

JUDGES 13:2-5 | THE HEAVENLY BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

VERSE 2 -

Of the town of Zorah, we know very little, other than that it was given to the tribe of Dan, as recorded in Joshua 19:40-41. The tribe of Dan was originally allocated land in the south (Joshua 19:40) and was located here at the time of Samson. However, they later migrated north and took over the town of Leshem, renaming it Dan (Judges 18:27-29).

The Danites were known for their skill in metalworking and their involvement in the conquest of the Promised Land. However, they also faced challenges and were often depicted as a tribe that struggled with idolatry and other sins. In Genesis 49:16, Jacob gives blessings to his children and says, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." Many rabbinical writings view this as prophetic of Samson, while many dispensational interpretations connect this verse with the end times, especially the Antichrist. The tribe, notably, is left out of the list of sealed tribes in Revelation 7:5-8.

Samson's father is first introduced as a Danite named Manoah, of whom nothing else is known beyond what we learn in the context of Samson.

Manoah is a Hebrew name meaning "rest" or "quiet." In the Bible, Manoah is the husband of Samson's mother and the father of Samson. It is related to the name "Noah," both names meaning "rest" or "comfort."

- Noah ("noach") = general rest, comfort, settling down.
- Manoah ("manoach") = rest, comfort more directly from enemies/affliction.

It is noted that the unnamed wife of Manoah was "barren, and bare not," a repetition that appears again in verse 3. She is the fifth in the chronological order of seven barren women mentioned in the Bible.

👉 The seven barren women mentioned in the Bible are: Sarah (Genesis 11:30), Rebekah (Genesis 25:21), Rachel (Genesis 30:1), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), Samson's mother (Judges 13), Michal (2 Samuel 6:23), Elizabeth (Luke 1).

VERSE 3 -

Among many conservative Christian theologians, there is an interpretation that the "angel of the LORD" mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures is actually the pre-incarnate Christ. This interpretation is based on the fact that the angel of the LORD is sometimes identified as God himself and speaks in the first person as God. For example, in Judges 13:22, Manoah realizes that the angel of the LORD who appeared to him and his wife was God, and in Exodus 3:2-6, the angel of the LORD who appears to Moses in the burning bush is identified as God.

It should be noted that the phrase when lacking the definite article, such as "an angel of the LORD," is not seen to be the Messiah, but only the phrase when used with the definite article. Additionally, this distinction is only found in the Hebrew Scriptures and not in the New Testament. It is also worth noting that not all students of the Word agree about this identification.

This identification of the 'angel of the LORD' with the pre-incarnate Christ, if accepted, highlights the active presence of Christ in the Old Testament narrative, long before his physical arrival in the New Testament. If this is the case, then Jesus Christ Himself is coming forth to announce the rescue, after 40 years of subjugation, from the Philistines. It is intriguing that the announcement "but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son," is virtually the same message later given to Mary about her own conception (Luke 1:31).

Only Sarah, Manoah's wife, Elizabeth, and Mary had their children's births announced by angels, and of these, arguably only Sarah and Manoah's wife had the announcement by the pre-incarnate Christ.

VERSES 4-5 -

The announcement that the child would be a Nazarite from birth (v.5) is significant, as it sets Samson apart for a particular purpose and service to God. A Nazarite vow is a voluntary vow taken by an individual to dedicate themselves to the Lord and separate themselves from certain things for a specific period. The vow is described in detail in Numbers 6:1-21.

The word "Nazarite" comes from the Hebrew word "nazir," which means "to separate" or "to consecrate oneself."

The requirements of the Nazarite vow include abstaining from wine and other fermented drinks, not cutting one's hair, and avoiding contact with a dead body. The Biblical text does not give any reason as to why these are prohibited, and speculation would likely be unfruitful, having no basis for reasoning.

The vow was typically taken for a set period of time, but in the case of Samson, it was for his entire life. This set him apart as a special servant of God with a unique calling.

There are only two men in the Bible who are thought to have been set apart by God as Nazirites, though opinion varies. Samson, as seen here, and also John the Baptist, as indicated by Luke 1:15. However, the term "Nazarite" is not explicitly used in the New Testament.

In contrast to Samson's lifelong Nazarite vow, it is thought that Paul's vow found in Acts 18:18 was likely a Nazarite vow. The text describes Paul shaving his head in Cenchreae, which was a customary way of ending a Nazarite vow. However, unlike Samson, Paul's vow was likely taken for a set period of time rather than for his entire life. Nevertheless, both Samson and Paul's vows demonstrate a commitment to serving God and a willingness to set themselves apart for His purposes.

Ultimately, Samson's downfall came when he broke the Nazarite vow by allowing his hair to be cut, which led to him losing his strength and being captured by the Philistines. The distinguishing trait of his life was his vow, not his strength; his supernatural strength was a direct blessing from God for the defeat of the Philistines, but also related to his vow. When his vow was broken, his strength was also gone, demonstrating the divine source of his power.

The Nazarite vow involved a specific set of restrictions and was tied to the Temple rituals. With the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70 and the consequent cessation of these rituals, there is no equivalent to the Nazirite vow in modern Judaism.