

Judges 08-07-02b

Let's pick up our study now in Judges chapter 13. You tend to read these stories and kind of zip through the introductory material and get to the good stuff, where giants are falling or jawbones are swishing through the air, knocking down Philistines or something. But I hope you can see that there is a reason for every item in the introduction to this story.

It's really important. And we've slowed down to take a look at it. We're going to speed up just a little bit.

But you can see that there is a significant problem in Israel that is manifest and is evident by way of contrast with other stories and other times of deliverance. And it tells us that there are different kinds of deliverance in God's plan. When God decides that through all nations of the earth there is going to be blessing and it's going to come through one individual, he chooses a man based on his faith.

He chooses Abraham because he knows he's a man of faith. He sees it. He imputes righteousness to him on the basis of it.

He honors him with the title friend of God. Abraham has put himself in the position to be an agent of deliverance and a means of blessing and an avenue through which salvation will come. That's the way God does it sometimes.

When you look at the Virgin Mary and Gabriel coming to her and talking about her being the mother of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, she was not a random hapless villager that just the angel ran across and said, well, this one will do. She was obviously a woman of great faith. If you read that song that she composed, what they call the Magnificat, the doctrinal content in that song is extraordinary.

She could not have been more than in her mid to late teens at the oldest when she wrote that. She was from a family that loved God and respected God. She herself had a deep abiding relationship with God and it reflects in what she wrote and what she said and how she behaved in her response to the angel's message.

Let it be to me according to thy word, she says. Most shocking news ever delivered to a human being in history. Nobody has ever gotten a message like she got.

Can you imagine? And she had the presence of mind. She had the substance in her soul to say that sounds good to me. Let's do it.

It's just stunning when you look at it and think about it. None of those elements are here. This woman doesn't say, oh, blessed be Jehovah, let it be to me according to thy word.

Through me women will call me blessed because lo, the Philistines will be heaped in piles and I will be noted as a mother in Israel of deliverance. None of that. She runs to her husband and

screws up the message, leaves out a half of it, adds to it, misses some of the main points.

And Manoah immediately says, well, hey, why am I a fifth wheel on this deal? How come I'm not involved somehow? The angel didn't come to me. I didn't get the instructions. And this is sort of a power thing for him.

Knowledge is power, information, contact, the conduit of communication. This is power. He's out of the loop.

And he doesn't like it. So he goes to God and he says, hey, I want the information. I want to get back in charge of this family and this stuff is happening without me.

And I've told you, you know, this is kind of a natural male response. It's not always healthy. But we tend to want to be the guy.

We want to be shaking and moving. We want to initiate. We want to be the agent that causes things to take place.

Well, Manoah realizes that he's been sort of brushed aside. He's been ignored. He's been overlooked.

He's been sidelined. And he says, hey, send the guy back to us and tell us what should be done for the child. I'm the guy.

And God hears his prayer and sends the angel back to the woman while she's out sitting in the field. And I asked myself this question and I had no answer. I asked you and maybe you can come up with an answer.

Why is a woman in Israel sitting in the field? I'm trying to think of why that would be. People didn't go to the fields to sit. You go to the fields to tend the crops.

You go to the fields to glean. When Ruth and Naomi went to the fields, they were gleaning. You can supervise the servants.

You could be watching the flax being harvested or any one of a number of things that a woman in Israel could be doing, but she's just sitting in the field and she's alone. What's she doing out there? I don't know. She's not in the house.

She's in the field and she's just sitting there. Maybe she's imagining what different cloud shapes mean or she's musing on, boy, that was sure an interesting thing when that angel came by. I don't know what she was doing, but she's out in the field sitting there and the angel of God comes to her again.

He purposely waits and comes when she's alone and when she's away from the house. This is not really Manoah's domain. We don't even know if it was his field.

She could have been sitting in a neighbor's field. Maybe she had a favorite overlook, watching Philistines run around in their suits of armor or something. Whatever it was, she's out there and the angel comes to her and apparently nothing is said.

He just shows up. She startles in shock and says, there he is, and so she runs to go get her husband. She ran in haste.

She told her husband, 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? He said, Ani, that's me, I am.

Actually it's just I and the italics there are good because he doesn't say am. I think it's one of their reasons. I think I've told you this before and you're free to disagree.

I do not think that there are pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus Christ. It makes me a total heretic. People would banish me from all kinds of venues.

But I do not believe the angel of the Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews chapter 1, read it. Many parts and many ways God spoke in times past.

In these latter days, he has spoken by a son. What else do you need? Spoken different kinds, different ways. Now he's speaking, if he spoke back then by a son, if we're supposed to understand the angel of the Lord to be the son, then why does Paul write in Hebrews chapter 1 that God spoke in different ways and now he's spoken by a son? To me, it doesn't seem to be rocket science.

But a lot of people think this is the angel of the Lord. If that were the case, if this were the Lord Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate form, you know what I would expect? I would expect the verb, hayah, to be included here with Ani. I, myself, am.

Jesus employs that plenty. If he's the I am, why doesn't he say he's the I am? Because he's not the I am, he's the messenger of the I am. That's my view.

You're free to conclude what you like. But the angel of God, and by the way, Jesus is not a messenger of God. He's never called an angel.

To which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet? To which of the angels said he at any time? If Jesus came in an angel, malach and angelos mean the same thing. They have the same confluence of meaning, messenger or divine messenger, either one. And if scripture says, to which of the angels did he ever say, sit at my right hand, you know what that says about Jesus? He's not an angel, never has been an angel.

He's not a messenger, never has been a messenger. Otherwise, how could you make that statement? To which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou at my right hand? He has

manifestly told Jesus, sit thou at my right hand. And he's never said that to a malach or an angelos.

So to me, it's cut and dried, but that's me. The angel of God came to the woman as she was sitting in the field. But no, her husband was not with her.

Look, she tells her husband, here he is. So Manoah rose and followed his wife. And again, this is just backwards for the ancient Near East.

The wife follows the husband. I was just teasing Patti today that I have long legs, she has short legs, and I forget sometimes I'm getting ready to go somewhere and she's getting out of the car and we start out together. First thing I know, I look and she's two steps behind me.

It reminds me of those oriental couples where, you know, here's the man, you know, the shogun or whatever, and his wife is two steps behind. You know, that's how they do over there. That's her place, two steps behind.

I look and I think, whoa, and I stop and I feel real bad about that. Because it shouldn't be that way, but you know, your mind is elsewhere. You're thinking about, well, now which aisle am I going to to get this thing and fries? You know, fries just completely dazzles my mind.

I forget how fast I'm walking. The anticipation of it is just so great. The woman ran in haste.

Then Manoah rose and followed his wife. That's just never done. Men don't follow their wives.

So this, again, is sort of a denigration. It's a belittling of Manoah. When he came to the man, he says, are you the man who spoke to this woman? He says, yo, I, me.

Manoah says, may your words come to pass. And it's just a couple of words in Hebrew. His sentence, he says, yabo, dav, let's see, how would you say that? Davarek, yabo davareka is just my crude pronunciation of it.

Yabo means let them come, your words. Davar is a word or a matter, something you've brought up for discussion, an issue. And ka is the possessive.

So he says, appreciate you saying that, I hope it happens. Then he gets into his real question. Ma ye, what will be? These are almost the same consonants as you have in Yahweh, except instead of the second one, you have another yod.

But this is the origin of the divine name Yahweh. It's from this I am, I will be, I was, it's all rolled into one in Yahweh. But this is ye, actually.

Ma is what? Mana, what is it? Give me another bowl of what is it? Give me some mana. Ma ye ye, mishpat hanar, what will be the mishpat? Mishpat, put a name in front of a verb, the verb is shafat, shafat is the word to judge, to ascertain, to set a policy, to say this is how it's going to be. I can't find a better way to shorten the connotation of shafat.

It's used of the elders that Jethro said, Moses, you spent all day in court, that's stupid, get some men to help you, let them judge, let them decide a case and say what's going to happen. It's not just to judge, it's not just to draw a conclusion, it is to give the sentence, to say look, this is what needs to happen. It is to establish a policy based on a judgment.

You analyze a thing, you make a decision and you say, okay, this is what has to happen now. You go home and move your fence there Ahab, because Joel over here is getting shorted an acre and a half because you put your fence in the wrong place. I have judged that he's right and you're wrong, so now you go move your fence and give him back his land.

That's shafat, it's the whole thing, it's the outcome, it's the procedure, the process, what happens afterwards. You can see it here, when Manoah says, it's not what will be the boy's judgment, it's what is the outcome, what is going to be the decision and the resulting policy relative to this boy. Why would Manoah ask this question? What does he know? What did his wife tell him? We're going to have a son and he's going to be a Nazirite from the day he's born until the day he dies.

What part got left out? Well, he's not supposed to get a haircut and he will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. She didn't tell her husband that. He's got no idea that there's a purpose for this boy and so he's asking.

He says, what's going to happen now with this boy? That's what shafat is. What's the resulting happening of this boy? And what will be his, and we have a form from Asa, once again, you put Asa to manufacture. You remember in Genesis, Barah to make, sort of ex nihilo to create something, Asa to manufacture out of existing material.

This is, Asa means to do something, to work with things. You build something out of stones, you construct something out of wood, you assemble, you work with existing materials, Asa. What are you going to manipulate today? What are you going to do? So he says, what is the policy, what's the procedure, what's the happening with this boy and what's his work? You put maim in front of Asa and it means work.

What is the Asa'u, what is his work? What's he supposed to do? Now these seem like real legitimate questions, don't they? Wouldn't you think? Wife didn't tell him, miraculous boy is about to arrive, wife's been buried, angel from heaven has come, or at least a man from heaven, somebody out of somewhere has come and said, you've been childless, you're going to have a son, and he prays to God, he says, send the guy back and give me some more information, the guy comes back and he says, what's up with this boy and what's he going to do? And the angel says what? Of all that I said to the woman, let her guard, let her be careful to observe. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, she may not drink wine or similar drinks, she may not eat anything unclean, he doesn't say anything more than she said, he doesn't even say the rest of his first message, he doesn't tell the man any more than what his wife told him, he specifically limits himself. He leaves out the part about the Philistines, he leaves out the part about the haircut, he leaves out the part about, you've been barren but now

you're going to conceive.

He says nothing more than what the woman said. How much new information does Manoah have after praying and God answering the prayer and sending the messenger back? How much new information does he have? Zilch, the Lord's arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear, he heard, he answered the prayer, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, your sins have hidden his face from you, communication channel gets cut off, God's not interested in telling Manoah anything. Two times he sent a messenger and Manoah doesn't get any information, doesn't get any instructions.

What was his question? What will be the boy's purpose and what will be the boy's work? The angel doesn't answer either question, purposely. Why is this? This brings up an interesting topic, if I was somebody else I would make a little doctrine with six or seven points out of this, but I'll just suggest to your mind, are there times when God doesn't want people to know things? Jesus would heal a man and say what? Tell no one. Peter says you're the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Jesus says what? Tell no one. It's interesting to go through the Gospels and see how many times Jesus tells people to be quiet. Don't tell what you know.

Do you ever hear that in the church today? Does anybody ever say, okay people we're having an unrevival this week, we're going to spend the next week not telling anybody about Jesus Christ. We are singing no songs, we are sending out no books, we're putting a stop on our website, for the next week nobody say anything. Do your best to not reveal anything, don't mention a divine point of scripture, nobody say anything about God.

I mean, it would just be, you'd get laughed out of town, but Jesus did it frequently. Tell no one. Tell no man what you have seen.

It's just kind of counterintuitive. What do you think God gave by way of instruction to this angel when he heard Manoah's prayer and he sent the angel back down? You think this angel got some instructions from God when he got sent? You think angels obey explicitly and completely, these unfallen angels? Of course they do. And this angel is carrying out God's instructions to say even less this time than he said the first time, and to limit himself to only what Manoah already knows.

Why would that be? Why would God specifically instruct the angel, I know what he's going to ask you, don't tell him. Seems like a legitimate enough question. What do you think? Does it not strike you as extremely odd that the guy would ask a perfectly legitimate question and God would specifically and purposely not tell him? Seems kind of mean to me.

Why would he do that? Well, are there times when you and I ask what we think are perfectly legitimate questions? Lord, why? What are you up to? What's going on here? And God very

specifically doesn't answer our question for days and weeks and months? It's a principle of Scripture, this is the point. You can look at the Lord Jesus, you can look at a story like this. It's not about, and this is sort of the second point.

The first point, if you think about it, to review what we covered in the first lesson, it's not about outcomes. It isn't about results. You cannot judge whether you did right or whether you did wrong.

You can't decide whether someone else chose rightly or chose wrongly, or was thinking correctly or was thinking incorrectly by results. That's not an accurate measure. The measure is the application of the standards of the Word of God.

If the Word of God says that something is right and you die doing it, then you were right, even though you died. If a relationship gets broken off, if something happens that seems evil, Joseph did everything he was supposed to do. His father told him to find his brothers.

He did so, and he got sold into slavery for his trouble. If he'd been a disobedient son and quit after he went to the first field and they'd already left, he'd say, Dad, sorry, they left. I don't know where they went.

He gave up, and he was sort of a half-obedient son and hadn't got sold into slavery. Maybe that would have been a better thing. Maybe he was wrong to just pursue them to the ends of their travels.

It must have been wrong, because look what happened to him. It's not the measure, is it? God has a grander plan. He can see far beyond what we can see.

Things that look wrong to us are actually right. Things that seem unjust and unfair, things that seem fruitless, things that seem hopeless, things that seem unproductive, are not necessarily so in God's plan. He may be measuring in a completely different way.

He may be accomplishing a completely different purpose. Little kids don't understand, 90% of the time, why their parents drag them hither and yon. Oh, Mom, why are we here? Why do we have to go here? We're dragging up and down the endless aisles of this Walmart.

Why? Why does this make no sense to me? I'm tired. This is no fun. Why do I have to sit? Oh, relatives are here.

I have to dress up, and I have to sit, and I have to be quiet, and I can't play. Why do I have to write this thing? Why do I have to do this? It makes no sense to them. They just can't comprehend that there's a bigger, grander plan of which they are a part, but at which they are not in the center.

They're not in the center of this plan. They're a peripheral part. And sometimes they have to sit, and they have to do unfun things because it's no different as believers.

So that's the first point. You cannot judge. Don't make the mistake of deciding, well, there's been an error in living before God.

There's been an error in applying Scripture because I don't think this situation turned out right. That's not the measure. And secondly, don't think that you have to know it all.

Don't think that the goal and the objective in every situation is to have all of the information. It isn't. If God does not tell Manoah the answer to these questions, what's the obvious conclusion to draw? He doesn't need to know.

If he needed to know, wouldn't God tell him? Who needs to know about the wine and the strong drink and the food and the haircut? Mrs. Manoah. All Manoah needs to know is don't get in her way. You be sure that she does what I told her to do.

Just stay out of the way. Don't mess her up. Now, there's another corollary to this, and it's something I thought of after our last lesson that I didn't really emphasize.

I talked about that she did the right thing in going to her husband, and there's an element of submission here. She defers judgment to her husband and so on, and that's good. But notice something else in this story that's also quite clear in the context.

The angel of God has come and delivered a message from God to Mrs. Manoah regarding the upbringing of this child. Now, suppose Manoah came in and said, Honey, I want ham tonight. And I'm sick of looking at that kid with his hair in his face.

Cut those bangs. Which is something, by the way, I have heard said in some household that shall remain nameless about some child who I won't go into his history. On an unrelated note, I spent a whole year with a burr haircut one time because I couldn't keep it combed.

But what if Manoah had said that? Does this put Mrs. Manoah in something of a decision point? The angel of God said, This child eats no unclean food, no raisins, no grapes. And by the way, this is a little bit of a hardship because the main beverage outside of if you can find water and if you can keep water fresh is wine. It's the only thing that will keep.

You can't keep. They don't have refrigeration. Goat's milk, unless you get it fresh, it's going to spoil in a matter of hours.

The only thing you can keep, and people grew up drinking wine with meals and so on. I mean, this is a pretty big deal to avoid anything from the vine. They did everything.

It's just like any other thing. They used the skins. They used the pulp.

They used the seeds after they had pressed grapes. Raisins were a commodity, just like dried dates and figs. Dried grapes, raisins, were a staple.

You could carry them around, just like these sun-made raisins. You ever find a box of those

that's like a year old in your pantry? I mean, they keep. They're kind of tough, but they keep.

Well, that same thing there, and they used those. Well, this child cannot have any of that. Can't get anywhere near it.

So what if Manoah says, hey, we're going on a trip, and this is what we're taking, and that's all they have. And he says, well, what should she do? What takes precedence? The word of God supersedes the word of the husband. And if a wife finds herself conflicted, getting two different sets of orders or two different sets of priorities or two different sets of guidance, or winds up being oppressed because the things of God pull in one direction and the husband is pulling in another direction, guess which wins? If the husband establishes a pattern of being evil or out of line, guess what? His authority is superseded by the authority of the word of God.

And the wife has a responsibility to do what is right before the Lord. And if that means disobeying the husband, in extreme cases, leaving the husband, so be it. He has abdicated.

He has forfeited his authority by establishing a pattern that is out of harmony and out of keeping with the word of God. Same thing with a government. Same thing with a pastor.

Same thing with anybody. An officer in the military. A lot of us are old enough to remember the William Calley situation.

And you cannot say... Think about the Nazis in World War II. Hey, I was just following orders when I ran the death camp. You don't get off the hook that easy.

You have a responsibility to pay attention. And if authority runs amok, you get out from under that authority. You do not conform yourself to amok authority.

And sometimes it's kind of hard to know when to draw that line, but that's something we do before the Lord. We make our best judgment. But women are not to sit under bad authority when it causes them and forces them to conflict with the word of God in a significant way.

And if Manoah had gone in and said cut the child's hair, feed the child a grape, she would have had to say no. The plan of God is on the line. The future of Israel is on the line here.

And you lose when you have authority and you step outside the plan and the purpose of God and you are no longer operating under the guidance of God that gave you that authority in the first place. So, he comes in and gets his information. He asks this question, but he gets no information beyond what his wife already gave him.

God basically brushes him aside. Why? Because he's a ne'er-do-well. He is the opposite of Abraham.

God honors Abraham. And look at what happens after this. He says, let us detain you and we will prepare a young goat for you.

Now, you may not realize it, but what is Manoah doing here? I said earlier, knowledge is power and you want to kind of assert yourself and you want to be the guy. Well, Manoah knows that he's been slighted. He knows that he's been sort of belittled here because everything is happening with his wife and he can't get himself back into the mix here.

He can't get back on top of this situation. The angel won't give him any new information so that he can say, well, dear, let me tell you what the angel said. He can't do that.

And so, he's still in the outs. So, he's going to try another means. He says, let us detain you and we will prepare a young goat for you.

Now, this is the old ancient Near Eastern hospitality thing. You stay here. I want you to stay here.

I want you to be my guest and I will give you some food. What does this do? A guy who's feeling inferior, well, now he is the host. He is the benefactor.

I will make you comfortable. I will give you food and you will now have to recognize that I am something. This is a subtle power ploy.

Manoah is trying to get some status back because he's just been basically kind of slapped in the face here. So, he's not grateful. What has he been given to be grateful for? He's frustrated.

He can't get an answer to his question. So, he says, look, you stay here. We will prepare a goat for you.

And, of course, during the preparation and remember that whole thing that it takes time. You've got to sit there and you can visit and he can try to gain the upper hand in this situation. But the angel of the Lord says, you can detain me, but I'm not going to eat your food.

I.e., you weren't born early enough to get ahead of me in this situation. I'm not going to eat your food. I'm not going to put myself in a subordinate position to you.

I'm not going to be your guest and you be my host. You are God's guest. God is the one that is setting this table.

God is the one that is making provision in this situation and you're going to sit there and accept it and you're going to take whatever scraps of information you get and you're going to be happy. And the angel very quickly reasserts who's in charge of this situation. And he says, I may choose to stick around, but I'm not going to eat your food.

Let me tell you what's going on here. And he does reassert the Lord in this. If you offer an olah, you must offer it to the Lord.

And he switches this because when Manoah said we will prepare a young goat, he didn't say we will prepare an olah for you. He wants to prepare the angel a meal. He wants to put him under

the obligations of hospitality and reciprocity.

You reciprocate. Somebody gives you a meal, you're under obligation to give them something. And the angel says, well, I'll stick around if you want to give the Lord an olah, not me a meal.

And so now Manoah is going to be short a goat, but he's not going to get anything out of it. It's going to be a whole burnt offering. Manoah did not know he was the angel of the Lord.

So Manoah says to the angel of the Lord, what is your name that when your words come to pass, we may honor you? And this is his third attempt to try to be assertive. And there's a lot of folklore about knowing someone's name, calling someone by their name. There's fairy tales about, well, if you can get the troll's name, you can make him do your will or whatever.

Well, this is really a very ancient idea. And Manoah wants to know the angel's name to hold him accountable. You know, you get stopped, you think the patrolman's being rude or something.

What's your name? What's your badge number? I'm going to go back to God and talk to him about you. It's a way to try to assert yourself. Manoah is thinking about himself and about his standing.

Has anybody said, let it be to me as the Lord? Has anybody said, thanks be to God, we're finally going to get rid of these Philistines? Isn't God great? Isn't God gracious? Manoah is just ticked because somebody's talking to his wife and he's out of the loop. And he feels justified in that. And you can see where he would feel justified, but there are bigger things at work.

And he doesn't recognize the divine element. Same thing is true for us. We can get our back up.

We can get indignant. We can get frustrated. We can appeal to legitimate principles and legitimate rationales and say, you know, this ought to be different.

But we really have to be careful. Look at what Manoah is missing here. Let me put it this way.

If you were talking to an angel of the Lord, right now, if I told you, alright, 10.30 tonight, you be sure and go to a quiet place. God has told me that you, fill your name in the blank, you are going to be visited by an angel of the Lord. Gabriel, Michael, one of these guys is going to come and see you at 10.30 tonight.

Think about it. You are going to have a conversation with one of the Holy Ones of God. What would be the nature of your dialogue? If you were going to sit and try to write some notes down about what to ask or what to say, if the angel says, can I carry a message to God from you? Is there something you'd like me to personally deliver to the Lord on your behalf, you know, by having you other than prayer? Is there something you'd like to know? You want to ask me something? Would you have this kind of conversation? What kind of a man has this kind of conversation with an angel of the Lord? And it says he didn't know he was the angel of the Lord.

How could he not know he's an angel of the Lord? What's the matter with him? I mean, this is as

bad as the Pharisees staring at Jesus Christ and not knowing he's the Son of God. This is an indication of blindness. This is an indication of how far Israel has fallen.

The woman didn't ask these questions. Even in her sort of lack of great faithfulness, she didn't ask these questions. She didn't ask for a proof.

Remember Gideon? Well, how do I know these things are going to take place? Make the fleece wet. Make the fleece dry. Do something to show me that this is really going to happen.

The woman at least accepts the message, but Manoah wants to sort of... What is your name that when your words come to pass we may honor you? The angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name seeing that it is wonderful? Well, the word translated wonderful here is used by David over in the Psalms. The form of it here is Pali. P-A-L-I-Y actually.

And it means incomprehensible, something that is past understanding. At least that's what the lexicon says. It's only found a couple of places in Scripture.

In this form it's only found twice, here and in Psalm 139.6. And this is a Psalm of David that says, O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down. You know when I rise up.

And isn't that the principle in this that the angel emphasized? God knows that you have no children. God knows that you've been barren. God knows the situation in Israel.

God is sending a Deliverer. He's going to begin to throw off this Philistine scourge. You know when I sit down.

You know when I rise up. You understand my thought from afar, David says. You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

That, by the way, that verse 3 is really interesting. It says you scrutinize my path and my lying down. What does that really mean? You scrutinize me when I'm going and you scrutinize me when I stop.

Sometimes we're going and we need to quit going. Other times we need to go and keep going. But whether we are going or whether we are stopping, God is observing.

God is scrutinizing those decisions, those actions. You are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all.

You have enclosed me behind and before and laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. Such knowledge is palai to me.

It is too high I cannot attain it. The level of God's comprehensive knowledge and scrutiny is beyond what David can comprehend. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? Remember that psalm.

It's a great psalm. Well, that's the other place where this particular word is used. A related form of it, with a maim in front, making it more of a noun, instead of something that is wonderful or wondrous or incomprehensible, it becomes a noun, and it's used in Job 37.16. And you remember when God says, actually, this is Elihu, which you know who I think Elihu represents.

But he says in verse 16 of that chapter, chapter 37 of Job, he says, Listen to this, O Job, stand and consider the wonders of God. Do you know how God establishes them and makes the lightning of His cloud to shine? Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, the wonders of one perfect in knowledge, you whose garments are hot when the land is still because of the south wind? Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, the wonders of one who is perfect in knowledge? Do you know the incomprehensible works of someone like God, who is on the other side of these layers of thick clouds? The obvious answer is you don't. You have no idea, Job, what God is actually up to.

His purposes and His works are incomprehensibly grander. And it's interesting to me that this passage in Job 37, the Psalm 139, and our passage in Judges 13 all use this same word or a form of it, and all of them talk about exactly the same thing. God is doing a thing that is beyond the understanding of the person who is immediately involved.

So it is represented by the angel saying, Look, I'm not going to tell you my name in the same way that I'm not going to tell you the child's purpose and His work. This is a work of God. God is doing an incomprehensible thing here.

Even the messenger who comes to give you these details is incomprehensible. Don't think that you can sit God's messenger down and feed him a meal and kind of control him and get on top of this situation. You're going to take charge of this situation.

You're going to manage it. You're going to bring it into some borders and some parameters. Now, there are times when we're supposed to do that.

Aren't there? There are times when it is appropriate. We are given a task, and we have got to sit down and figure it out. But the interesting thing about this section of Scripture is it tells us that there are times when don't do that.

Don't try to do that. We've got to be wise enough to recognize when God is doing one of His palai things. He's doing one of this.

The noun form that's used over in Job is mithla'ah. It's too big. It's past finding out.

Don't ask the name of it. Don't sit it down for a meal. Don't ask for a second go on the instructions.

Look, you know as much as you need to know. It's a child coming. Make sure he's a Nazarite.

That's it for you. Your part in this is done. You don't have to train him to be a warrior.

You don't have to give him piano lessons. There's no other instructions necessary. His involvement in this is just peripheral.

It's minute. He's a bit player. There are times when God does things.

God brings things into our life. It is of this nature. We need to be wise enough to recognize.

I think sometimes parents realize this about a child. You have a child growing up in your household. You think, you know what? God is doing something with this child.

It's beyond me. This child does things and knows things and has gifts and has aspirations and is going in a direction. The best thing I can do is just stand by and pray.

I can't contribute to this. I can't try to take credit for this. I can't try to insinuate myself into this and be a part of it.

I need to stand back and let God do what God is going to do. We need to be wise enough to do that. This is Manoah's role.

You know what Manoah's role is in the life of Samson? Stand back and get out of the way because God is going to do something. You don't need to know anything. You don't need to know the angel's name.

You don't need to take charge. Just don't get in your wife's way. Don't get in the child's way.

Don't get in God's way. You know as much as you need to know. And it takes some humility and it takes some perspicacity to recognize that all of us have times when God is at work.

The Experiencing God thing is look at where God is at work and go join Him in it. Well, the Manoah Samson lesson is when you see God at work, a lot of times you need to not try to join Him in it. You need to stand back and get out of the way.

That's the angel's instruction to Manoah. Look, you can praise God. Send an offering to God.

Thank God that He is sovereignly at work in Israel. And you get to be a close observer. That's as much as you need to do.

You want to get a goat? Get a goat. Offer it to God. And watch God at work.

Watch the supernatural. This angel is going to go up in the smoke of the offering. The only good thing Manoah does in this whole episode is be quiet and watch the supernatural disappearance of God's messenger.

That's it. Not every case is this way. There's other times when we're supposed to be intimately involved.

We need to make close application. We need to be personally dedicated and personally diligent.

But we have to recognize that not every case is that way.

And there are times when God is sovereignly at work. You think about Abraham. Was Abraham supposed to be obedient? Did Abraham have to assemble an army and go rescue his nephew and do a lot of other things? And as a result, he got to meet Melchizedek and do the bread and the wine thing? That was because Abraham was obedient.

Abraham got busy and did something in a situation. This is not an Abraham situation. We see it by the contrast.

This is a sovereignty of God situation. And that's the time to stand back and give thanks. Be glad that you're there to see it.

Well, this is a good place for us to pause. We'll pick up and see the birth of Samson and what happens when he grows up and the Spirit comes on him next time. But we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for its comprehensiveness and its diversity and the many facets of your plan and purpose that we come to know and come to understand by study. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us the wisdom to perceive and to know the difference so that we will know when to travel and when to lie down and be still.

We will know when to apply your word in an active way and when we are to stand still and watch your deliverance. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.