

Judges 08-06-27b

Let's continue our study now in Judges chapter 13. And I hope I haven't belabored this too much. I think it is really interesting to see how different God's behavior is when it comes to the Philistine problem than it is with all of the previous judges.

Everything is different. You've got this sort of miraculous birth narrative going on. Let's take a look at it.

We've seen the man from Zorah, the family of the Danites. His name is Manoah. His wife is barren and had no children.

So this is another one of those humanly hopeless situations. It's got all the earmarks of disaster around it. You've got Mr. Welfare Case or whatever you want to call him here.

Mr. I-Can't-Get-A-Job living in the land of leprosy from the family of the worst tribe in Israel. Dan is so bad that they end up getting left out of the list of tribes over in Revelation because they were just so horrendously evil. They just get eliminated at one point.

Listing the 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, 144,000. So the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, Indeed now you are barren and have born no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. So we have a promise and it's an outlandish promise.

It's an outrageous promise. Nobody has seen a barren woman suddenly conceive and give birth in any kind of recent memory. Hannah hasn't happened yet and the last time was in the line of the patriarchs.

All three generations of the patriarchs is the last time this barren woman conceived. Moses' mother had no trouble with getting pregnant. We just haven't seen this sort of thing.

Joshua, Moses' wife, none of these people had any trouble getting pregnant. If anything, the last reference to someone having a barrenness was the enforced barrenness of Jephthah's daughter. That was kind of a reversal.

She was all set up to be a progenitor offspring and he messed that up with his oath. So, something is in the works here. You're starting with a really bad potential situation.

One of the points about this, I've already mentioned that there are certain things in this life that are ordained by God. Our life span, our place in history, our geographical location, our family. Some of these things are just ordained by God.

You don't have a choice. You don't go to the store in some pre-incarnate state and shop for parents or shop for siblings or decide, well, I'd really like to be born as a black man of the deep south in 1848 or some such thing. You don't get that kind of choice.

You just show up and when you come to consciousness of what's going on, you say, whoa, here I am, I'm an American, I'm in the late 20th century or the early 21st century and here's the hand of cards I've been dealt. I've got to play them as best I can. God determines these things.

By the way, one of the things God determined was propitiation and condemnation. In Adam All Die, we are all originally born under the sin of Adam and we weren't in the garden. We didn't choose that.

We just show up and look around and well, guess what? You're corrupt and fallen. You've got a sinful nature. You are destined for eternal punishment if you don't avail yourself of God's grace.

That's a given. You don't get to escape that. You don't get a by or a pass if you're mentally deficient, if you die before coming to an age of accountability or whatever you want to call it.

Those people don't get a by or an out. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God is one way of looking at it. We are conceived in iniquity.

We're born in sin. You don't get a choice. Don't choose your parents.

Don't choose your siblings. Don't choose your circumstances of life. And so many times you can be in this sort of barren situation.

I didn't really pick leprosy Israel to grow up in, but here I am. I didn't really pick the tribe of Dan, which is now down to a clan of Dan, the Dan clan. I didn't choose that.

I didn't choose to be, you know, I've got lumbago or my back is out or whatever. I can't do any work. I'm Manoah.

I'm the man of perpetual rest. And my wife can't pop out any kids. There's just nothing going on here.

There's just no potential at all. Leprosy being that living death kind of a thing. So the angel of the Lord shows up out of nowhere into this situation that seems so fraught with loss and decrepitude and unpotential.

This is like the antimatter of all Israel. It's like the worst possible place. That's where the angel of the Lord shows up.

And you would expect, well, when the angel of the Lord appeared in the first generation of the patriarchs, who did he go see, Sarah or Abram? He went to Abram. Abram, get thee up out of thy land. Kindred, go.

It was the man. Here the angel of the Lord just bypasses old workless and goes to his wife. And he's not even involved.

I've always had a little bit of a thing about being the guy. I think I told you this story not too

long ago, but right after I first got married, my wife had been fending for herself for many, many years, and she can be a very assertive person. Well, we had to go get a tire.

And so we walked into the tire store. And I was going to do my usual thing, walk up and get the tire thing done. Well, before I could open my mouth, my wife was up there talking to this guy and picking out tires and saying, well, this, that, and the other.

And I thought, hey, wait a minute. This isn't going to work. I can't be the houseman here.

Here's my mechanic wife in here making all these. That's the man's job. And I had to explain to her that, you know, you're embarrassing me here.

I want to be the guy. I want to go up and talk grease and valves and treads and whatnot. I want to do that.

And she had to kind of adjust to avoid trampling my somewhat battered male ego there. But Manoa, look, the angel goes right past him. He's ostensibly the head of the house.

The angel just bypasses him and goes to his wife. And you think, well, I mean, even Zacharias, the next big time that this is going to happen, the angel doesn't go to Elizabeth. The angel goes to Zacharias.

Gabriel's going to appear to Mary, but he's going to make a visit to Joseph as well. Joseph's not going to have to say, hey, wait a minute. How did I get? And that's a little bit different scenario.

But here, the angel appeared to the woman. And we never get her name. Now, you would think as central as she is in this story, she would be named.

Her name is anything, Myra. It's not here. She's Mrs. Manoa.

She's, you know, how bad can it be if you're married to a guy who can't work? So the angel appears to her and says to her, indeed now. Now, do you think the angel knew her name? Do you think when he got his marching orders up in the third heaven, God said, well, go find the unnamed woman. The angel knows her name.

God knows her name. But God leaves it out of the account, and there's a reason for that. The angel appeared to the woman.

Now, the last time we've had a central character called the woman, who was it? You go all the way back to the garden. The woman, she gave me of this fruit, and I did eat. The woman who now gave us to be with me, she is the one that messed this deal up.

So, the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman. This is not an accident. And said to her, you are barren and have born no children.

I mean, even under the curse, God told the woman, in sorrow you will bring forth children. You

will yeled. These yeledim, that's the noun and the verb in Hebrew for having offspring.

Your desire will be to have your husband, you'll have the master over you, but you're going to have these kids. You'll be delivered. You'll be saved in childbearing.

Childbearing is a deliverance for women. It's a way you get it all over your masterful husband, because that's a thing you can do that he can't. He's going to have to line up.

He's going to have to support that whole deal. You have the kids, well now that bread is going to have to be divided more ways. But you are barren and have born no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Conceive and bear a son. It's one thing to conceive, but only half the time does conception result in having a son, right? It doesn't say you're going to conceive and bear a daughter. You're going to conceive and that conception is going to result in a son.

For whatever reason, in the impenetrable mysteries of the divine will, God has chosen to work his plan in Israel in a patriarchal way. Not so much in the church, but in Israel it's patriarchal. God works through the men.

There's a picture of authority and subordination. Subordination is not inferiority. Subordination is not second class status.

It doesn't mean that you are less or that you are devalued. It means that you have been assigned a different function. God himself reflects authority and subordination in the Trinity.

The Son is subordinate to the Father. The Spirit is subordinate to the Son and the Father. Now, if God himself is undiminished deity in the Trinity and has submitted himself as the Son and as the Holy Spirit to the Father, then who of the human race can dare to say subordination lessens me, devalues me? It's nonsense.

Is Jesus Christ devalued? Is God the Holy Spirit a second class or third class citizen because he subordinates himself to the will of the Father? It's blasphemy. Don't get the idea in your head. Don't let our secular humanist society tell you that by being obedient and by submitting yourself under the mighty hand of God as he has delegated his authority down through government and all the way down into the family and into the home, children, obey your parents and the Lord for this is right.

It doesn't devalue the child. It doesn't squash his id or warp his psyche or whatever else you want to think to be obedient, to receive discipline. Whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

He whips every son that he receives. He spansks them. He spansks us.

And anybody that thinks they've got a better way than God's way can explain that to God later on. I think I'm just not even going to try to go down that road. You shall conceive and you shall bear a son.

This is a prediction. It is a promise. So we have two things here.

We have a problem, a personal problem for Manoah and his wife. In Israel, it's a problem if you don't have offspring. That's the reason you're here.

You're supposed to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. You're supposed to multiply and be like the sands of the sea. That's why Israel exists.

It is to multiply and fulfill God's covenant promise to Abraham. They're not doing it. Barrenness, fruitlessness, that's the reason Jephthah's daughter was so sad and mourned her virginity for those couple of months, and it was commemorated every year because that is a cutting off of the divine mission in Israel.

All of these things have spiritual connotations and spiritual applications for people in this life. It makes totally no difference. If you have kids in the church age, it makes totally no difference if you're male or female in the church age.

What was for national Israel and was an object and a type is now a personal spiritual application now. I am astonished sometimes at the misunderstanding and the lack of perception of the difference between the Old Testament age and the New. National Israel reflects the individual believer.

What was true in national Israel, you have an authority structure. There is authority and there is submission. There is provision on the part of the man.

There is support and multiplication, fruitfulness on the part of the woman. Those are things that are supposed to be taking place in your soul and in my soul. We have an intellect and we have an emotion.

That's the man and the woman. The emotion is a wonderful thing. It is a valuable thing.

It is no less important. Hear me now. Your emotion is no less important than your intellect.

You cannot live an emotionless life. Don't go down the stoic road. Don't decide that emotions are evil, feelings are bad, let's all be Mr. Spock or Vulcans.

That's nuts. God designed our emotions. But emotions, just like a good wife and mother, must be subordinated to the authority that God has established in the soul, which is the intellect.

Preferably an informed intellect that is itself submissive to the authority of the word of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit. And that is what makes a husband a good spouse. That's what makes a mother a good parent.

That's what makes a child a good member of the household. That's what makes a pastor good for a group. That's what makes people who listen to the teaching and preaching of the word of God good in a congregation.

It is all about recognizing your assigned role. There's nothing about value. We are one in Christ.

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation and your value comes from Christ. Your value doesn't come from your assignment. You may be least or you may be greatest in terms of function, but your identity and your value is identical in God's sight because our value derives directly from Jesus Christ.

Don't let anybody tell you that by doing a certain thing or acting a certain way or subordinating yourself, you are devaluing yourself. This is the big evil myth of the feminist movement and a lot of other things. So, you are barren and have born no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

And notice the angel has come to the woman to tell her this. She is probably the least in her community, which is a small community with all of the descriptions that we've already given, but the angel comes to her. Don't think that God can't meet you where you are and wreak a great deliverance.

Bring about a great work. Circumstances are irrelevant. History is irrelevant.

Previous experience is irrelevant. There are certain things that when God decides to do them, it's not even a matter of your volition. You have an assignment.

This woman has been assigned to deliver this child, Samson. And I can only guess at what kind of a delivery that was. This muscled down little Hercules guy coming out.

That might have been a really tough birth. But that was her assignment. She didn't get a say.

She didn't have a vote. There wasn't a discussion. They didn't gather together in a discipleship group and mentor one another.

She didn't choose from a smorgasbord of possible options on a banquet table somewhere. The angel came and said, Look, lady, you're going to have this kid. So get ready.

Here's what you've got to do. Cut out the wine. Cut out the beer.

Don't eat any unclean food. You're living here on the borders of Philistia. All of this fancy law-breaking food is in your periphery.

Get out of it. Get over it. Go on a diet.

Quit drinking. Quit partaking of these unclean things. God has given you an assignment.

This lady, to her credit, wasn't chosen by accident. She has no argument whatsoever. You shall conceive and bear a son.

No razor shall come upon his head. Don't cut the baby's hair. I ran across a little baggie.

I was digging through my garage last night looking for something. I found a little baggie of my daughter's first haircut, carefully saved. You know, that silky, really unique kind of hair that little babies have when it first goes out of their head.

Then they get to be toddlers. Pretty soon it's kind of long and unkempt and clip, clip, clip. One of my daughters, we got that.

The other one, unbeknownst to my wife, Uncle Tim, took my daughter to the shop and brought her back all beaming, saying, look, doesn't her hair look great? It was great weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth because the hair was not saved. Well, no hair is going to be cut off of this child. You want to see that little baby hair, just look on the end because it's all still there.

It's not being cut off in any way, shape, or form. No razor is going to ever touch his head as far as his mother is concerned. The first thing said about the child, notice, you shall conceive and bear a son.

You shall be careful not to drink wine. A similar drink is beer. They only had two kinds of alcoholic beverages in this area at this time, and it's wine and beer.

They had a fermented drink. It was basically kind of a barley beer. So a lady, no wine, no beer, and no unclean food.

If you don't remember what the law specifies, look it up. No unclean food. You shall conceive and bear a son.

The promise is reiterated. A twofold witness, two or three witnesses, the thing is established. You shall conceive and bear a son.

In case you didn't hear me the first time, you, bear and woman, are going to conceive, you're going to have a son, stop drinking, eat the right food, and don't cut his hair. The first thing that is said about him, no razor shall come upon his head. Now, we've often noticed how fond the Lord is of using sort of bracketing elements in helping to focus our attention, and even in ancient times, people that didn't have the Bible in writing, how do you remember a story? How do you remember the beginning and the end of a thing? Well, there's often a symmetry.

Samson's life is going to begin with a woman. The agent of Samson coming into existence is going to be a woman, and the agent of Samson's demise is going to be a woman. The first thing the Lord says about Samson is, don't cut his hair.

The last thing that's going to happen to him is his hair is going to get cut. The beginning of his end is going to come when he lets his hair get cut, and when he lets himself and some other woman start taking charge of his life. Here's a godly woman who is obedient and doesn't cut his hair.

Here's an ungodly woman who does cut his hair. This is life. This is death.

We're already seeing God's organizing hand at work in this story. The child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb. Normally, Nazirite vows were taken consciously by an individual who committed themselves for a period of time.

Paul the Apostle took a Nazirite vow for a period of time. When he was done, he cut his hair. It's all detailed in the book of Acts.

This child is going to be a Nazirite to God from the womb. This lady has no choice in being his mother, and he has no choice in being a Nazirite. He doesn't get to pick.

He doesn't have an opt-out clause. He will be a Nazirite to God from the womb. He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

It's a done deal. He's not going to not deliver Israel. He is going to.

It doesn't matter what kind of man he is. This is what he is going to do. So the woman came and told her husband.

You can tell right away that she's a godly woman because if somebody approaches a wife and starts negotiating with her and telling her this is what's going to happen, she needs to go to her husband. The husband is the rightful authority in the home. The woman should not be negotiating separate deals.

She shouldn't be taking out her own bank accounts. Again, I'm talking about in Israel. Things are much more flexible in the church age.

But in Israel, the man is accountable. It's a good model. There's nothing wrong with following that model.

We are utterly free. All things are lawful. We pursue what is edifying.

There's nothing wrong with doing whatever you want in this life with the definition of those things being that which is seeking for glory and honor and immortality and the eternal life that God has to offer. We don't operate on the basis of rules. We operate on the basis of pursuit of righteousness, on the guidance that God gives us.

And it's not to say that it's relative or that it's some sort of a shifting ethic or that it's some sort of situational morality or situational ethics. But there is a time for everything and we are allowed to discern the time. In Israel, there would be a rule for when you would cast away stones and there would be a rule for when you would gather stones together.

We are expected to be wise enough to figure that out for ourselves. Think about children in the home again. No running in the house.

I've run through my house a number of times. Am I breaking a rule? Well, I don't have a rule. I'm an adult.

I can decide when and where to run. Got a rule? Close the door after you go through it. Come in the house? Shut the door.

Go out in the house? Shut the door. I'm unloading groceries? I leave the door open. Am I breaking a rule? Well, look, I'm mature.

I know when I can leave the door open and when I need to shut it. I don't need a rule to tell me that. This is the difference between the Old Testament legalistic, law-bound age of Israel and the grace, freedom in Christ age of the church.

We are expected to be living at the standard of a mature man. We're expected to have the discernment and the wisdom to know what to do without having to fall back on rules. Rules are for the immature.

Rules are for the child. Rules are for someone who can't think their way to the answer. We are supposed to be beyond that.

Sadly, many times we're not. But this woman does the right thing. She goes to her husband.

He is her authority. And she does exactly the right thing. She goes to him and she says, Look, Manoah, here's what happened.

You need to be aware of this. I'm not running some kind of a game behind your back here. A man of God came to me.

Notice, she does not immediately identify the messenger as the angel of the Lord. She uses the word Ish. She says, Ish ha Elohim.

A man of God came to me. And his appearance was like the appearance of an angel. Very awesome.

But I did not ask him where he was from and he did not tell me his name. So, what is she doing here? She is deferring judgment on who the messenger is and what the value of the message is to her husband. Which is exactly what she should do.

She doesn't say, Well, honey, I got a mission from God so let me tell you what you're going to do now. You're going to throw out the wine and we're going to get that six pack out of the cool cave where we keep our vegetables and no more beer for you. She doesn't start dictating to her husband because, well, God told me.

Now think about it. There's application here. Sometimes you're in a marriage and there are different levels of enthusiasm.

There are different levels of motivation or pursuit of spiritual things. Sometimes it's the woman and the man is somewhat disinterested. She's learning and growing in the word of God and she sees that in the light of the word of God that certain things ought to be happening and certain things ought to be taking place.

You have to really be careful. Again, this is the church. We're not in the age of Israel, but we have been given a pattern that precedes the law of Moses.

It goes all the way back to the garden. The man is going to be standing in front of God's judgment bar. The man is going to give an answer for the way his household runs, not the woman.

No wives are ever going to be standing there unless you are a single parent household. You are not going to be standing there giving an account for the way the household runs. It will always be the husband.

So he has to have the courtesy of being informed of what's going on and of making the evaluations. You can have plenty of input into the decision. You can have plenty of advice.

You can nag. You can do whatever you want to do. Especially in this age, you can do whatever you want to do.

But the pattern in scripture is the man needs to make informed decisions and his wife needs to support him. It's no different in the Marine Corps. An issue comes up.

You're about to go out to the field. You're about to do this, that, and the other. You've been given orders from on high of a general nature.

Go take this hill. How are we going to do it? Well, you sit down and discuss it with your leadership. You've got some officers.

You've got some senior enlisted there. You sit down and hash it out. So the captain, the unit commander, sits down and says, Gunny, how do you think we ought to do this? Gunny says one thing.

There's a staff sergeant sitting there. He says, well, we can't do that because my trucks won't climb that hill. We haven't got enough chow to last that long.

I haven't got enough comm wire to support three positions. We can only do two. Or whatever it may be.

You discuss it. You get all the information. The commanding officer makes a decision.

He says, alright, two positions and not three. We're only going to stay this long. You're going to be here.

You're going to be here. And once he makes the decision, everybody says, yes sir, three bags full. And regardless of your reservations, regardless if it is comporting with your advice or not, once the decision is made, that's it.

And in the Marine Corps, I don't know how it is, well, I do know how it is in some of the other services, but in the Marine Corps, once that decision is made, that is law. And you may think it is the stupidest, dumbest, most insane plan that ever was hatched. But if that's the plan, you throw yourself into it 110% and you do everything you can to make it work.

You don't stand back and wait for it to fail because, you know, I told you in the meeting that was going to fail. I told you that wasn't going to work. That's not the Marine Corps way.

If it's a stupid plan, you've got to find a way to make the stupid plan work. And Marines are famous for that. It can be the worst situation, everything is wrong, and you still pull victory out of the jaws of defeat.

And that's the attitude you have to have. This is a biblical attitude. Once there is a decision, once there is a policy, and it comes from established God-given authority, it is our obligation to make that thing work.

Do all things without what? Grumbling and disputing. You know where grumbling and disputing and complaining comes from? I don't like this plan. I have a better plan.

Why aren't we doing it my way? How come I'm not getting what I thought I should get out of this? That's grumbling and complaining and disputing. Look to the authority that God has established. Advise it.

Influence it. Do everything you can. But once a decision is made, it's time to clam up and get the job done.

Don't try to sabotage the thing and make it fail so that you can go back and say, see, I told you this wasn't going to work. Wouldn't it be better to go and say, I really didn't think that was going to work, but we sure pulled it off together, didn't we? We pulled together. We made it work.

We made it happen. I didn't think this thing had a prayer. But we all pitched in.

We gave 110%, and God has blessed our effort. God will bless the efforts of those who are not looking at getting tangled up in the immediate circumstance, but looking to God and honoring Him by honoring the structure that He's put in this life. The task, the detail, the circumstance is not really that important.

What are we being judged on? Is God going to judge us on how the budget came out? Is God going to judge us on whether or not we got the yard done and the tree got planted in exactly the right spot? I planted a bunch of trees and I kept saying, you know, I really think these ought

to be further away from the fence. Well, they got put in a certain place and now I can't mow behind them. Well, I could sit and moan and cry the blues and say I told you this was a bad place.

Look, I could make a big deal out of that. Or I could get somebody a weed eater and let them mow behind there. And you know, we pulled together.

We make it work. Okay, it looks nice. It's a little difficult with the mower thing, but hey, here's another solution.

And I don't have to run the thing. You can run it because you wanted it this way. Well, great.

If you don't mind doing that, that would be great. And we're together. We're unified.

And we kind of smile about, well, yeah, you know, in retrospect, probably would have been better to pull those things a little further, but it's okay. We're not divided. We're not ununified.

We're not carping. We're not developing the root of bitterness that springs up and divides and defiles. And it comes from consciously adopting the attitude.

This lady has that attitude. She goes to her husband and she says, look, I'm not going to tell you anything other than what I observed. I saw a man.

He's obviously from God. He looked to me like an angel. Honey, you can decide.

You're the man. You're the husband. Workless.

You figure it out. She doesn't disrespect him. And I'm reading a lot into his name, but we have no indication that he was a great man of means or that he ever did anything except sit around.

And you'll see as the story goes on why this is probably the case. But she doesn't hold his status or anything else against him. She respects him because that's what you do.

That's what you do. Nobody can lay blame at her door. She's doing what she is supposed to do.

And if he's failing, that's on his head. She doesn't use his failures as an excuse to be a failure herself. I didn't ask him where he was from.

He did not tell me his name. He said to me, and notice she gives a very good quote. He said to me, you shall conceive and bear a son.

That's verbatim. That's exactly what he said. Drink no wine or beer nor eat anything unclean for this child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb.

And then she does add something. From the womb to the day of his death. Did the angel say that? He said he shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel.

She's embellished. Remember this is what got Eve in trouble in the garden. The original, the woman.

He shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it. God never said that. In fact, Eve wasn't even around when God gave the command.

She got it from Adam. It's that game where you lose something in translation. Maybe Adam messed that up.

At any rate, she says until the day of his death. Now, let me just ask you a little trivia question here. Is Samson a Nazarite until the day of his death? What are the parameters of the Nazarite vow? No wine or strong drink.

No womanizing. No cutting of your hair. That's three elements.

Of the three defining features of Nazarite, how many of them did Samson keep to the day of his death? Did his hair get cut? Did he get drunk? Did he womanize? Three strikes, he ain't no Nazarite anymore. So this is not something the angel said because he knew better, but she reads it into his words. My point here, the reason we spend time memorizing Scripture verbatim is so that we don't become guilty of expanding God's word beyond what it says.

That's the reason we try to get a reasonably good translation, not the new incomplete version, not some of these other interpretive translations or paraphrases. Because people read things in that God never said. If God wanted to say it, He would have said it.

If He didn't say it, don't say it. Say what He said. It's as near as we can get to it with our translations.

So people who say, well, God helps those who help themselves, where is that in the Bible? I'm going to heaven when I die, where is that in the Bible? The Bible doesn't say anything about going to heaven when you die. The Bible doesn't say anything about God helping those who help themselves. But this is the kind of accretion and conglomeration that takes place when we are not careful to observe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And she does get a little bit sloppy here, and she says something that's actually not true. Samson will not be a Nazarite until the day that he dies. So Manoah prayed to the Lord, and he said, O my Lord, please let the man of God, the Elohim whom you sent, come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born.

God listened to the voice of Manoah. The angel of God came to Manoah and spoke to him, saying, Hi there, Manoah. I talked to your wife last time, but this time I'm talking to you.

That's not how it continues, is it? Who does the angel go back to? The only one who has got a lick of sense in this family, and it's not Manoah. He goes back to the woman. Manoah says, Let the man come to us and teach us.

God listened to the voice of Manoah, but he didn't necessarily fulfill Manoah's request. He sends the angel back to the woman, and the angel times it and ensures that he arrives when Manoah is not there. The woman ran in haste.

Now he just shows up. He says, Hi there, Mrs. Manoah, or whatever her name was. And she says, probably legitimately, Oh my God.

And so then she runs to get her husband. But isn't it interesting? Couldn't we have saved a little bit of a loop here by the guy waiting until they were sitting down for a noon meal or something and showing up? God comes by Abraham's tent. Sarah's right there.

But he comes to the woman. He's making a point, isn't he? He purposely comes to her. He purposely slights Manoah and comes to her.

She has to go get Manoah and bring him back. The woman is the means of the man coming to the message. That's the point.

And it's emphasized here twice. Both times the message comes to the woman and is brought to the man and the man is drawn through that message closer to God. God is going to bring deliverance to Israel through the seed of Adam.

Is that the promise in the garden? It's the seed of the woman that is going to bruise the head of the serpent. It's the seed of the woman who is going to bring deliverance and salvation to the human race. And Gabriel comes and announces the imminent fulfillment of that covenant promise.

First to whom? Gabriel goes to Mary. She gets it. Then Joseph.

Joseph is kind of slow to come around. His wife is getting pregnant and he's not sure what to do. And the angel has to come to him and say, look, this is okay.

This is not a malfeasance on your betrothed part. God listened to the voice of Manoah but the angel goes to the woman. And it's through the woman that he gets the answer to his request.

So she ran in haste and told her husband, once again, doing what she's supposed to. She says, look, the man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me. So Manoah arose and followed his wife.

This would jar your mind more completely if you were steeped in ancient Near Eastern culture. Think about the Orientals, the Japanese and that. The guy's going down the road and his wife is following two steps behind.

You've heard of that thing? The man leads. The woman follows. This is how it works.

In a patriarchal society, the man walks. The woman is behind. It was that way even in some of the Native American tribes here.

But Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he says to him, are you the man who spoke to this woman? He says, what? What does he say? Does this phrase ring a bell? Has anybody else ever given an answer to this type of question in a similar way? He said, Ani. He said, essentially, that's me.

He said, Ani. Me. I myself.

The it is or the am part of it is unspoken. You'd be tempted to think when somebody says I am, these are kind of like the I am statements of the Lord Jesus. A lot of people come to this and say, see, this is the pre-incarnate Christ.

Because, are you the one? I am. Well, he does not use the verb that God used to Moses at the burning bush. Who shall I tell these people sent me when they ask? Tell them I am has sent you.

He uses the pronoun instead of the verb here. The verb is absent. Are you the man? He says, are you the ish? He doesn't say are you the Lord.

He doesn't say are you the pre-incarnate Christ. He says, are you the ish? Are you the man? He says, Ani. Which in Spanish would be yo.

And in English might be yo. Are you the man? Yo. Ani.

That's me. So, he identifies himself as the previous visitor. Manoah says, may your words come to pass.

I hope what you said is true. What a great message. Let your words be.

He literally says now, which is ata, yabo, bo is the word that means to come. So, he says, now come the matters or the words of you. What you spoke, dabar, it can mean word, it can mean issue, it can mean the matter or the thing you discussed.

So, it's just three words. Ata, yabo, dabar, dabreka, basically. Now, let them come, your words.

Then he says, what will be the boy's measure? Naar is the word for boy and shafat is the word that means the standard of evaluation. Shafat is the word that means to judge. So, what will be the judgment of the boy? What will be the work of the boy? This is the verb asah.

What will he judge? What will he do? What will be his judgment? What will be his work? So, the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, and you've got to give Manoah credit, these are good questions, however, they've already been answered to the wife. We don't have a record that she told Manoah the part about he will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. She just said, I'm going to conceive and bear a son, he's going to be a Nazarite until the day of his death.

She left out the whole reason he's arriving. So, this is a fair question on Manoah's part if his wife didn't tell him, well, okay, this son is coming, I sure hope that's true. May your words come to

pass.

So, what's he here for? What's he going to decide? What's he going to do? So, the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, of all that I said to the woman, let her pay attention. Let her be obedient. Let her follow the instructions I gave her.

And for the third time, we have the statement, she may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. Now, let's just ask ourselves a hypothetical. What has she had? What if she liked to knock back a little brandy at the end of the week? You know, she's tired, swept out the hut there, and is kind of sweaty, and she goes and gets a wine skin, and down it goes.

And that's kind of her habit. That's her way of relaxing. What if she did that after the angel said not to? Could this have derailed the fulfillment? Could it have derailed the promise? In other words, is this conditioned upon obedience? The answer is yes.

Because the angel says, you make sure she follows these instructions. The implication being, if you don't, if she doesn't, the deal is off. It is contingent upon obedience.

Now, let's go back to the application we thought about in the first lesson. There are certain things that God has ordained. He has put us in a place and a time.

He has mapped out our genome. We have strengths and weaknesses that we inherit. We are a product of our environment as well as our heredity.

We're in a certain place in history. We're in a certain place geographically. All of that is set up and is foreordained.

We're here for a purpose. You have a spiritual gift. You have a circle of family and acquaintance in which you have the opportunity to shine as a light in the world.

Whether or not the purpose for all of that ordination is fulfilled is dependent upon obedience. You can screw it up if you do not pursue godliness. If you do not pursue holiness.

Everything that God set up in arranging the circumstances of your life, past, present, everything that makes you who you are and puts you where you are can be for naught if we're disobedient. If we are disobedient, we can miss the purpose. That's the thing the angel fills in for Manoah.

What's the purpose for this child? That's great that she's going to conceive and we're going to have a son. What's he here for? The angel doesn't immediately answer that question. He says, first of all, it's going to be a moot point unless you make sure that she's careful to follow my instructions.

Obedience is paramount. Obedience is necessary. Obedience is required.

Or I don't even have to get to the purpose because you're never going to get there. Make sense? It's greatly emphasized. It's greatly underscored in this passage.

All that I commanded her, let her observe. And notice he doesn't answer the question. He never mentions the Philistines.

Maybe he's expecting the wife will dredge that back up later. Well, Manoah is going to have a reply. That's what we'll pick up next time.

But there is great density in this material. You cannot skip a word in this account or we'll miss something important. So we'll pick up at this point next week and see what it is about the angel's visit this second time that has great meaning and importance for us.

But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the dynamic and interesting way that it is presented to us.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will educate us through it, will motivate us, and cleanse and purify our conscience. Enable us to think and see clearly and to decide and to act in a way that is in accord with your predestined purpose and plan for our individual lives. And that together we will reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ day by day until his return.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.