

Life Lesson 52
Samson, Part 1
Ibzan, Elon, Abdon and Samson
Text: Judges 12:8 - 13:25

Introduction

Can you guess what happens next to the children of Israel?

They go around in their tiresome circle again. God used Jephthah to deliver them and judge them. Then came three more judges.

We know very little about them. Their names are Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. Although we don't know much about them, they are important enough to be in the Bible, so we should remember them.

After these three, the Israelites again started their cycle of sin and punishment. They were evil, so God let the Philistines conquer them. This time they spent 40 miserable years serving the Philistines.

But God was merciful. He already had plans for a deliverer.

The next judge had an exciting, but sad life. His story began before he was born.

The Story

There was an Israelite named Manoah who lived at this time. His wife was not able to have children, which made them both sad.

Then one day an angel appeared to the woman and said, "You will have a child as you have always wanted. He will be used of the Lord in a great way to deliver God's people from the Philistines. All his life he must be set apart for the Lord's special use. He will be a Nazarite. He must show that he belongs to God in a special way by never cutting his hair and by never drinking anything made from grapes. Be careful never to eat anything forbidden by the law and never eat anything made of grapes, since the child will be a Nazarite from the womb."

What a surprise it must have been for her to meet with an angel and to receive such unusual instructions! God had a purpose for the directions He gave her. Many people today believe a child isn't a real person until after he is born. They think abortion is okay because they think the baby isn't really alive.

This part of the Bible tells that the baby was chosen by God before he was born, while he was still in his mother's womb. Even before birth he was to obey the special rules for a Nazarite – one set apart for special service to God. If he hadn't been a real person until after he was born, it wouldn't have been important for his mother to not drink grape juice or eat forbidden foods.

Manoah was excited when he heard the news. At last they would have a child, and that child would be a special servant of God. Manoah worried about how to raise such a special child and asked God to send the angel back to give them some more instructions.

God sent the angel back, although he had already told them all they needed to know. The angel repeated to Manoah the instructions he had given Manoah's wife.

"Come and have dinner with us," Manoah said to the angel.

"I mustn't stay," the angel said. "If you want to offer something, you should offer it as a burnt offering to the Lord."

Manoah asked the angel, "What is your name?"

"Why do you want to know?" the angel replied. "It is a secret."

Manoah offered the sacrifice to God. He set it on fire and the smoke went up toward the sky. Then something wondrous happened! The angel went up in a flame and ascended into Heaven with the smoke of the fire. Manoah and his wife were so shocked that they fell down flat on their faces. They were scared to death.

"Surely we will die since we have seen a messenger of God," Manoah cried.

His wife was more practical. "I don't think so," she said. "If God meant to kill us, He wouldn't have bothered to give us all these instructions."

She was right, of course. Before long the woman had a little boy. That boy would become a great judge and leader of God's people. They named him Samson.

The Life Lesson

What can we learn from this story?

God has a purpose for every person He creates. Maybe you won't be a great and famous leader, but you have a special job God has already planned for you. There's no need to worry about the future. You don't need to wonder about what you will be and do when you grow up.

God already knows! He planned it before you were even born. When the time is right He will tell you. You just need to be listening.

Review Questions

What three judges came after Jephthah?

Ibzan, Elon and Abdon

Why were Manoah and his wife sad?

Because they had no child

Who told Manoah's wife she would have a special child?

An angel.

What instructions did he give?

The mother was not to eat grapes or any other food from grapes. The child would be a Nazarite.

What was a Nazarite?

A person specially set apart to serve God.

What were the special rules for Nazarites?

They were to drink no wine or any other grape products, never touch anything "unclean," and never cut their hair.

What did they name their little son?

Samson

