

September 11

Scriptures: Read Judges 12 & 13

Key Verse: “For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son... and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5)

Overview

After the great victory God gave Jephthah over the Ammonites some internal problems arose. The men of the large tribe of Ephraim came to complain, as they had with Gideon (8:1), but this time their attitude and approach was much worse. It appears they were again jealous of the victory in which they were not involved, and they wanted the glory and probably the spoil. They threatened to burn down Jephthah’s house. Jephthah was equally angry and responded with force. He gathered the men of Gilead together and defeated Ephraim. This defeat certainly broke some of Ephraim’s pride and arrogance.

The Philistine immigrants to Canaan settled around the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They were a source of trouble and oppression in Israel because the Israelites once again “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (13:1). This time, however, we do not read that the people cried out to the Lord, possibly because they had become too far removed from God and were apathetic; yet still the Lord was graciously planning Israel’s deliverance through a miracle child, Samson. However, total deliverance from the Philistines would not be seen until the time of David.

Manoah and his wife were Danites who lived in Zorah, a border city between the territory of Dan and Judah, about 28 kilometers west of Jerusalem. Manoah’s wife’s name is not mentioned, yet she was greatly honored by God to receive an angelic announcement of the birth of a son. This indicated that an important person would be born, as was also the case with the births of Isaac (Gen.18:10), John the Baptist (Luke 1:13). What wonderful news this must have been for the couple who had been unable to have children!

Before Samson’s mother conceived, the Angel gave her specific instructions. When she told Manoah, it seems he believed her but still wanted to see the Man of God again for reconfirmation and to be sure about the instructions. God honored his request and the Angel appeared a second time, this time speaking to both. She was to follow the diet of a Nazirite so that, from the moment of conception, Samson would be nourished only by such food and drink as were permitted on behalf of her son that he would be raised as a Nazirite from the beginning of his life. “Nazirite” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “separated” or “dedicated”, for he was to be consecrated to the Lord, and remain pure and separated from all defilement, as were Samuel (1 Sam.1:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15).

When Manoah asked the Messenger of God His name, the response was significant. It was unspeakable (cf. Gen.32:29), a divine name beyond their understanding. The Hebrew word describing the Name is often translated “wonderful”. This is the same word used in Isaiah 9:6 concerning the promised Messiah. If Manoah had any doubts about their unusual visitor, they were surely dispelled when He ascended with the flames of their offering to the Lord.

Manoah feared death, as did Gideon, since he had seen God face to face, but his wife's wise words brought comfort and reassurance that God would not kill them. After all, God had a plan for them which was to be fulfilled in the birth of Samson, his name meaning "sun", implying brightness and strength (Ps.84:11). Samson grew with God's blessing of health, strength, and courage (13:24). As a man, he was also blessed with the Spirit of the Lord, which would come upon him to empower him in his task of beginning to save Israel from Philistine oppression (13:25). This was the exciting plan of God for Samson's life. Although the plan of God for some people's lives may seem more exciting and honorable than that of others (at least in human terms), God had an equally important plan for every person who is consecrated to him.

Prayer

You are a God of the supernatural. We need Your mighty intervention today in our lives, our families, our circumstances, and our world. Lord, please help me to know how to go on praying, using this written prayer as a starter.