

Judges

Lesson 27

(vi) God Saves (13:21-23)

Now we come to an interesting passage that gives insight into the knowledge of Manoah and his wife concerning the things of the LORD. Here we see how God saves. Verse 21. *“Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.”*²² So Manoah said to his wife, *“We will surely die, for we have seen God.”*²³ But his wife said to him, *“If the LORD 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 let us hear things like this at this time.”* (13:21-23)

Manoah had to know the Scripture. He had to know the story of the Exodus. He had to know what the LORD told Moses when he begged the LORD to see His glory. The LORD replied to Moses, *“You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”* (Exodus 33:20). When Manoah knew that he had seen the face of the divine *angel of the LORD*, he had to be fearful that the LORD’s word to Moses would surely apply to him too and that he and Mrs. Manoah would die. This is not the first time we have heard this concern. Gideon had it too in Judges 6. *“When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, ‘Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.’”*²³ The LORD said to him, *“Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.”* (Judges 6:22–23).

Manoah did not have the book of Judges to read and learn the character of the LORD or how He had responded to Gideon. It must have been a common concern for anyone in that position. Yet, Mrs. Manoah brought a logical answer to the concern because, somehow, she knew that God saves. Remember what she said to Manoah. *“If the LORD 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 let us hear things like this at this time.”* That kind of thinking makes logical sense. It makes perfect sense. And, with the LORD, putting two and two together like Mrs. Manoah did makes the most sense. In addition, it can be applied throughout the Scripture when the LORD is involved. Mrs. Manoah was right.

(vii) God Fulfills (13:24-25)

Just as promised, Mrs. Manoah would become pregnant and give birth to a son. God fulfills His promises. Verse 24. *“Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him.”*²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.” (13:24-25)

The child was given the name *Samson*. The name means *sun*, or specifically *little sun*. But as St. Jerome states about his name in this verse, it means *strength of the sun*. The writer tells us that as a child, Samson was blessed. More than likely, this was a reference to his strength and stature as he grew into a man. He must have been an extraordinary child, accomplishing extraordinary actions, performing extraordinary feats, along with the gifts of health, courage, and appearance. Where did all this come from? The Holy Spirit. It began when the Spirit stirred him for the first time in Mahaneh-dan. We do not know where this place is located; however, we will hear about it again in chapter 18, verse 12. It was at Mahaneh-dan that Samson must have first known that something was different about himself compared to other boys and men.

Chapter 14

With the move into chapter 14, all sense of timing is lost. First, we do not know when Samson was born. Second, we do not know how old Samson was when the Holy Spirit began to move on him in wonderful ways. Third, we do not know how old Samson was when he began to seek out women to love. This third point is where we arrive with the start of chapter 14. Samson is smitten by a Philistine woman. How old is he? We do not know.

(2) The Story of Samson's Lust and Life

(a) A Philistine Woman in Timnah

(i) The Plan (14:1-4)

For some unknown reason, Samson loved the Philistine women more than the Israelite women. As we journey into chapter 14, we learn the story of Samson's lust and life. It begins with a Philistine woman in Timnah. He sees her. He develops a plan. We read about it in chapter 14, verse 1. *"Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. ² So he came back and told his father and mother, 'I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' ³ Then his father and his mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?' But Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she looks good to me.' ⁴ However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel."* (14:1-4)

When the writer tells us that *"Samson went down to Timnah,"* we, in our American mindset immediately jump to the conclusion that Timnah must be in the Philistine area south of the tribal area of Dan. But that is not the case at all. Timnah is actually a town on the northern border of the tribal area of Dan, completely on the opposite side from the Philistine area. In Joshua, we learned that Timnah was one of the boundary markers for the northern border of Dan. The problem with our assumption comes with the word down. Down means south to us. But the word "down" is actually perfectly accurate in this phrase. Why? Samson was from the town of Zorah, another town on the northern border of the tribal area of Dan. It was southeast of Timnah. This is because the border of Dan curves around the tribal area of Ephraim with Timnah closer to the Great Sea side of Ephraim, north west of Zorah. However, Zorah sat in the mountains and Timnah sat lower on the plains. In order for Samson to travel from Zorah to Timnah, he had to walk down the mountain to get to Timnah.

There in Timnah, Samson saw *"one of the daughters of the Philistines."* First, in the timing, the Danites are more than three hundred years since the order was given through Moses from the LORD that foreigners who were not believers in the faith of Israel, as worshipers of the LORD, were not to be tolerated or allowed to live in the tribal areas. This entry in the text indicates one of two things. Either, the Danite leadership did not care that the Philistines were living in their area, or, they did not have the power to oust the Philistines from their area. Frankly, the reason was probably because of their fear since the Philistines were oppressing Israel at the time and held Israel as a tributary of Philistia. Philistia was no doubt extracting taxes and goods from Israel each year and that included the tribal area of Dan. It also indicates a third thing. The Philistines had moved into and were living in the tribal area of Dan. If they were not ousted during the time of the taking of the Promised Land when Joshua was in charge, the Philistines had been there more than three hundred years. However, more than likely, they had moved into the tribal area sometime after the Philistine oppression began.

When Samson asked his father to *"get her for me as a wife,"* Samson was following the normal protocol for the obtainment of a wife across most of the nations at that time. In the normal course

of selecting a wife, the father of the man would make the arrangement for the marriage with the father of the woman. One change we find in Samson's story is that Samson found the woman he wanted for a wife. That was not normal, at least not overtly normal. In most cases, the father selected the wife for the son, made the arrangement, and the son had to accept the selection of the wife by the father. That was the case with Abraham sending his servant to select a wife for Isaac if you will remember. Isaac and Rebekah had never met before their wedding day. Further, the woman did not get to select her husband, her father did. Therefore, Samson's request was only odd because he was so adamant about this woman, he had set his eyes on.

Nevertheless, Samson's parents balked at the request. No doubt, Mr. and Mrs. Manoah knew the LORD's law and they knew that Samson's request was against the LORD's law.

We see Samson's lust for the woman when he says, "*she looks good to me.*" We do not know if Samson wanted her for any other reason than her looks. We do not know if Samson had had any kind of interaction with the woman accept by sight. We do not know what the woman thought about Samson. It was all based on her looks as Samson saw her.

Now we come to an interesting statement by the writer. "*However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.*" We are at loss at this point in the story. Even under the oppression of the Philistines, the writer does not tell us that the Israelites had become so sick of the oppression that they cried out to the LORD for help as was the case in the previous cycles. In this case, the LORD was moving on his own to bring Samson into the picture as a judge. But as we have indicated already, Samson would only "*begin to deliver Israel.*" He would not complete the job. We will also see in the rest of the book of Judges after completing the story of Samson, more evil rebellion against the LORD was simultaneously going on at the same time as this oppression of the Philistines lagged on for forty years. Therefore, it seemed logical that that the LORD made the decision to put Samson in this predicament with the Philistines and the Philistine woman for His purposes to start the overthrow of the Philistine power in Israel.

Finally, the writer tells us, "*Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.*" This statement is the perfect conclusion to tell us the reason why Samson lusted after this woman. The Philistines needed to be ousted from the land and the woman was the catalyst for that purpose. The LORD was working in Samson.

(ii) The Experience (14:5-9)

On the way the hill from Zorah to the village of Timnah, we learn of the experience Samson had out of sight of his parents who were traveling with him. Verse 5. "*Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him.*" ⁶ *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.* ⁷ *So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.* ⁸ *When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.* ⁹ *So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.*" (14:5-9)

Evidently, Samson had convinced his parents to let him have the Philistine woman as a wife. Off they traveled together to Timnah. However, before reaching Timnah, the family stopped outside the village at the vineyards. Timnah actually sat in the valley of Sorek according to Judges 16:4 which we will study soon. According to the Pulpit Commentary on this verse, it was

... famous for its vines (Isaiah 5:2; Jeremiah 2:21), from which it derived its name (Sorek, translated in the above passages the choicest vine, and a noble vine), is thought to have been

in the immediate neighborhood. Probably the whole district under the hills was a succession of vineyards, like the country round Bordeaux.

We do not want to read anything into this passage, but we must conclude that something occurred on the journey that cause Samson to stray from his parents and enter into the vineyard fields for some reason. Perhaps nature had called. Perhaps his older parents had fallen behind and he was venturing out while they caught up with him. Perhaps they paused for a rest and Samson decided to explore. We must remember that Mr. and Mrs. Manoah were older parents of young Samson. For whatever reason, Samson ventured off, out of the sight of his parents and met the lion.

Between verses 6 and 8, verse 7 indicates that Samson's father was successful in making the marriage arrangement and the family was on the way back to their home in Zoroh. Verse 8 indicates that after his parents were safely home, Samson was on his way back to see the Philistine woman in Timnah and on his way he saw what had happened to the lion in the days that had passed. The lion had decayed, no doubt sped up with the help of other animals. A hive of bees had had time to set up a hive in the rib cage and hide that was left on the ground. Why was the lion in the vineyard? He was probably hungry and hunting in the vineyards for a jackal or fox that were known to have dug their holes in the vine fields (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Solomon continued on to see his bride and then headed back home. On the way, he gathered some of the honey to eat on the way and he carried some home to his parents. Would that indicate that a great deal of time passed between Samson's visit with his parents to line up the marriage, his protecting them on their way back home, and his visit to the woman and back home. It does seem like several weeks might have passed, drawing out the story line. But that is not the case. It just so happens that from the age of eleven and until I was eighteen, I worked honey bees for Stroope's Honey in my home town of Waxahachie, Texas. I learned every aspect of the honey business. I have first-hand knowledge of bee keeping. A swarm of bees can take over a secure space and produce the comb and fill it with honey on average of seven days to two months depending on the time of the season and the supplies available to the bees in the fields to draw from. However, under perfect conditions, when the land is producing flowers in abundance, a hive of bees can draw out a full deep hive box with ten frames in three days. That would be a good estimate for how long it took for the bees to fill out the carcass of the dead lion. But I must tell you, several times in my bee keeping years, I have seen bees fill out a deep ten frame box almost completely full in twenty-four hours. How do I know this? During the producing season, we would rob the hives by driving the bees low into the lower boxes with smoke. We would snatch the deep boxes from the top and replace them with empty boxes. Sometimes we would need more deep boxes to put on the hives. We would leave the field and return the next day with the extra boxes. Upon opening a hive that we placed the day before to add a box or two, we discovered that the new box of the previous day was almost built out with comb and capped honey in twenty-four hours. When we placed a ten-frame deep box on a hive, each frame had a flat wax sheet in the frame. The wax sheet in the frame was stamped with the honey comb cell shapes which the bees would build out into full cells. As soon as the wax combs are filled out, other bees who are producing honey will fill the cells. Then, the bees forming wax will cap each cell. This seems like it would take a long time, but that is not the case. Many bees make the work quick when supplies are available in the fields to draw from and make the wax and honey. With all that said, the events of this whole passage that we read in verse 5 through 9 could have taken as little as three days or as much as two months. I tend to lean toward a week at the most.