

God Provides a Savior
JUDGES 13

Good morning everyone, my name is Andrew Ross, and I am blessed to be one of the pastors here at The Landing. And it is a blessing to preach this morning as Pastor Brent and Kathy are away celebrating their anniversary and seeing family. Praying that they have a wonderful and restful time away.

This morning, we are looking at Judges 13, which Keven just read. And if I could summarize the Main Point of this chapter, it would be this: *God provides a Savior for the Praise of His glorious grace.*

I read a story in a Bible commentary this week about cake mixes, which is not a typical topic to read about in a Bible commentary. But it was a story about when ‘just add water’ cake mixes had come out. Apparently, when these mixes first hit the market, people would not obey the instructions. They would add milk or eggs, because they thought that the cake would turn out better if they made this extra contribution. But they would be disappointed when the cake turned out badly. So many people complained about these mixes because they felt that they should add something more than just water. So the mixes were altered to include adding water and fresh eggs, so that cooks could feel like they had contributed something important to the cake.¹

The reason I share that is because in Judges 13, God is eager to show us that the people of Israel had nothing to add or offer for their rescue. As we will see, the author makes it clear that Israel is an utter mess. They have nothing to offer or bring to the table, except for their brokenness, which makes God’s grace shine all the brighter!

BACKGROUND

But to see this we first need to get a little background on the book of Judges. Judges takes place after the people of Israel have been rescued from slavery in Egypt, and God has given them the land He promised them. But long before they entered the promised land, God had warned them not to worship the false gods of the people around them. And He told them what would happen if they did. It says in Deuteronomy 28:25 *The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way*

¹ Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: Pocket Books, 1958), 66. - Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 159–160.

against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Well, not long after living in the Promised Land, the people of Israel began to worship the false gods of the nations around them.

So in the book of Judges, there is this cycle that happens again and again. First, the people worship false gods. Then God gives them over to their enemies (like He said He would). Then, the people of Israel cry out to God for help. And then God sends a Judge to deliver them. So don't think of these judges like the kind of judge you see in a courtroom; these were military leaders who rescued God's people from their enemies. But eventually the judge would die, and the cycle would repeat and get worse and worse.

JUDGES 13

In Judges 13, we are looking at the last and maybe most well-known judge in the book, Samson. Samson's story begins like all the other judges: the people in Israel are sinning against God; look at verse 1 with me again. Judges 13:1 *And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.* The people of Israel were sinning against God, worshiping idols, and so God did what He said He would do; He gave them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them. And it says that the Philistines had been oppressing the people of Israel for 40 years. You think of the people of Israel being in the wilderness for 40 years. This is a long time; a whole generation has lived under Philistine oppression.

However, the good news is that God is at work to rescue them. Look at verses 2-7 with me. Judges 13:2–7 *There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. 3 And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, 5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." 6 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, 7 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, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’”

NO CRY FOR HELP?

Here we see God unveiling His plan to provide a deliverer for Israel. But there’s something really important missing here. The people of Israel don’t cry out to God for help. Repeatedly, throughout the book of Judges, after God’s people are oppressed by their enemies, they eventually cry out to God for help. I’ll give you some examples so you can see this pattern. Judges 3:9a *But when the people of Israel **cried out to the Lord**, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them...* Judges 3:15a *Then the people of Israel **cried out to the Lord**, and the Lord raised up for them a deliverer...* Judges 4:3a *Then the people of Israel **cried out to the Lord** for help...* Judges 6:6 *And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel **cried out for help to the Lord**.* You get the picture; this is the pattern that happens again and again in Judges. But in chapter 13, there is no mention of the people crying out to God for help. It’s no wonder why they were oppressed for 40 years, which is the longest in all of Judges. They didn’t ask God for help, and it’s actually going to be more than 40 years before Samson begins to rescue Israel because he wasn’t even born at this point.

Why? Why didn’t they cry out to God for help? Apparently, they had become well adjusted to worshiping false gods and being under subjection to the Philistines. The people of Israel have sunk so low and have become so spiritually numb that they don’t care to ask God to deliver them.

We know that’s what is going on because we see it later in Samson’s life. At one point, Samson burned a bunch of the Philistines' crops and killed several of them. And you would think the people of Israel would be secretly happy that finally someone is standing up and fighting against their enemies. But look at how they respond... Judges 15:11–13 *Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?” And he said to them, “As they did to me, so have I done to them.” ¹² And they said to him, “We have come down to bind you, that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves.” ¹³ They said to him, “No; we will only bind you and give you into their hands. We will surely not*

kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

They are upset with Samson, not the Philistines! “*Samson, don’t you know the Philistines rule over us? What are you doing, you’re going to mess things up!*” As if things were not already messed up! And they give Samson up to their enemy as some kind of peace offering. They have no problem breaking their covenant with God, but as soon as Samson messes with the Philistines, they send 3,000 guys to stop him. **This is what sin does! Sin blinds people to the truth; it distorts our view of reality.**

HYPOTHERMIA

Let me give an illustration. There is this strange phenomenon that happens when someone reaches extreme stages of hypothermia. Oftentimes, a person in serious hypothermia will experience an intense and overwhelming feeling of heat. Now, they are not actually getting warmer; they’re extremely cold. But because of this intense, hot feeling, they will begin taking off their clothing. Which, of course, is the exact opposite thing to do when you are experiencing hypothermia. That’s what sin is doing to the people of Israel in Judges 13, and it still does today. Sin lies and disorients reality.

The people of Israel have plunged into sin so much that they don’t see their need for rescue; in fact, they fight against their own rescue. And the same can happen to us. **One thing for us to take from this passage is a warning: don’t flirt with sin.** Don’t believe the lie that you are the exception, that you can mess with sin without being deceived. We must fight sin and trust in God’s word! And we need to help one another fight sin. **Hebrews 3:13 exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that *none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*** We need each other to help us fight sin, which is heart-hardening and deceiving.

GOOD NEWS!

But there is good news for Israel in the midst of their sinful blindness. Even as Israel is running after evil, how does God respond? **He provides a deliverer!** Do you see the overwhelming grace of God here?! What kind of God rescues people who don’t even see their need for help? Christian, how often is God helping you with needs you didn’t even know you had? How often can you see God’s hand going ahead of you and preparing you when you had no clue? If God only helped you and me when we knew to ask for it

we would be in a mess all the time. God does more than we could ask or imagine!

And God's actions here are so hopeful, especially when we think about our unbelieving friends and family. Think about it, in Judges 13, God is working to rescue people who sinfully don't want to be rescued. They don't see any problem! Do you have friends or family who are lost in sin and don't see any need for rescue? Be encouraged, that doesn't stop God!

We see that here in Judges 13, and we know it is true because that's how God saved you, Christian! You may have not ever lived in such outward blatant rebellion as these Israelites, but we all were just like Israel before God saved us. None of us came out of the womb with this innate sense that I am a sinner who needs a Savior. For the moment you and I were born, we were bent on serving the idol and false trinity of me, myself, and I. Ephesians 2 says that we were all dead in our trespasses and sins, following the course of this world. That's how all our lives began. And then it says, Ephesians 2:4–5 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.* God is mighty to save! He moves to save people who don't even see their need and are running away from Him!

OUT OF NOTHING

But we see God's great power to save in another way in these verses. Samson is the only judge who is called to be a judge before his birth. All the other judges are people who are off doing their own thing, and God says, *"I choose you to rescue my people."* But not with Samson.

And look at Judges 13:2 again, Judges 13:2 *There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children.* This couple is not able to have children. How is God going to bring a deliverer from this family? And did you notice the woman's name? Of course not, because we are never told what her name is. In all of the Bible, this woman is only ever known as Manoah's wife and Samson's mom.

But what is the point of these details? **I think the author of Judges wants us to see that God is raising up a Savior for Israel out of nothing. The only one who gets any credit for providing a Savior for Israel is God.**

Only God could do this! God miraculously gave this couple a child when they had no hope. And no one can say that Samson's fighting skills came because he was born into some military family or anything like that. Manoah and his wife were no one special. Out of nothing, God provides a deliverer, so that everyone would see the power of God to save. God doesn't need a boost; He isn't dependent on anyone or anything. He is mighty to save!

MANOAH'S RESPONSE

So Manoah's wife tells him this amazing news, and look at how Manoah responds, starting in verse 8. Judges 13:8–14 *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 the child who will be born." [9] 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. [10] So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." [11] 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." [12] And Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission?" [13] And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. [14] 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."*

GOD LISTENED

Manoah hears the amazing news but he would like some more instruction, which isn't a bad thing. He believes, he just wants more guidance. So he prays to God and it says in verse 9 that Judges 13:9a *God listened to the voice of Manoah...* Don't run over those words too quickly. God listened to Manoah. The God of the universe listened to Manoah!

There is this famous picture of President John F. Kennedy working in the Oval Office, and he has all these papers on his desk, looking very busy. But under his desk, near his feet, you can see his little 8-year-old son playing. And it's a great picture because it seems so out of place. Who gets to play in the Oval Office, under the president's desk?

If you ever get to go into the Oval Office, you won't be allowed to go under the President's desk. We don't have that kind of access. And yet, we

can approach the King of Glory as sons and daughters, and He stoops down to listen to our prayers. God hears Manoah's prayer, and He sends His messenger again.²

NAZARITE

Manoah's wife sees the angel of the Lord and she rushes to get Manoah and he asks, Judges 13:12b *when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission?* And the angel of the LORD gives the same instructions that he gave the first time. Samson is to be a Nazarite from the womb. A Nazarite vow is described in Numbers 6 as a vow someone could voluntarily take for a limited time of dedicated separation to God. And that separation included at least 3 things: (1) no wine or any other intoxicating drink (2) no cutting your hair (3) no contact with a corpse.^{3 4} But Samson is unique here as well, because he isn't going to take the Nazarite vow voluntarily; he is a Nazarite from birth. And his mom has to follow the Nazarite rules while she is pregnant. I think there is something to be said there about God's perspective on life beginning at conception, not at birth. Samson's mom has to follow the Nazarite rules so that her pre-born son does not become defiled.

But the big picture is that Samson is set-up in ways that no other judge was. He is set aside, dedicated as holy to God from the womb; he has a mandate to save the people of Israel. He should be the best judge, and of course, if you know the story, he is the worst judge.

SAMSON AND ISRAEL

You see, Samson was like a living picture of the people of Israel. One commentator goes into a lot of detail showing how Samson's life mirrors Israel. I'll give just a few examples. Samson, like Israel, is miraculously born by the will of God. With Israel, God chose a guy named Abram, and Abram and his wife could not have children, but God says, *"from you I will make a*

² Illustration adapted from another sermon illustration, but I don't remember where I heard it. God knows, and praise God for it!

³ Abraham Kuruvilla, *Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 217.

⁴ Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 403. - More examples: *"Samson cries out to Yahweh from his oppression. Samson is blinded (cf. 1 Sam 3:1-3). Samson is abandoned by Yahweh and does not know it."*

great nation and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Samson, like the people of Israel, is called to a life of separation and devotion to God. But Samson is drawn to foreign women, just as Israel was drawn to foreign gods. Samson, like Israel, experiences bondage and oppression from his enemies. And there are many more examples.⁵

So let me just make an application for those who are in high school and younger. So if you are anywhere from 1-18 years old, focus in for a second. It is such a wonderful thing that you are here listening to God’s word and worshipping Him! You are being set up for success, much like Samson and the people of Israel. *But you need to know that going to church, and having Christian parents, and all that good stuff won’t be worth anything to you in the end if you don’t love and follow Jesus!* Going to church is great but that doesn’t save you. Being obedient to your parents is great but that can’t save you. Knowing the Bible is great but that can’t save you! Jesus died on the cross to save sinners like you and me. So if you don’t love and follow Jesus, then trust in Him today for the forgiveness of all your sin. Talk to your parents today about what it means to really trust in Jesus!

Let’s look at what happens next, Judges 13:15–18 *Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you.” [16] 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.) [17] And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?” [18] And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”*

WONDERFUL

Manoah asks if he can detain this messenger, and later in verse 18, he asks what this person’s name is. And the response he gets in seems strange. The angel of the LORD says, Judges 13:18b *“Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”* This is similar to when Jacob wrestled with God in Genesis 32, and it says, Genesis 32:29-30 *Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. [30] So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”* But in

⁵ Daniel Isaac Block, Judges, Ruth, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 392.

Judges, the messenger says his name is wonderful. And the only other time that this adjective appears in the Old Testament is Psalm 139:6.⁶ David is praising God and says Psalm 139:6 *Such knowledge is too **wonderful** for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*

Wonderful here means that it is beyond my understanding. And I think that is what this angel of the LORD is saying to Manoah, “*My character and nature is too much for you, you won’t be able to take it in.*” I think this is the pre-incarnate Christ talking with Manoah and his wife. That’s my opinion; the Bible doesn’t explicitly say that, but I think that is part of why He says His name is wonderful. But after saying His name is wonderful, He does something wonderful.

Judges 13:19–25 *So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, **to the one who works wonders**, and Manoah and his wife were watching. [20] And 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. [21] The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. [22] And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.” [23] 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.” [24] And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. [25] And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

HE ACCEPTS THE OFFERING

God confirms His message with miracles! The angel of the LORD goes up in the flame. Manoah and his wife fall on their faces as if in an act of worship, but then everything clicks for Manoah, and he is scared that he will die because he has seen God. But his wife has assurance. And did you notice the first thing she clings to for assurance that they will not be killed? Look again at verse 23. Judges 13:23a *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...* God accepted the offering!

⁶ Daniel Isaac Block, Judges, Ruth, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 413.

Christian, what is your only hope for this life and the life to come? What is your hope that you will not be condemned before God? God accepted the true and final offering, not a goat or a lamb, but Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:11–12 *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

SAMSON AND JESUS

The birth of Samson is meant to point us to Jesus! Did you notice how many similarities there are between Samson's birth and Jesus's birth?

- Samson's Birth was announced by the Angel of the Lord.
- Jesus's birth was announced by the angel Gabriel (and a host of angels)
- Samson's birth was first told to just his mom, and then later, the angel of the Lord told Joseph.
- Mary was told about Jesus's birth alone, and then later an angel told Joseph that Mary would have a son.
- Both births were miracles!
- Mary was a virgin, and Manoah's wife couldn't have children.
- In Judges 13:5 the angel of the Lord said of Samson Judges 13:5b ***he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.***
- When Jesus's birth was foretold, what did the angel say? Matthew 1:21 ***"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."***

Jesus didn't just begin to save His people like Samson, Jesus saves His people to the uttermost! And if the Angel of the Lord is the Per-incarnate Christ, God the Son, think of how amazing that is! Manoah and his wife offer a sacrifice in front of the person who would be the final sacrifice for sinners. They are hearing about a deliverer from the One who would succeed in every way that Samson failed and finally save God's people.

May God give all of us the grace to receive this news with joy and live in light of it. Let's pray!