

Samson's Mother Prepares for His Birth

***Key Verse: “Lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”
—Judges 13:5***

***Selected Scripture:
Judges 13***

ISRAEL'S HISTORY, AS RE-corded in the Old Testament, was one largely of alternating between faithfulness and unfaithfulness in serving God. At the time of our lesson, the account states that “Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD,” and as a result they were delivered into the hands of their enemies, the Philistines, for forty years. (Judg. 13:1) As this period drew to a close, God knew that a faithful leader needed to be raised up in Israel to begin the work of delivering them from this cruel enemy.

God selected a faithful couple from the tribe of Dan—Manoah and his wife—to be the ones who would bring forth a son, to be named Samson, to begin this great work. An angel of God was sent to Manoah's wife, who was barren, telling her she would bear a son. The angel further stated that her son would be “a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.” (vs. 7) The word ‘Nazarite’ means ‘separated’ or ‘consecrated.’ Those in Israel who took the vow of a Nazarite were specially separated for service to God. A Nazarite abstained from

any drink that could be intoxicating, they also were not allowed to touch or go near a dead body, and as an outward sign of their consecration to God they did not cut their hair or shave their beard. In preparation for the birth of this child and his dedication as a Nazarite, the angel instructed Manoah's wife that during the period of gestation, she herself should "drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing."—vs. 4

Manoah, not present when the angel came to his wife, requested of God that the angel be sent again. He wanted to be certain that they followed all the instructions given from God. The angel was sent again, reiterating the previous instructions given to Manoah's wife. As a result of the angel's reassurance, Manoah rejoiced, and desired to show his thankfulness by making an offering to God. The account states, "Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on." (vs. 19) The phrase 'the angel did wondrously' was immediately fulfilled in a remarkable way. As the flame of Manoah's offering went up toward heaven, "the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar" (vs. 20), and they saw the angel no more. They were then convinced that this was indeed a messenger sent from God, and they rejoiced in anticipation of a promised son who would be used in the service of the God of Israel.

There are several lessons in this account for spiritual Israel. First, as with Manoah and his wife, all who desire to so dedicate—consecrate—their life to God must do so knowing the terms of that consecration. Second, they must study and follow to the best of their ability the instructions given in God's Word as to the fulfillment of their consecration. Third, as Manoah thanked God by offering sacrifice to him, the life of the spiritual Israelite should be one of offering a "sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."—Heb. 13:15 ■