

If the book of Judges is a picture of the divided church, in the story of Samson we have a picture of the divided Christian. He is a Nazarite – one set apart for the Lord. In Numbers 6, Nazarite vows are temporary but Samson is one from birth, just as the Christian from the moment of rebirth belongs to the Lord.

The Lord gives Samson tremendous strength, just as we can say, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). But Samson often misuses his strength to settle personal grievances instead of on the Lord’s behalf. And his relationship with the Philistines (a type of the world) is mixed: He is both attracted to them (notably to their women) and in a constant state of quarreling with them.

The continued decline of the overall nation of Israel is evident here. The Philistines are not marauders raiding the nation from its borders, but victorious rulers living in the midst of the land. There appears to be no organized resistance. Dedication to the Lord appears only in a tiny remnant, Manoah and his wife. If we see the church reflected in Judges, we are at a point similar to 2 Timothy where all but a few have deserted Paul and his opponents have become the leaders.

Notes

13:1 The Philistines were an ancient people living along the southern Mediterranean coast of Palestine, roughly the same area as today’s Gaza strip. The Bible says there were not native to the region but came from islands to the west (Gen. 10:14, Deut. 2:23; Jer. 47:4). Recent DNA studies of remains from a Philistine cemetery in Ashkelon confirm that their ancestry was more European than Middle Eastern, possibly originating in Greece. The Philistines disappeared as a people around 604 BC when they were exiled to Mesopotamia by Nebuchadnezzar. The Israelites, of course, shared the same exile but were preserved by God as a

distinct people, still able to find fulfillment of many scriptural prophecies.

13:5 A Nazarite or Nazirite was a man or woman making a voluntary vow of consecration to the Lord, for a certain time. They were to renounce wine or any other grape products, let their hair grow, and avoid contact with any dead bodies. The custom continued into New Testament times, as shown by the young men taking a vow in Acts 21:17-26. Jesus was a Nazarene, not to be confused with Nazarite. Scripture tells us, for example that He did drink wine, and also touched dead bodies (or did He?).



Questions:

1. Manoah’s wife is barren but God brings life to her womb. What other Biblical women share a similar story?
2. How is the encounter of Manoah and his wife with the angel of the Lord similar to Gideon’s? How is it different?

3. What is the significance of the name in verse 13:18?
4. Manoah fears that he will die because he has seen the Lord but his wife is convinced they will not. What is her reason? Is there any spiritual symbolism here?
5. What does verse 14:4 tell us about the ways of God?
6. Where in this passage does Samson break his Nazarite vows? The laws of Israel?
7. What do we learn of Samson's character here?