



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Judges 13:1-7, 8, & 24-25 New Revised Standard Version June 25, 2017

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 25, 2017**, is from **Judges 13:1-7, 8, & 24-25**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Judges 13:1) The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

Perhaps the most shocking word in this verse is “again,” for the Israelites did not learn from the hard lessons and suffering of their parents and grandparents, but had to experience the same life-lessons repeatedly. Perhaps the

parents had not passed on the needed teaching about God and His Law to their children. Perhaps their children were just as rebellious against their parents and God as their ancestors had been. Once again, God handed them over to their enemies as punishment, a sad discipline motivated by the love of God for His children. As they justly deserved, God sentenced them to forty years of harsh labor under the Philistines, after which time He would deliver them.

(Judges 13:2) There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children.

The tribe of Dan was one of the least influential of the tribes of Israel. Various interpreters have tried to explain why the tribe of Dan was omitted from the list of the twelve tribes in the Book of Revelation, chapter 7 (some teaching that the antichrist was to come from the tribe of Dan). Just as Sarah (Abraham's wife and Isaac's mother) was barren, and Hannah (Samuel's mother) was barren, and Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother) was barren, so God sometimes worked miracles so special leaders would be born to barren women. God often does what human beings think is impossible, so we have good reasons to trust in God. The greatest miracle of all was the conception of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by the Holy Spirit and His birth through the virgin Mary.

(Judges 13:3) And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son.

As we have seen in previous commentaries (see the IBLC on Gideon), the title or name “the angel of the LORD” probably referred to the Lord Jesus Christ prior to His human birth through the virgin Mary. The title “the angel of the LORD” is used 53 times in the Bible, with the last time being Matthew 1:24, prior to the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Angelic announcements always indicated the importance and meaning of a forthcoming event.

(Judges 13:4) Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean,

The angel spoke to her about what not to eat or drink because the child was to be a special servant of the LORD, a Nazirite. Throughout his life, from the moment of conception, he was never to drink alcohol or eat any unclean foods. In this verse, the Bible teaches what we know from medical science: what mothers eat and drink can affect their unborn children. The consumption of alcohol or drugs by a pregnant woman is one of the leading causes of birth defects (though, of course, not all birth defects).

(Judges 13:5) for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”

Rather than taking a Nazirite vow later in life, God wanted the boy to be a Nazirite from birth. Nazirite vows are described in Numbers 6:2-21. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were to be Nazirites for life. The Apostle Paul took Nazirite vows for a specific length of time. God wanted Samson to be totally consecrated to His service as a judge when he delivered Israel from the Philistines.

(Judges 13:6) Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name;

Manoah’s wife did exactly right when she told him what she experienced in seeing the angel and what the angel said. She really needed him to witness an angel visitation, just as Joseph needed an angel visitation to convince him that he should marry Mary, the mother of Jesus. Manoah’s wife probably wanted the angel to tell her husband that the child she would conceive would be by his faithful wife and not unfaithful wife. During her thrilling experience, she did not think to ask questions of the angel that she later realized her husband might ask.

(Judges 13:7) but he said to me, ‘You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.’”

[Note: the other four translations used in the *International Bible Lesson Commentary* rightly interpret this verse as “from the womb” not “from birth.” The difference is significant. See commentary comments below.]

The woman told her husband exactly what God, through the angel’s message, expected of her and their child, for her husband would need to agree with this meal plan and, most importantly, accept this child as his own. The angel told her what she could not eat or drink while her child was in the womb. Because he was to be a Nazirite from before he was born and after he was born, Samson was also forbidden by God to drink any type of alcohol; and he was also forbidden to eat whatever was unclean. The angel revealed and this ancient Biblical text teaches what some modern scientists eventually discovered: what a mother drinks and eats can have a beneficial or a harmful effect on her unborn child. For example, many newborn babies suffer from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or the more severe form called fetal alcohol syndrome. She wanted the angel to come back and confirm the facts he told her with her husband. Every time they fed their child as he grew up, they would be reminded by the special diet that God

expected him to live a holy life as one of God's special leaders. They could also use mealtimes to teach and remind their child about his special call of God and the importance of learning and obeying the Law of God, even to the fine details of what he ate and drank.

(Judges 13:8) Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, "O LORD, I pray, let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born."

God answered this pray of Manoah, who truly wanted their son to live for the Lord. They had no experience in raising children, for Samson would be a first born son. They lived among Israelites and Danites, who as tribes had abandoned God and suffered under Philistine oppression for many years. They needed to learn from the angel exactly what to do to raise their son to live a godly life in a godless, but religious, society.

(Judges 13:24) The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him.

Just as the angel of the LORD promised, she bore a son. She named him Samson. In addition to rearing Samson according to the will of God, God was with Samson and his parents to raise him rightly. From birth, Samson knew and experienced the fact that he was special to God and God

expected him to free His people from the Philistines. God meant for him to serve as a judge and soldier of the LORD.

(Judges 13:25) The spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

The King James Version translates “Mahaneh-dan” as “camp of Dan.” God was with Samson. Because Samson did not drink alcohol, he was able to recognize that his spirit was not stirred because of strong drink. Over time, he could recognize the Spirit of the LORD stirring within him, and he would be able to distinguish this from feelings of anger or indignation. His history shows how God was able to work good through Samson in spite of his bad choices, that eventually led to his capture and death.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What can happen if a church or denomination abandons God and the Law of God (or the Bible’s teachings) as the Israelites did in the Old Testament?
2. Why was it important for God to set a certain length of time to punish His people instead of leaving the length of punishment undetermined?
3. What benefits did Samson enjoy while growing up?
4. Today, how does God teach parents how to raise their children?
5. Samson’s parents followed the LORD’s instructions, but

Samson chose how he would live after he became an adult. Why do you think he made some wrong choices during his time as judge over the Israelites?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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