you shall conceive and bare a son, and then any special instructions for that particular one.

This also shares some details with Gideon's calling in Judges 6, just a few chapters before. The angel of the Lord appears, and starts talking to Gideon. There is no birth there, but all other aspects are similar.

Now, we are to understand that when the angel of the Lord appears and says something, it is signaling a major event about to unfold; something that God has taken upon Himself to announce, and then to do.

The reason that this particular one in Judges 13 is so important is in verse 5, the last portion, "And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." Samson's work was to get the ball rolling. He was to be a firebrand to start the fire going. He was the match to light the Israelite's wick. He was going to be the one to start a revolution.

In a way, he was perfect for the job. But, he could have done it so much better.

I want to review some of these enunciations. We will not go to all of them. I just want you to see the main character.

First, here is the sacrifice of Isaac. And who shows up?

Genesis 22:11-12 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

And he tells him do not kill the boy.

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Genesis 22:15-17 Then the Angel of the LOORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LOORD, because you have done this thing,

Now the promises and blessings are sure.

This was a huge step in the plan of God. Abraham proved to God that he had been totally steadfast, and he becomes a great example of faith to us.

Now, things are really moving because *now* in Isaac's seed all the nations shall be blessed. Big, terrific step in God's plan has just been set upon.

Genesis 22:18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Now, on to the burning bush.

Exodus 3:1-3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LOORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

Then, when he gets there, out of the bush comes a voice,

Exodus 3:5-6 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground." Moreover He said, "I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

All right. We have a definite identification here, the Angel of the Lord is God Himself, the One we know as "Yahweh," or "The I Am." Obviously, the calling of Moses was another huge step in God's purpose, and so He appeared to Moses, personally, in the bush.

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Now again, in Joshua 5, this is right before the destruction of Jericho. And this is important because the people are coming into the land.

Joshua 5:13-15 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LOORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the LOORD'S army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy." And Joshua did so.

So, here the Angel of the Lord appears in all His armor, and He says, "Do you not recognize Me?" And Joshua says, "Yes Sir!" And he takes off his sandals. All right. Same Person.

Now, go a bit further to the time of Gideon in Judges 6. I am trying to impress upon you how important these steps are.

Judges 6:11 Now the Angel of the LOORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which *was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites.

This is such a story, because here is Gideon, cowering in the winepress, threshing wheat which really needs to be done out in the open where it winnows more thoroughly.

Judges 6:12 And the Angel of the LOORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LOORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!"

What irony! God has such a sense of humor.

Judges 6:14 Then the LOORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

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So, it is very clear that here also, we have Yahweh—the LOORD, the I AM—appearing to Gideon. And He did a great thing by saving Israel at this time.

So, clearly, the Angel of the Lord is the One we know as Yahweh, the One who became Jesus Christ. And, here He is Himself announcing major milestones in God's plan. When He takes special pains to oversee them personally, and make sure they get done the way He wants them done. What this does is that it makes His appearance to Manoah and his wife that much more important than what we usually think about it as, because, He appears to them TWICE.

So, Samson was to be a very special person to God to have a rather large part in His plan, which makes the story of Samson all that much more tragic. He was to be a special person, not just from birth, but also from conception. How many people in the Bible is that said of? I can think of Isaac, and Samuel, and John the Baptist, and of course, Jesus Christ, and Jeremiah; but not very many others. Those are big names.

And then there is Samson. It makes you think.

Judges 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb;..."

He was to be a Nazir (in Hebrew). And this means "consecrated." He was to be a consecrated one; one separated; a holy person to God. The Angel specifically commands that no razor is supposed to touch his head. And here it is, as early as possible, a major theme is thrown in. No razor is supposed to touch his head, and it foreshadows what happens at the end of the story because, that is the last thing. It is perhaps the most significant part of the vow because that is the last thing that Samson ends up transgressing. He does not do it even by his own volition. It is done to him. But, he has a hand in it. He gives up his secret, and they are able to do it to him.

By the time we get to his dalliance with Delilah, that is the only part of his vow that he has not transgressed up to that point.

Now also, it is mentioned here in verse 4, that she (his mother) is not to eat anything unclean. And also, she was not to have any of the products of the grape either while she was carrying him. This portion about not eating unclean food gives me the notion that they were eating unclean food. Why the remark if they were not? This shows how much they had assimilated with the Philistine culture, and God had to remind them that, "you

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should not be eating unclean food. Make sure that you do not from now on, because this child is special, and I do not want anything to defile him from the very beginning from conception onward. So, make sure that you are pure while you carry him, and make sure that he stays pure."

Now, what is this Nazarite vow? We need to go into this a bit.

Numbers 6:1-8 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and *similar* drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from *similar* drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. *Then* he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God *is* on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

Now, this is God's original command regarding the Nazarite vow. There are only two differences that I can see regarding what was asked of Samson.

The first is that the Nazarite took his vow for a specific period of time, whether a year or two years, or what, we are not told. But, the vow included the length of time he would remain a Nazarite, and then he was committed to that. Samson was committed to being a Nazarite from conception for the duration of his whole life. If you want a New Testament reference, Paul took this vow for a time, and it is found in Acts 18:18.

The second difference between a typical Nazarite vow and Samson was that there is no mention that Samson ever took the vow. Scripture says that he was consecrated as a Nazarite from conception.

We can assume that he took the vow at some point, but it is not said that he ever did. He was made a Nazarite from conception. He was separated by God Himself.

This latter point is significant in terms of my theme of the second generation Christian seen through the light of Samson. Oftentimes a second-, third-, or even fourth-generation Christian having grown up living God's way in the church of God, tend not to value the way of God as highly as they should. Those who came out of error, who came out of the world into the light have a greater appreciation for the difference between the two. And so, second generation Christians tend to take a lot of things for granted. And, they tend to think of the Christian life, in many cases, as very restrictive—it is like they are missing out on something. But, they never have experienced the world quite like the others, and so they feel that they ought to go out there and experience it.

But, as we see in the lesson of Samson, this is not very good. That is thinking dumb! God has given the blessings of growing up in the church of God's truth from birth—from conception if you will—yet we take those blessings and gifts, and opportunities for granted. I am a second generation Christian. I know I have.

We do not "see" the difference. And, usually it takes a great deal of maturity, sometimes falling into ditches, and having to be hauled out of them before it begins to make an impression.

So, like Samson, second generation Christians take it for granted—take God's way for granted—and flirt with the world, as if it holds no danger whatsoever. They are strong! They can get out of anything! Or, so they think.

So, there is little serious commitment among many second generation Christians. And that is unfortunate. Hopefully, we can learn from Samson's example.

We are going to go over again the typical Nazarite vow's three main stipulations.

First, they cannot eat or drink anything from the grapevine—grapes, raisins, juice, wine, vinegar—anything. These things were supposed to be totally hands off when it came to the vine. And it is interesting that back in Judges 13, it says, "And similar drink." And, the word there is a cognate to another word referring to fermented drinks, meaning beer, or mead. And, it is possible that this restriction could cover any type of alcoholic beverage—not just wine. This is a possibility. I am not sure, but it makes sense.

The grape symbolized abundance, and pleasure. "Wine cheers the heart of God and man." And, a Nazarite was told to forego or sacrifice both of these things—abundance and pleasure—in order to devote himself to God. He was strictly set in one thing: To do God's bidding, whatever it may be. He was supposed to not even touch these things. They are to be far away from him. Alcohol, while quite pleasurable, also intoxicates. It

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affects decision making. Scripture says in Proverbs 20:1 that wine is a mocker. It makes people think and do silly and stupid things. It causes brawling. God wants His servants, especially those who have dedicated themselves to Him, to be clear-headed.

And so the stipulation about grapes and alcoholic drinks seems to point to sacrifice, commitment, right thinking, and wisdom. That is what God wants these people to show.

Secondly, a Nazarite must not cut their hair for the entire period of the vow. Long hair is a sign of submission. I Corinthians 11:10, 15 says that person who has long hair is under authority. It means that they have submitted to someone. In this case, a Nazarite submits himself totally to God. And so, the long hair that they wore told everyone that they have put their other matters aside in order to serve God. So, this symbolizes submission, humility, service, and separation.

The third thing was that they were not to touch a carcass—human or animal. A dead body was ceremonially unclean to any Israelite, but especially to a Nazarite. A dead body represents—death! And by extension, it represents the sin that caused the death. And sin is the manner in which we are cut off from God. That is exactly the opposite of what the vow is supposed to do. The vow was separating one's self **to God**, not **from Him**.

And so, to touch a dead body was to repudiate the entire vow. It was as if it was saying, "*I love death. I love sin. I am willing to fellowship with these things rather than keeping myself pure and undefiled.*" So, this one symbolizes purity, life, dedication, and union with God.

Numbers 6:9-12 And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the other* as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day. He shall consecrate to the LORD the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

Do you know what this means? Do you know what he had to do? He had to start over at the beginning. If he had dedicated his life to God for one year, and he touched a dead

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body on day 364, he had to go back and do another entire year! And, look at the cost! He had to give a sin offering, and burnt offering which includes the grain offering; and then he had to give the trespass offering too. He had to give four offerings just for inadvertently touching a dead body—even if it was not his fault. But, God said that he was responsible. And so, he had to give these offerings, shave his head, and start over.

What is very interesting to us is that the Nazarite vow is symbolic of our Christian vow.

When we dedicate ourselves to God for our lifetime, and then mess it up (even after a long time), the damage is done. We must repent, and go through the process again to learn the lesson and finish our course—the whole course.

So, what we have to understand, here, is that Samson was to be totally separated from defilement, perfectly, throughout his entire lifetime. And, not even be in the wrong place at the wrong time where he could accidentally touch the carcass.

Do you see the standard that God sets? Samson did not even come close.

What about John the Baptist? He was another Nazarite separated from conception. It is found in Luke 1. You may want to go there and read it. The same or similar type things are said about John the Baptist.

We have the same type of characters—we have a father, a mother, and a son to be born who is consecrated. And do you know what? Things turn out so much differently for them than for Samson and his folks.

Samson was raised to be a physical savior, John the Baptist was a herald to prepare the way for the Savior. It is very interesting that that is exactly what was told to Samson's folks, that he was just to get things going. He did not really fulfill what he was supposed to do. Well, he did, but he did it in a way that he should not have done it.

Samson was given great physical strength, while John the Baptist had great spiritual strength. Samson constantly forsook his Nazarite status, while John the Baptist, as far as we know, was completely faithful to his.

Samson brought death to thousands, while John the Baptist ended up leading perhaps thousands to Life—Jesus Christ.

Samson lead a life of indulgence and sin, while John the Baptist lived a simple, Godly life, and preached repentance from sin.

Both died at a party; Samson died in revenge, while John the Baptist died for standing on principle. They are almost exact opposites. That is why Jesus said that no one greater has been born among women than John the Baptist.

This is after the first enunciation by the Angel of the Lord:

Judges 13:6-8 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God [she recognized it], very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'" Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

This sounds good.

Judges 13:9-14 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again [notice that He came to her again] as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!" So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I *am*." Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass*! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. "She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

In this chapter the instructions concerning Samson's Nazarite status is given three times. You know what happens when something is repeated, and then repeated yet again. It is very important. God was laying down the rules here. And He gives it twice Himself, and Manoah's wife repeats it once to him. So, God's instructions concerning Samson are crystal clear—at least to me they are. They go right on down the line with Numbers chapter 6.

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However, Manoah keeps asking, "*How do we raise this kid?*" He says it in verse 8, and also in verse 12. First he says, "*What shall we do for the child,*" and then he asks, "*What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?*"

"Hrmph! I have just told you! He is going to start the ball rolling, and he is going to be a Nazarite. That is all that you need to know. Follow those rules."

Now, if we would go one chapter over to Judges 14, we will see something about Manoah.

Judges 14:1-2 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

And then they try to talk him out of it.

Judges 14:10 So his father went down to the woman...

This hints that Manoah was no pillar of strength. In fact, he gives the impression through the whole thing here that he was a rather vacillating, fearful, even compromising man. The strong one in the family seems to be his wife. We do not know her name. I believe this to be true because do you know what Manoah means? It means "rest, quiet." I get the idea that Manoah was this mousy man. There was nothing to him. He was like a noodle. He was a really weak type B personality.

Samson was certainly a type A! And he makes spaghetti out of noodle-spined men. Samson said, "*Dad! I want this!*" And dad gave in to him without hardly a fight. That is the impression I get of Manoah, that he was a very weak man. And, he ended up raising a son who walked right over him anytime that he wanted to.

Now, how much instruction did Manoah and his wife give Samson? My guess is it was not a whole lot. He was special! And so, it appears that they had a bit of a hands-off policy toward him. He was God's chosen one. So, they did not mess with him too much. They certainly did not instruct him enough, whatever it was that they did do. They did not give him the right instruction.

The text gives the impression that Manoah took the Angel's instruction to be the totality

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of their responsibility toward Samson.

So what did they do? They followed while they could the Nazarite vows to the letter, and that is it.

Now, what was behind the Nazarite vow? Things like Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Or, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, "Teach him these things as you walk by the way, and sit here, and do this, and work that, etc."

It does not seem like they did that. He was too special, I guess. And what they ended up producing was an angry, and willful rebel.

So as far as they knew, he did not drink wine, did not touch dead bodies, and had long hair. (By the way, there is some indication that he wore dread-locks, just in case anyone cares. Chapter sixteen says that it was braided.)

Does that not give you the picture of a rebel? That is what he seemed to be. Like I said, God had called him to be revolutionary, and that is exactly what he turned out to be, but not the way that God would have done it.

Judges 13:15-18 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LOORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." And the Angel of the LOORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LOORD." (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LOORD.) Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LOORD, "What *is* Your name, that when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?" And the Angel of the LOORD said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?"

"Dummy! Do you not know who I am? Can you not see?"

Judges 13:19-20 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LOORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on—it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the LOORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Finally! They recognized Him.

Judges 13:21-23 When the Angel of the LOORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LOORD. And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" But his wife said to him, "If the LOORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time."

"Come on, Manoah!"

She is the one who had some brains in the family. She could figure things out. So, from what happened here, it seems that Manoah was not a virtuous man. He was rather weak and spineless. He had to ask for the Angel's name, and seems oblivious to what was going on, even though he had proof after proof. And, he seems to have just ignored it, or could not recognize it.

And, I think that is why the Angel of the Lord said, *"No, I am not going to eat with you. You do not deserve to eat with Me. I am not going to give you this honor. You do not know who you are talking to. That would set the wrong precedent. I will accept the offering, if you give it to the Lord, because at least you understand, maybe, who that is, but you do not recognize Me as that Person."* So, He would not give him that honor.

I just wonder if Manoah and his wife were the best couple that Israel could offer at that time. It makes you wonder. Hannah was already taken. She might have already had Samuel.

So, was this God's second choice? He needed something to create a rebellion for Him to get the ball rolling. And he did.

So, Manoah's wife seems the stronger of the two. She seems to understand better what is going on; she provides Manoah an explanation for all the things happening in the story. She realizes that grace has been shown to them, that they really should be cinders on the ground, but that they were not; and so, God had a job for them to do. She is able to give a good explanation to Manoah why things had gone this way. She recognized that the Angel of the Lord had given a prophecy about her son, and that these things would come to pass.

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And we do not even know her name. What irony! She did as much as she could, evidently faithful work. But, she is obscure. She is just Manoah's wife.

Judges 13:24-25 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Now notice that just as soon as we get this explanation from Manoah's wife, she is shown doing the work. She bore a son. She called his name Samson. Where was Manoah? Why did he not name him Samson? I do not know. She went and found him, and he followed her back. And so, she is shown doing all the work.

She named him Samson. There is a nearby town called Beth Shemesh. It was a pagan town at the time. It meant house or temple of the sun. Shemesh is very similar to Shimshon, which is Samson's name in Hebrew. There are two possible etymologies for this word. First, it is actually the diminutive of the word "sun." In English that would be like "Sunny Boy," or Hey! "Sun Man," or something like "Little Sun," or "Little Bright One." This is a really interesting name for someone who would end up beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Maybe she thought that little Samson had brought light into her life. I do not know. But, if this was the case, she was certainly a positive woman. She saw him as a "little sun" in all of its strength.

The second etymology makes Samson mean, "strong one," or "daring one." But this implies foreknowledge on her part. She obviously knew that he was to become a deliverer, but she did not know that he would become a strongman. I believe that etymologically it is more remote than Shimshon being related to Shemesh. But, it is a possibility. However, perhaps the greatest deliverer of Israel, of all (physically, I mean) was named David; and his name means, not strong man, and not savior, but "Beloved." He was his mother's little angel perhaps; her beloved youngest son.

God gives a fair amount of leeway to mothers about what they want to name their sons.

It also said, "the child grew." Perhaps I should not read too much into this, but it suggests that Samson grew of his own accord, and that he matured physically, but not spiritually. If you would check Luke 1:80, it talks about the child John the Baptist growing in such things in the spirit. And, if we would go just a bit further into chapter 2:40, and 2:52, it speaks of Jesus and says that He grew in wisdom and stature, and other of these sorts of things.

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But here, speaking of Samson, it only says that he grew. But, God blessed him, nevertheless. God had a work for him to do, so God endowed him with the gifts that he needed. But, there is no mention of spiritual gifts like faith, wisdom, knowledge and understanding, love, patience, joy, and those sorts of things. The implication only is that He gave him physical things like health and strength.

And then it says that the spirit began to move upon him. The Hebrew suggests that the spirit stirred him up, or actually, the idea of this verb is that it was thrust upon him; almost like God had to slam him with it. "*You got to do something! Get moving!*" It was like—have you ever seen kids playing, and one of them has something in his hands, and he thrusts it at the other one, and says, "Here, take this!"

This is almost the idea you get from this verb. God had to really wake him up. "*Hurry up Samson. Time is wasting. You've got things to do!*"

Judges 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

This is the Camp of Dan. So, somehow in this place, in this Camp of Dan, perhaps it was a place where young rebels began to meet, I do not know. However, it seems that the Danites were being the hardest oppressed because they were the ones nearest to the Philistines. And so, perhaps what God was doing was making Samson think about his patriotic duty to his tribe, and to his nation, and that he needed to get out there and do something. He had to right the wrongs and act on Israel's behalf. He had to defend the downtrodden. He had to throw off the Philistine yoke because no one else was going to do anything.

I told you before that I think that they produced an angry, young rebel. And, I believe that is what this little hint is (in verse 25). He began to get fired up to do these things.

So, Samson had a few good qualities that God could use, but they were few and far between.