

# The Birth of Samson

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening, brothers, sisters and friends. Just to repeat the intimations from this morning. First of all, we're taking our annual leave from tomorrow, from 9th to 23rd.
- Just to let us know our supply. This is all, of course, God willing. But as it stands now, on the 15th, it's Colm Campbell in the morning and Reverend Kenny Ferguson in the evening.
- And on the 22nd, it's Donnie McCauley in the morning and Colm McLean in the evening. Again, just as I said this morning, on Thursday, 19th, the prayer meeting, God willing, it will be Nigel Kenny, a lawyer with the Christian Institute, who will be taking that service.
- And let him know if he wants to share some of his work too, to feel free to do so. So at least he'll be leading the prayer meeting. And perhaps a small, very short update on what the work is of the Christian Institute and what work he is doing.
- And one other thing to note, of course, is that WFM, the ladies in the congregation, if you haven't been before, this is your call to go again. WFM, 24th October at 7.30 with one of the ladies sharing what the Lord has done for her in her life, her journey with the Lord.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ]     24th October at 7.30. And just finally, as we said in the morning, just a very early call that we hope to begin a Bible study in the months. There's options we have to us just to, we'll be a sign-up sheet after our holiday, but just to put it out into the air, informal time of Bible study, open to everyone.
- I said in the morning, there'll be tea, there'll be cake, at the very least, a short time of discussion and studying God's Word together. More details for that once we have it firmed up ourselves, but just put it out there for us.
- And please do pray just now for the men who have been willing to take on the supply work, especially the men who are lay preachers.
- Of course, pray for Reverend Ferguson Cujic too, but for lay preachers, it's hard enough preaching anyway at times. But these men who do the hard work behind the scenes, we are thankful, very thankful to them.
- So please do keep them in prayer. Again, we're here to worship the Lord. All our praise this evening, our sung praise will be from Sing Psalms, will be from Psalm 77.
- [ 2 : 2 9 ]     We will work our way through Psalm 77 as we go out this evening. Psalm 77 talks, of course, and reminds us that God is a God who looks after his people.
- And when things are difficult, when life is hard, we trust in him and has continued, indeed his ancient and ongoing goodness to his people. Sing Psalms, Psalm 77.
- We can sing, first of all, verses 1 down to verse 8. Sing Psalms, Psalm 77, verses 1 to 8. I cried aloud to God for help. I prayed that God would hear.
- When I was plunged in deep distress, I sought the Lord in prayer. At night I stretched untiring hands. Relief my soul refused. Remembering you, O God, I groaned with longing as I amused.
- Psalm 77, verses 1 to 8. To God's praise. To God for help.

- [ 3 : 33 ] I prayed that God would hear. When I was plunged in deep distress, I sought the Lord in prayer.
- A night I searched and found my hands.
- Reveal my soul refused. Remembering you, O God, I groaned.
- With longing as I was. In my interest, I grew on steel.
- Long steel, you kept my eye. I thought now out the corner is The years which I am or I  
Throughout the waters all the time My soul's I fall to life.
- [ 5 : 31 ] I wonder here, Hear wide my heart And answer thine to life.
- Forever will the Lord be there And never show His case As He will draw on His death As  
He will draw on His death And turn from His love And turn from evil riches Let's join  
together in a word of prayer.
- Let's pray. Lord our God, we come before you this evening With these very words still in  
our minds Words we just sung.
- Words we just sung. These words of worry. These words of pain. And we echo the words  
of the psalmist this evening. This morning we prayed for the wider world and the wider  
situation around us.
- Just now Lord we bring before you ourselves. We bring before you our own local situation.  
Just now for the short time of prayer we do pray for all that goes on within this district.
- [ 7 : 15 ] Even within this congregation. Lord we come to you just now. And we ask for any this  
evening. For any here present. Or for any perhaps who are not here.
- But who are your people who belong to this village. Who are finding themselves  
questioning in the same way. Who are wondering perhaps even this evening.
- Have you forgotten them? Has your grace towards them? Has they extended as it were  
just that bit too far? Have they been cut off from the ties of your care?
- And the ties of your love? Lord we ask that this evening. You bring them to that knowledge  
once more. Bring them back to that knowledge. Those who once served you so brightly.
- Those who once knew what it was to experience your presence so closely. Those who  
had such care and love for you in their hearts. And those who perhaps over years.
- [ 8 : 14 ] Over many years. Lord that love has grown cold. That faith has grown so small. As the  
worry and the burdens of life set in.
- As our own sin. As we acknowledge it. As we see it. As that sets in. As the burdens and  
sins and concerns of this world set in. And Lord we come this evening.
- And we confess that we often find ourselves. Even as your people. We find ourselves so  
worried. We find ourselves feeling so small. So far away. We find ourselves with the same  
questioning as a psalmist here had.
- Will forever the Lord reject and never show his grace? Has he withdrawn his steadfast  
love and turned from me his face?
- Lord as we come before you just now. We come before you as one people. But one  
people made up of so many individuals. Each one of us with our own story. Each one of  
us here this evening with our own worries.
- [ 9 : 16 ] Our own doubts. Our own concerns. Each one of us this evening with burdens. Which  
weigh heavy on our hearts and our minds. We pray just now. Especially as your people  
here this evening.
- As those here who know you. And who love you. Who seek to serve you. Lord remind us  
we ask this evening. Remind us once more. Of your promises towards us.

Of your care towards your people. Remind us as we remember your steadfastness. As we remember your continual generational goodness. That you are a God who does not change.

And because you do not change we are not consumed. Because you do not change your promises towards us do not change. Help us to find our hope this evening. Our very renewed hope this evening.

On that fact. That we worship a God who knows his people. We worship a God who sent a saviour into this world to redeem his people.

[ 10 : 15 ] A people known from all time. And kept to all time. Help us understand that fact. We are not unknown. We are not adrift.

We are not on our own. Lord you have called us. And set us apart. Called us your own. Made us your own special people.

All through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us then this evening. To once again find our hope. And find our peace. And find our joy in him.

And in him alone. We confess we often look to the world. And look to ourselves. And look to those perhaps even closest to us. For our support. And our help. And our love in this life.

But we know it's only through Jesus. We find these things eternally. For the world and ourselves. Will fail us. And we will fail ourselves. Our strength will fail us.

[ 11 : 13 ] Our ability will fail us. He will not. Lord. We pray for our wider district. Our wider village here. We pray for many homes. Many of whom we know.

Many of whom we care for. Some of whom we love deeply. Who have no gospel interest. Who have zero gospel care. Who have no understanding of even the basics.

Of who you are. And what you have done. And what you require of them. Lord help us not to be unknowing. Of the lack of gospel knowledge.

Help us to be so in tuned into our village. That we understand. That we live in a dark place. And indeed we live in dark times. Where your name is not known. Where the gospel is not understood.

And many around us. Who have not yet come to know you. They are not even yet rejecting you. For they know not enough to even reject you. They are just unaware. They are clueless.

[ 12 : 10 ] They are adrift. They are closed in their eyes. In their hearts. In their spirits. They are wandering off to a lost eternity. With no word of ever hearing the gospel. Lord we ask you would use us as salt and light in this place.

Give us Lord we ask the wisdom. And give us indeed the zeal. To see our friends and our neighbours. And our family members. Come to know. And come to love you.

And come to serve you. Lord we ask you would use us as witnesses in this place. Help us as a congregation. As a gathering of your people. Help us as brothers and sisters.

To work together well. In order to see your gospel go out. We pray once more Lord. Through the plans. The plans. The future plans. The future ideas. For these things.

We do them for your honour. And for your glory. But we ask Lord. That you would lead us and guide us. We confess if you are not in these plans. They will not work. They will come to nothing.

[ 13 : 09 ] Lord give us wisdom. We ask in all these things. Help us not just as a family gathering. But help us in our own spheres of influence. Help us as individuals in our homes.

Around this village. Of all the contacts and family members that we have. All those we are close to. And all those we meet with week by week. Help us to be shining gospel lights.

Help us to be blazing with the love of our saviour. Help us to fearlessly and clearly. And with joy in our hearts. Proclaim for risen Lord Jesus. As we heard this morning.

Help us to be steadfast like John. Help us to be of one mind like John. Help us also to be affable like John. Help us to be approachable like John.

Help us Lord in all our approachability. In all our affability. In all our clearness of speech. Help us to be clear on the one thing that matters.

[ 14 : 09 ] Who Jesus is. What he has done. What he continues to be and to do. His finished work on that cross.

Lord help us never to overcomplicate the gospel. Help us never to put pitfalls. And need to dig ditches before those who come to the gospel.

But help our own conduct. Our own lives. Both as individuals. But also as a congregation here. Help all that we do. And all that we say. In every way we act and think.

To be no barrier to the gospel. To those who are inquiring. Help us instead to point them to our saviour. The one who can save them. And transform them. And renew them.

In their hearts. In their minds. In their very souls. We pray once more for the suffering. How we are hearing as the day unfolds. And as we heard. Throughout the night last night.

[ 15 : 05 ] The suffering reality of. So many people just now. We are very much mindful just now. Of the suffering. In Israel and the areas around about. Lord. And the complicated politics.

Of these countries. Where we are so careful. In what we say. And how we understand it. Lord. We have barely a grasp. But you know.

And you see. We pray once more. As we prayed this morning. For your people in Israel. We pray also Lord. For your people in Gaza. For your people in the surrounding countries. You have your people in these places.

And even though at this moment. They are facing one another. On either side of a conflict. We know that. In the spiritual reality of things. They are still one body.

They are still united together. Worshipping their one saviour. We pray the same. For our brothers and sisters. In Ukraine this evening. As they also face constant. Ongoing attack.

[ 16 : 01 ] Pray for our brothers and sisters. There. And our brothers and sisters. In Russia. Lord. You alone. See it all. And you alone. Understand it all. And we feel so clueless.

We feel at times. Perhaps so far away. Lord. You see it. You understand it. All things are plain. And known to you. We give you praise Lord.

That the church is not confined. To one geographic area. Nor to one people group. One culture. Nor to one skin colour. Lord. That your church is across the world.

This evening. Different languages. Different traditions. Different cultures. Different means. And ways of worshipping. We pray just now.

As we gather together. With the assembled body of saints. Across this world. We raise our voices. With one voice. To worship. Our one saviour. With that one hope.

[ 16 : 58 ] Eternity spent with him. Until that day comes. Help us to serve you well. Help us to faithfully. Be servants to you. In our homes. In our village. Help us to rely. On God.

Help us to truly understand. That we come to a God. Who is eternal. In your ways. Your promises. Are never ending. And never failing. You care.

For our individual. For our individual. For our small. Situations of life. As you care. For the wider world. And indeed. The whole universe itself. We come just now. Confessing sin.

Confessing waywardness. Confessing disobedience. Confessing that this past day. We have done. And said. And thought things. Which are so. Abhorrent.

Against your holy nature. God. We take these things. And we lay them. At the foot. Of the empty cross. We are reminded. There is.

[ 17 : 55 ] No one there. He has. Indeed. Been killed. He has indeed. Rose again. He is indeed. Now at your right. Hand.

Making intercession. For his people. Until we see him. Face to face. Lord. Help us to serve. You well. Ask all these things. In and through.

And for Christ's. Precious name's sake. Amen. Let's turn to greed. And God's word. We are. Carrying on. Our study of the judges. We take a few weeks. Break.

My timing is impeccable. As always. We are actually going to. Of course. We are going to have our two week break. Now with our holiday. But. Judges chapter 13. Judges chapter 13.

As we said. We are taking a snapshot. Really. Journey. Throughout. Judges. We are trying to stop. As often as we can. And here we begin. The journey. Looking. At the person. And the life.

[ 18 : 50 ] Of Samson. Of course. As all the. The characters. All the people. And judges. We have studied. Each one. Could do with. A study.

In their own right. But. Just a summary study. Of this man's life. We can begin. This evening. Looking at the birth. Of Samson. Chapter 13. Judges chapter 13.

Page. 199. Of the few Bibles. Judges. 13. Let's hear again. The word. Of God. And the people of Israel.

Did. Again. Did. What was evil. In the sight of the Lord. So the Lord. Gave them into the land. Hand of the Philistines. For 40 years. There was a certain man.

Of Zorah. Of a tribe. Of Danites. Whose name was Manoah. And his wife. Was barren. And had no children. And the angel. Of the Lord. Appeared to the woman.

[ 19 : 44 ] And said to her. Behold. You are barren. And have not born children. But you shall conceive. And bear a son. Therefore be careful. And drink. No wine.

Or strong drink. And eat nothing unclean. For behold. You shall conceive. And bear a son. No razor. Shall come upon his head. For the child.

Shall be. A Nazarite. To God. From the womb. And he shall begin. To save Israel. From the hand. Of the Philistines. Then the woman.

Came and told her husband. A man of God. Came to me. And his appearance. Was like the appearance. Of the angel of God. Very awesome. I did not ask him. Where he was from.

And he did not tell me his name. But he said to me. Behold. You shall conceive. And bear a son. So then drink. No wine. Or strong drink. And eat nothing unclean.

[ 20 : 37 ] For the child. Shall be a Nazarite. To God. From the womb. To the day. Of his death. Then Manoah. Prayed to the Lord. And said. O Lord. Please let the man of God.

Whom you sent. Come again to us. And teach us. What we are to do. With a child. Who will be born. And God listened. To the voice of Manoah. And the angel of God.

Came again to the woman. As she sat in the field. But Manoah. Her husband. Was not with her. So the woman ran quickly. And told her husband. Behold. The man who came to me every day.

Has appeared to me. And Manoah arose. And went after his wife. And came to the man. And said to him. Are you the man who spoke to this woman? And he said. I am. And Manoah said.

Now when your words come through. What is to be the child's manner of life. And what is his mission? And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah.

[ 21 : 32 ] Of all that I said to the woman. Let her be careful. She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine. Neither let her drink wine or strong drink. Or eat any unclean thing.

All that I commanded her. Let her observe. Manoah said to the angel of the Lord. Please let us detain you. And prepare a young goat for you.

And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah. If you detain me. I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering. Then offer it to the Lord.

For Manoah did not know. That he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord. What is your name? So that when your words come through. We may honor you.

And the angel of the Lord said to him. Why do you ask my name? Seeing it is wonderful. So Manoah took the young goat. With a grain offering.

[ 22 : 31 ] And offered it on the rock to the Lord. To the one who works wonders. And Manoah and his wife were watching. When the flame went up. Toward heaven from the altar.

The angel of the Lord went up. In the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching. And they fell on their faces to the ground. And the angel of the Lord appeared.

No more to Manoah. And to his wife. And Manoah knew. That he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to his wife. We shall surely die. For we have seen God.

But his wife said to him. If the Lord had meant to kill us. He would not have accepted. A burnt offering. And a grain offering. At our hands. Or shown us all these things.

Or now announced to us. Such things as these. And the woman bore a son. And called his name Samson. And the young man grew. And the Lord blessed him.

[ 23 : 27 ] And the spirit of the Lord began to stir him. In Manaphadan. Between Zorah. And Eshterol. Amen. And give praise to God. For his holy.

And his perfect word. Let's again sing to God's praise. Again sing Psalms. Psalm 77. Sing Psalms.

Psalm 77. This time singing. Verses 9. Down to verse 15. Of the psalm. Sing Psalms.

Psalm 77. Verses 9. Down to verse 15. For all time. Has his promise failed. Is God no longer kind.

Has he in his great wrath. Dismissed compassion. From his mind. Then to my heart. There came this thought. On this I will rely.

[ 24 : 24 ] The years. Of the right hand of power. Of him who is. Most high. Psalm 77. Verses 9 to 15. To God's praise.

or have he in his great trabajo. Oh, God is still. For all time. I shall fall. timinlesia sowel.

Or him how still. Hurt tyin." Has he in his great máualki sipsed.

of passion from his mind. Then to my heart, the gift of soul, of this I will provide.

Then hear some of the bright hand of power, of him, his Lord's side.

[ 25 : 46 ] I will recall that Lord's in peace, good words so long at home.

I thank you, dear, for all your lives, good mighty peace I show.

For God's most holy that you live, what God compares with you, you are the Lord of the hills, whose power the angels do.

You have redeemed you, good Lord, with you, Lord, and all night the hour, shake hosts and chosem children here, deliver all the power.

Amen. Let's turn back for a short time to a chapter we had, Judges, chapter 13.

[ 27 : 47 ] In Judges 13, as we said, the nature of a study is, we could do, and we should indeed in the future may well do, a full study on the life of Samson.

As it is, it will take three or four studies to get through what we have even here in this brief summary. But this evening, focusing on chapter 13, the birth of Samson, the events around the extraordinary birth of who would become an extraordinary man.

Just to remind ourselves, we've come this far and we've seen almost the repetitive nature of Judges, and that's not to demean the text.

It is repetitive. It is written to be repetitive. It is structured to be repetitive. Because it's repetitive to the point it's making that mankind, humanity, that we just love.

That's a word we're choosing carefully. We just love to sin. We're called to love the Lord. We're called to serve the Lord. We serve ourselves. We love ourselves.

[ 29 : 03 ] We love our sin. And again and again, as we said before, every time, the cycle of Judges, God calls his people to do something, or to be something.

They fail to be that, to do that. Instead, they fall into sin. They spend time in sin. They cry out to God. God rescues them, and calls them to be his people once more.

And so, the cycle continues around, and around again, and again. It doesn't really apply this evening, but just to remind ourselves as we go through the book of Judges, just because God tells us it took place, it does not mean that God condoned it taking place.

There are so many instances of that. And again, if you spend any time in conversing with someone who would perhaps call themselves an atheist, or someone who has got at least a working knowledge of why they're an atheist, they'll often say, well, the Bible is full of things where God says or commands evil things.

The Bible is full of killing and murders and rapes and so on. Just because God records it, it does not mean he condones it. We've seen that countless times.

[ 30 : 22 ] We'll see it again and again as we carry on through this study. God is honest. God is eternally truthful. And he records the true reality of who we are in his word.

We come, of course, here then to the birth of Samson. And the problem is, when it comes to, we're discussing this just partially next door in the session, when it comes to these accounts, we know them so well.

We all know that the basic story of Samson, we all know just some of the amazing feats he did. We all know his failures. The truth is, when you dig down into the very text, when you look, take it verse by verse at times, there is so much revealed, not just about Samson, but about those around him, and of course, ultimately about God, that it's hard not to lose sight.

So we'll take a broad view this evening, and it gives us plenty of avenues to go down in the future, or yourself for your own private study. Look at just under three or four very broad headings.

First of all, we can see, a destroyed nation and destroyed hopes. So I destroyed nation and destroyed hopes. Then secondly, a child promised.

[ 31 : 43 ] Thirdly, a child set apart. And finally and briefly, a judge for Israel. So I destroyed nation and destroyed hopes. A child promised, a child set apart, and a judge for Israel.

First of all, a destroyed nation and destroyed hopes. Taking the first wee section here. The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Just to remind ourselves, this is the shorthand summary we find throughout Judges. It's the same pattern that the writer of Judges uses to tell us that yet again, they are doing the same sins, which caused them the grief in the first place.

Just to remind ourselves, what was that sin? It was the worshipping and the bowing down of the false gods. Notably and really, it was almost always Baal, but Baal in different names and different guises.

It was the same God, small letter G, they were worshipping, just different cultural forms of that God. Well again, that's bad, but you know, is it that bad?

[ 33 : 01 ] Well yes, as we touched on before, just to remind ourselves, to worship Baal, it meant sacrifice. It meant cutting yourself at times, cutting your loved ones at times.

It meant vastly gross, and vastly graphic displays of public intimacy, I should say, and most horrifically, of course, to worship Baal meant child sacrifice.

Living child sacrifice. We covered this before, but just, and we won't go too far into it, because it's dark and it's heavy. Heating up a brass statue, with arms, and placing your child on the arms of that heated up brass statue.

Or a statue often that would cut out, with a flame inside, and you put your child into that flaming statue. And they did that. Again and again, they did that.

Every time they fell into sin again, they did that. So in shorthand, the people of Israel again, did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Again, they worship the Baals.

[ 34 : 19 ] Again, they sacrifice their children for their own convenience, and for their own glory, and for their own plans and ideas. So the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years.

God sends the enemies, as it were, back into the nation. Now, if you think far enough back to the start of our study, this is one of the enemies that the people of Israel were told to destroy in the first place.

And because they couldn't even do that, and because they didn't do that, and God promised that he would give them into their hands, if only they would follow him, if they didn't follow him, the Philistines were not given into their hands, and now the Philistines have come back to destroy and capture and kill.

40 years. Can you imagine 40 years under enemy? Not just opposition, but full-blown oppression. There is no escape.

Generations, two generations perhaps, 40 years, two generations maybe more, born into the land. Two whole generations. And all they have known is the oppression of the Philistines.

[ 35 : 31 ] And by no means did it look like the Philistines were good rulers. They oppressed the people of Israel. They oppressed them heavily. They demanded from them of the produce of their land.

The people seem to be starving, and we will touch on this in future weeks. The people are starving. Their livelihoods are gone. It's been 40 years of continual abject misery.

Generation after generation. Rebellion after rebellion. And the Philistines have full control. The culture of the people gone. Their land has been taken.

Their lives indeed have been taken. There is nationwide trauma. Nationwide destruction. Indeed, the nation is now gone. The nation has become part of a much greater, a much more powerful nation of the Philistines.

They have a military force, and indeed they did. They had great military power. And Israel now looks to be gone. Totally gone. It's been 40 years since Israel last existed as a nation of some sorts.

[ 36 : 45 ] You can imagine yourself. Imagine living at this time. Perhaps you remember your parents, your grandparents, speaking once about Israel. Once we were free.



Once we defeated our enemies. But now, now you were born under this oppression. You were born under the Philistines, owning everything you called your own. There's no freedom.

There's no peace. The nation has been destroyed. And we go from this wide-angle view, we could say. This, as they call it, a macro view.

This overarching, nationwide view. And scripture takes us down then, in verse 2 onwards. The whole nation's destroyed. 40 years of destruction, oppression.

And now we find, we could say, a micro view. Within this destroyed nation is also a family, or a couple at least, with destroyed hopes.

[ 37 : 48 ] We zoom on down, we come on down to the family level. Within this wider national destruction that our normal family is trying to live their normal lives.

And here we meet Manoah and his wife. And we see from the text, and the grammar just makes it more clear, but there's nothing hidden here.

It's all clear. We see from the text, we've obviously been trying to start a family. Trying to do what we're desperate to do, and it hasn't worked out for them.

The wording and the grammar tells us it's been an ongoing process. We've been waiting for years and years. And for all these years, there is, again, no hope for them.

They're living in a destroyed nation, and here we have a couple whose own hopes, we can be sure, of course, are very much destroyed too.

[ 38 : 54 ] Their hopes of their family plans destroyed. Their hopes, perhaps, of their future plans destroyed. As we spend time, next 20 odd minutes, if nothing else, and here's the conclusion at the start, if nothing else, this account of the birth of Samson tells us, God cares for the small as well as the large.

God cares for both the macro worries, the nationwide, worldwide situations, as he does for the couple who are broken and the couple who are in prayer.

The couple who can't conceive, the couple who are going through whatever they're going through. God cares, and God sees, and God knows. God knows. So to this couple of destroyed hopes living in this destroyed nation, God promises a child.

Verse 3, here we have a second point, a child promised. Verse 3, Manoah's wife is going about her daily business, living her life as best she can in this context.

We aren't told what she's doing, because what she's doing is just whatever she does day by day. This is a woman going about her business. We assume perhaps she's out in the fields, because that's where the angel meets her later on.

[ 40 : 33 ] So we can assume she's out in the fields, gathering perhaps the small bit of grain they can gather together. Again, the Philistines were taking most of the food, but the small bit of food they had left for themselves, she's out there gathering up the grain and picking the ears perhaps off for herself and her family.

And while she's doing her normal, everyday business, there appears before her this man. Now we know, of course, it's an angel of the Lord.

But as of yet, she doesn't know that. We know it. She doesn't yet know fully who this man is. She has a sneaking suspicion, we'll see in a second.

But you can't say yet it's an angel. All she says is a man has come and appeared before her. And he brings to this poor woman what you can imagine must have seemed like impossibly good news.

In the normality of life, she's expecting nothing from anyone. It's been 40 years since God has spoken, as it were, to the people of Israel.

[ 41 : 48 ] 40 years they've been lost in their own sin and lost in their rebellion. And now God speaks to a woman in a field. And as incredible as that sounds, it's even more incredible when you think properly.

Just think how small. And think how undervalued. And think how little was thought of women in that day. And God speaks to a woman.

In fact, he speaks to her twice. We'll see that in a second. And he brings to the woman the impossible good news. First of all, he tells her perhaps there's a struggle.

Perhaps only Mano and his wife know their struggles. No one else knows that they've been perhaps trying to conceive. Behold, you are barren and have not born children. Literally not been able to.

We could say it's a full rendering of a word. You haven't been able to do it. But you shall conceive and bear a son. You can imagine yourself just the shock, the surprise.

[ 42 : 54 ] There's no word strong enough, I guess, for it. But the woman, she listens. And she runs and she tells her husband.

And look how she describes the angel in verse 6. When a woman came and told her husband, A man of God came to me. His appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God.

Very awesome. She knows he's from God because he's shared with her something only God could know. That they haven't been able to conceive.

They haven't been able to give birth. To bear a child. Only God would know that private pain of their lives. And in that then, she knows this is someone at least sent from God.

But she has no idea yet who or indeed possibly who she is dealing with. And look at the joy. Look at the wonder. You can hear the text here. You can see that the grammar of it.

[ 43 : 55 ] She's almost speaking so fast. She's telling her husband everything that took place. I saw a man. His appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God. Very awesome.

I didn't ask him where he was from. I didn't ask him his name. You can imagine yourself the joy. You can imagine yourself the wonder. But also the sheer confusion of the situation. But he said to me, Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.

There is a joy. But also there is a real sense of God's holiness here. There is something different about this man who appeared to her. She knows there's something special about him.

His appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God. Very awesome. It's quite hard to translate really that word awesome. It's the best we have in English. It's to be awestruck.

To be terrible is a good translation. But not in a bad way of course. Terrible in terms of just... There's no human words to describe the sense and the awe and the wonder she gets from this man.

[ 45 : 12 ] Either way, she runs and she tells her husband. And I love the honesty of the scripture. When you remember these are normal people. These are a normal couple.

Yes, a few thousand years ago. But brothers and sisters and friends, we haven't changed in these thousands of years. We still act the same way and think the same way. Look at poor Manoah.

Look at Manoah's prayer in verse 8. Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with a child who will be born.

What do we do? What do we do? You're sending us a child. We believe that. But what next? Not for a second does he doubt his wife's account.

Not for a second does this man doubt his wife's story that an angel, or at least this man, appeared to her. It's not a doubting prayer he has. It's a desperate prayer. Lord, help us.

[ 46 : 18 ] We don't know how to be parents. We don't know what is happening. And there's something special, of course, about this boy. We'll see that in a second. He will be set apart.

Lord, help us. We can't do it by ourselves. He just wants more help. Of course, I don't know, but I know some here certainly do.

The surprise and the joy, I'm sure, of finding out that there's a baby on the way, whether a child or a grandchild, whether that's expected, I'm sure is joyous enough.

But, of course, in their case, completely unexpected. God listens to the prayers of poor Manoah.

He listens to the panic prayer. And he sends again the angel. But look what happens. God sends the angel again to the woman.

[ 47 : 19 ] Manoah has prayed the prayer. Manoah has asked for the help. But again, God shows his care and the respect he has for his people, for his own creation, man or woman.

God listened, verse 9, to the voice of Manoah. And the angel of the Lord came again to the woman as she sat in the field. Her husband's not there, so she runs and she grabs her husband.

She tells him that the man, he is back again. And Manoah comes to the man. And it feels perhaps a bit harsh even in English. He's quite abrupt to the angel, verse 11.

Are you the man who spoke to this woman? But that's not the sense. That's not the tone. The tone is not that. The tone is wonder. The tone is amazement. Is it you? Are you the one who came to promise us a baby?

Are you the man who spoke to this woman? And this woman, again, it sounds quite harsh, but it's not. It's affectionate. Are you the one who spoke to her? Is it really you? Is this true?

[ 48 : 19 ] Is this actually happening? That's the sense. It's amazement. It's wonder. Manoah trusts completely in the promise that God has given him.

And the angel, of course, then confirms. The angel says, yes, I am. He said, I am. Now, in verse 12, in verse 11, the end of verse 11, we have to note what's going on here.

The angel answers quite simply saying, I am. Well, it's a reasonable answer. Are you the one? Yes, I am. But it's not yes, I am.

It's I am. Keep that in our minds for just now. We'll come back to that in a second. They do the natural thing that you would do as you face this man who has come from God with good news.

They offer him food. They offer him hospitality. They are a kind couple. They seem to be a really gentle couple. They seem to want to be a serving couple. We'll see that later on in Samson's life.

[ 49 : 28 ] Their decisions aren't always the best, but they seem to care for Samson. They're a caring couple and they're a hospitable couple. So they offer food to this man who's been sent from God.

Of course, we still think it's a man. Verses 15 down to verse 23. Here we see things begin to shift further.

The angel does not eat. He will not. Now he can eat. We see elsewhere angels eating in Scripture. It's not a physical problem, no. Manoah wants to feed the man to say thank you to the man for bringing this good news from God.

The angel is not here to be praised himself. We'll see that in a second. If you detain me, I will not eat off your food, but prepare a burnt offering.

Offer it to the Lord. And look at the offering. It's a goat and it's grain. It's the food that have fed the man anyway. Instead, it's going to God.

[ 50 : 39 ] The man is not the source of the good news. God alone is. Verse 17. Before we see the burnt offering, Manoah asks the angel.

And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, What is your name? So that when your words come through, we may honor you. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?

If you're perhaps more familiar, I'm sure many of us are, with the King James Version rendering of the text. It says, My name is secret, I believe. Or my name is secret. Secret. Secret.

And you'll find even the commentators and the translators of the KJV, they wrestled with this verse because it's a hard word to translate. So they chose to translate the meaning rather than the word itself.

The word itself is wonderful. But even wonderful doesn't quite capture it. The name is beyond wonder. My name is beyond wonder. My name is not knowable.

[ 51 : 46 ] It's not understandable. Very strange reply for an angel to give. I'm hoping our minds are going elsewhere in scripture.

Where else does an angel appear to a man whose name is not knowable? Jacob perhaps? Where else does someone speak to something, an angel of the Lord, and the angel gives a name that's not his own?

Burning bush perhaps? I am, that I am, the same Hebrew word here used. We said before, and we'll see it again.

Often we see here the angel of the Lord appearing. He's appearing. It is a Christophony or a Theophony. It's an appearance of the Lord himself in some form.

And he appears here. We can't say for certain. At times the angel is speaking so much on behalf of the Lord. It's the Lord's words himself speaking through the angel.

[ 52 : 49 ] Or in this case perhaps it is the Lord himself appearing in some form before. We see that's the angel of Yahweh. There's such mystery here. We can't say for certain.

Personally speaking, and again we'd be careful giving personal opinions in a pulpit. But just allow me just one second. Personally speaking, I am quite happy in my own study, in my own reading, in my own understanding.

To see the angel of the Lord in Judges. And every time to read in. And Calvin is on side here but doesn't make it right. But it helps leave it. Every time I read the angel of the Lord, I read it as some form of appearing of Christ in his pre-incarnate state.

And this is one of the texts that builds up for us. An angel can't say my name is wonderful. They're just created beings. An angel can't say my name is beyond comprehension.

My being is beyond understanding. They can't say that. They're just angels. They're created creatures. God alone can say my name is beyond understanding.

[ 53 : 55 ] God alone can say the same way I am. Safe to say we now begin to understand who it is we're dealing with.

We give the goat, the young goat, and the grain offering. And bear in mind there's not much food. Bear in mind the Philistines have taken most of the land. Bear in mind this is a small bit of food we probably have for themselves.

But they give it to the Lord and offer it to the Lord as a thanks offering. And the food in verse 19. It goes up in the flames.

It goes up in the flames. It goes up to the Lord. When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar. The angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar.

Now their eyes are opened. Now Manoah and his wife were watching. And they fell on their faces to the ground. And you see the panic and the worry now set in.

[ 54 : 55 ] This poor couple. They've now realized they have seen God. Not an angel of the Lord. No. They have seen God. In sum form God has appeared.

That's why we can believe it is Christ incarnate. No man can see God and live. But the Son. The Son appears to his people throughout all of history. From the garden to his incarnation.

And a child in a manger. He appears to his people at certain points throughout the Old Testament. We have seen God. No one can see God and live. And now Manoah's wife.

Again I love this section. Now Manoah's wife then speaks to poor Manoah. Poor Manoah feels quite excitable as a person. And his wife is there just keeping the head on for him. Keeping him down to ground.

And she reminds him. God is good basically. God is good. He's come to us. He's shared these things with us. He's promised us a child. He's hardly going to kill us now.

[ 56 : 00 ] We're okay Manoah. It's okay. Do not panic. Do not fear. And she gives birth to a boy.

Called Samson. Now briefly you've noted perhaps we've been missing out good chunks of text. Because this is not just a normal boy. There's one repeated section.

One repeated set of verses again and again about this boy. From the very start. As the angel tells the woman. You will give birth to a boy.

Verse 3 onwards. Verse 4. Therefore be careful and drink no wine. This is to Manoah's wife. To Samson's mother. Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink.

And eat nothing unclean. For behold you shall conceive. Excuse me. And bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head. For the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb.

[ 57 : 04 ] And so on. It gets repeated then. Again when Manoah asks the angel. What how. What are we to do with him?

How do we raise this boy? How do we look after this boy? The angel then repeats the same instruction. To them. Samson was going to be a child.

Yes. An answer to a prayer. Yes. A miraculous birth. Yes. But also he was to be set apart.

These instructions we see here. And you've I'm sure heard this before. But just remind ourselves. The instructions we see here. But his hair can't be cut. No alcohol. These are the instructions on how to follow out.

What we call the Nazarite vow. And in scripture. This is a thing we see. And it's a whole series in itself. It's a fascinating study. But just in short as time goes.

[ 58 : 01 ] The Nazarite vow was a vow. You would take. As an adult. You would take. Often to. To do something for the Lord.

Often perhaps. Often to. After God has. Has. Blessed you. You would then take a Nazarite vow. To. To set yourself apart.

It was almost always for. A set period of time. It was there basically to say. That you would set yourself aside. Holy and fully. For the Lord's work.

And whilst you were. Fully and wholly involved. In the Lord's work. You would have to follow. These very strict. Stipulations. There was three main stipulations.

You had to follow. Nothing fermented. No alcohol. Even to the point of. You couldn't even drink grape juice. Unfermented. You couldn't even eat.

[ 58 : 58 ] A grape skin. No alcohol. Not even a hint. Of anything. Involved in the production. Of alcohol. Of course. We know in scripture.

As I study the given day. We know that. God gives all good gifts. There is no sin. In partaking. Occasionally. I'm sure. If it's your will. If it's your way. If it's your want. There's no sin in partaking.

In alcohol. As long as you don't get drunk. We know that from scripture. We see Paul telling Timothy. To take some wine for his stomach. But. The sin here is not. It's not saying.

There's sin in any form of alcohol. No. But for the Nazarite. You could not even. As I were. Look towards it. Not a wee bit. Not for celebratory events.

Not even part. Of the Passover. You could not. Take. Touch. Look at. Go near. Alcohol. You also. Could not. Cut your hair.

[ 59 : 52 ] For the full length. Of your vow. If you vowed to the Lord. You would serve him. Fully for a year. Or two years. You couldn't cut your hair. It was to show. You were dedicated to the Lord.

And you could not. Make yourself. Unclean. You couldn't. For example. Go near. A dead body. Your mother. Dies. Your father. Dies. You can't.

Go near them. You can't. Touch them. You are. Dedicated. To the Lord. Therefore. No. Unclean. Thing. Can go near you. And you can go near. No. Unclean. Thing. What's so unusual.

About Samson. Is he is a Nazarite. As the angel says here. From the womb. This was something. You would choose. To do yourself. As an adult. Samson.

Is born. Into this vow. He is born. This way. He is born. Serving the Lord. This way. We see that even his mother now. Can.

[ 60 : 50 ] Do nothing. His mother must now. Follow the Nazarite. Those. Of course. It makes sense. She was to drink alcohol. Or eat grapes.

Or do anything. It's. We know how it works. It transfers. Eventually. Into the. Into the child. And. Therefore. He is no longer a Nazarite. Now. For us.

For us. Just now. It makes sense. But we know. That this makes more sense. And it's repeated. Three times. Clearly. In our text here. For a good reason.

Scripture. And God. Working through scripture. He is wanting us. who acknowledge and see clearly that Samson was made, was born, was set apart to follow this certain lifestyle which shows he is dedicated to God.

And if we know the story, we know the account. Bit by bit by bit, Samson manages to destroy every single layer, every single facet of this vow by everything he says and does.

[ 61 : 58 ] The story of Samson, and we'll get to the conclusion here in a few weeks time, but just in brief just now. The story of Samson tells us that God even uses absolute failures to do his will, to carry out his purposes.

Good news for us, brothers and sisters. Those of us who seek to serve the Lord well, who have made absolute shipwrecks at times of our faith, God can still use even disasters for his glory.

We'll touch more on that, God willing, in the weeks to come. The child is born, this promised child. The angel of the Lord said it would happen, it has happened precisely how they said.

And look how beautiful, and the end of this, look how beautiful and simple it takes place. Verse 24, All these years of worry, all these years of stress, a child is born.

Almost as simple as that. But note here, Samson's been prepared to become the next judge of Israel, the next saviour of his people.

[ 63 : 24 ] The Lord blessed him, and the spirit of the Lord began to stir him. Slowly but surely, he's being built up to serve the Lord.

Yes, with much failure along the way, and we'll see that in a few weeks' time. Much failure, much backsliding, much sin, but still, the Lord uses him to bring about his purposes and his glory.

Brothers and sisters, God sees the cries and pain of his people. Whether that's a national level or a personal level, God cares, God sees, God knows.

And going forward in the life of Samson, God uses, even those who, as it were, have broken their values, he can use them to fulfil his purposes and for his glory.

Samson is an unlikely judge. He is a bad example at times, an awful example of a judge, but yet we see God using him to fulfil his purposes and to bring justice to his people.

[ 64 : 32 ] Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord, we bring before you once more this time of study. We thank you for it. We ask you to help us to apply this word to our hearts and to our minds.

Help us to leave this place not just having grown in our understanding, but a grown in our love and appreciation of who you are. You're a God who hears and sees the pain and cries of your people.

Even those, Lord, who are going through private situations, quiet pain, quiet sadness. Lord, the tears of your people over many years, you hear them and you see them.

We pray that, Lord, would be a case for even your people here this evening. Lord, you deal with your people individually. We ask you to come alongside them just now. Help us, Lord, as we come to an end of this Lord's day.

Help us to make the use of the time we have left. Help us to honour you and to praise you. Help us spend this evening with you in our minds as we begin this new week.

[ 65 : 33 ] Lord, prepare us and help us to serve you well in it. Help us to sing with hearts full of praise and minds full of understanding these final words from your word as we sing and as we conclude our time together this evening.

I ask all these things in and through and for Christ, his precious name's sake. Amen. We can finish it off by singing the psalm we've been working through.

Sing Psalms, Psalm 77. Sing Psalms, Psalm 77, verses 16 down to verse 20.

Psalm 77, verses 16 down to verse 20. The waters saw you, O my God. They saw and thrived in pain.

The very depths became convulsed. The clouds poured down their rain. The thunder rolled across the skies as lightning bolts were hurled. Your thunder in the wind was heard.

[ 66 : 39 ] Your lightning lit the world. Psalm 77, 16 to the end. To God's praise. beale, MMA. The waters of you, O my God, the sun writhing him, the sonstacon the thunder From the last, the place for k varieties The found, the road, and cross the skies As thy maple Rhodes ever

Church of the land, the land was there, your life in the world.

The whole earth temple, there I'm afraid, your path was through the sin, your path was through the nightly waters, your path was through the sin, your people like a flock of sheep, you guide me through.

Thy hope to stand, thy heaven's heart, you let them on the way.

With the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.