

Our Last Savior

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Preacher: Paul Martin

[0 : 00] Take those holy words and open to Judges chapter 13. You're looking at the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

We often refer to those at the Pentateuch. And then right after those five books, Joshua and Judges. Judges chapter 13.

Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years.

A certain man of Zorah named Manoah from the clan of the Danites had a wife who was sterile and remained childless.

The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son.

[1 : 11] Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. Because you will conceive and give birth to a son.

No razor may be used on his head because the boy is to be a Nazarite set apart to God from birth. And he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Then the woman went to her husband and told him, A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God. Very awesome.

I didn't ask him where he came from and he didn't tell me his name. But he said to me, You will conceive and give birth to a son.

Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean. Because the boy will be a Nazarite of God from birth until the day of his death.

[2 : 21] Then Manoah prayed to the Lord. Oh Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.

God heard Manoah. And the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field. But her husband Manoah was not with her.

The woman hurried to tell her husband, He's here, the man who appeared to me the other day. Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, Are you the one who talked to my wife?

I am, he said. So Manoah asked him, When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?

The angel of the Lord answered, Your wife must do all that I have told her. She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink, nor eat anything unclean.

[3 : 36] She must do everything I have commanded her. Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you.

The angel of the Lord replied, Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord.

Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the Lord. Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the Lord, What is your name so that we may honor you when your word comes true?

He replied, Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding. That can also be translated, It is wonderful.

Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the Lord. And the Lord did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched.

[4 : 54] As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground.

When the angel of the Lord did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the Lord.

We are doomed to die, he said to his wife. We have seen God. But his wife answered, If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things, or now told us this.

The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him.

And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahana Dan between Zorah and Eshto.

[6 : 08] Come, brother. It is always a joy to be with you.

I bring you greetings, warm greetings, from Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto. We are thankful for all that the Lord is doing with you. I'm also renowned as being extremely loud and giving a moment for our brothers to settle things.

Thank you, brothers, for your service to all of us. I do want to extend to you great greetings from Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto. I'm always encouraged, I think, in a unique way when we're able to visit with you on a Sunday.

Many of you prayed for us right from the start. And that means that you have been praying for our church for 24 years in April. And we give thanks and praise to God for his faithfulness to us for those many years.

I think we will begin, though, by... Well, let me list for you some locations and you tell me if you can figure out what they are all about.

[7 : 23] Here they are. A family room floor. The back seat of a car. A hospital elevator.

The side of a highway. And the galley of a 727. What do all of these places have in common?

They were all the unusual places where women gave birth to children last year. All very surprising and all very unique.

But still not as unique as the birth story just read for us from Judges chapter 13. The nativity story of the last of the judges.

There are 12 judges in the book of Judges. Samson is the last one. Judges are... Sometimes you might be picturing a guy with a funny white wig and a hammer banging on his desk.

[8 : 34] A gavel. But that's not who the judges are in the book of Judges. This word judge can be translated as deliverer or even savior. And so the 12 judges of the 12...

This is the last one. Samson. And kids, do you know what a nativity story is? Does that ring a bell? A nativity story? Do you know a particular nativity story that you might have just been thinking about?

Anybody know? The birth of somebody named Jesus? Yeah. That's a nativity story. And this is also a nativity story about a promised savior.

Long before Jesus, there were these judges, these deliverers, these saviors. And I think maybe if you read carefully, you might spot some similarities between this savior and his birth, Samson, and another savior and his birth, our Lord Jesus.

So we're plopping into the middle of the whole history of judges. There was the last three where Ibbzan, Elon, not that guy, and Abdon. And then we get into verse one.

[9 : 52] The people of Israel did again what was evil in the sight of the Lord. In the book of Judges, doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord meant you were worshiping other gods, idols.

That's what that phrase means. You are worshiping other gods. And so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for 40 years. God would bring foreign invaders to make life hard so that you would begin to call out to him again.

This is the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, and he is bringing about these circumstances so that they will look to God. 40 years of Philistine oppression.

And what's interesting in this part of the book of Judges is that there is no indication that anybody is calling out for Yahweh's help. Nobody is calling.

Nobody is praying. No prophets are coming. It is just silence. Not unlike the 400 years of silence from the last prophet Malachi to that first gospel writer, Matthew.

[11 : 00] And then this nativity story unfolds for us. It comes in four scenes. We'll look at each scene individually. Number one is this. Scene one, God promises a son to an unlikely woman.

Scene one, God promises a son to an unlikely woman. You see this in verse two. There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, had no children.

And the angel of Yahweh, L-O-R-D, all caps, Yahweh, the name of the Lord, the angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman and said to her, Behold, you're barren and you've not born children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Now in this unlikely story, this future mother is never named. She is simply the woman of Manoah, the wife of Manoah. But this woman is part of a long line of vitally important, unlikely women.

Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Hannah, Elizabeth, just some of the so-called barren women whom God blessed with children whom were integral to the salvation of God's people.

[12:15] In other words, God had purposes in this couple's infertility. Manoah's wife, in particular, had to suffer years of disappointment in order for God to bring about this particular miraculous birth.

Her suffering helped set the table for God to more extravagantly display his salvation. Maybe you're struggling to get pregnant.

Maybe you're struggling because you are pregnant. That seems like a good time to pause and remind us all. It is always God's desire for us to look to him in our trials.

Do you remember what the brother of our Lord Jesus James wrote? Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith, that's what the trial is doing, testing, refining your faith, the testing of your faith produces steadfastness or endurance.

And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, presumably the wisdom in how to be joyful in a trial, if any of you lacks that wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him.

[13:45] That's a sweet promise, isn't it? He gives without reproach. He doesn't say, really, it's you again? You still haven't figured out how to have joy in your trial? Well, that's not our God. Oh, he gives without reproach.

You need help. You need wisdom to know how to rejoice in me in this trial. I gladly and generously give. That's one prayer you can pray in any trial.

Lord, give me wisdom to count this, to reckon this trial as joy so that I can become more steadfast.

That would have been a great prayer for Manoah and his wife to have been making and yet there is no suggestion that they were giving any thought whatsoever to God.

But here's some very good news. Even when you don't pray or ask for his help because he is so gracious and so kind, God might intervene in your life in spite of you.

Manoah and his wife, they are a reflection of all of Israel at this time. Yahweh was kind of a distant memory to Israel. He's something of a cultural artifact.

[14:54] They had no living, ongoing, engaging relationship with their God. There's no indication that Mr. and Mrs. Manoah were asking Yahweh for a baby. In fact, there's no point they're asking Yahweh for anything.

They had grown, all of Israel had grown so accustomed to Philistine oppression that they're not even, they're not even worried about it anymore. Later on, and not many years from this point, in his adult life, Samson does one of his deliverances.

They're all strange. But after one of them, his own people come to him and say to him, this is Judges 15, 11, don't you know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?

We're happy subjects of the Philistines. As if it were a fait accompli, a little français for you, a given, an accepted reality.

Israel had succumbed to Philistine cultural domination. And yet Yahweh chooses to send one last Savior, one last judge.

[16:03] Aren't you glad that God didn't wait for you to cry out to him before he called you? He promised that he would have a people.

And even in our own ignorance and unbelief, that won't get in the way of God. That takes us to scene two. First, God promised a son to an unlikely woman.

But scene two, God promises a unique son to an unlikely woman. The instruction from the angel of the Lord continues. Verse four, Therefore be careful, drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.

No razor shall come upon his head for, here's the reason why, the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

So this unique angel tells Manoah's wife that her son is going to be a Nazarite from his conception to his death.

[17 : 09] Now what does that mean? If you are born in Toronto, you are called a Torontonians. I presume if you are from Bremen, you are called, I was going to make a joke but I won't, a Bremenite.

Are you Bremenites? I don't know what you are. If you are born in Nazareth, you are called a Nazarene. But when you are called a Nazarite, that has nothing to do with Nazareth or any place else.

It is not a term that is based upon where you were born. To understand what a Nazarite is, it would be great if you could just turn back a couple of books to Numbers chapter 6.

Being a Nazarite had nothing to do with where you were born or where you live. The word Nazarite comes from a Hebrew word, Nazar, which means to cut off. That's all it means.

To separate, to separate something by cutting it off. And so, when used in a religious sense, we might use the word to consecrate. Something is being separated for religious use.

[18 : 18] And this is what it is to be a Nazarite. A Nazarite is a man or a woman who had made a vow to separate themselves to Yahweh. And that vow consisted of three things you were not going to do.

You are not going to drink wine, you're not going to cut your hair, and you're not going to touch a dead body. This is number 6, verse 1. Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, say to them, whether, when either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself, that's the word, to Nazar himself to Yahweh, he shall separate Nazar himself from wine and strong drink.

He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink. He shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes fresh or dried all the days of his separation. He shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, even the seeds or the skin.

So, three abstentions. The first one is this. Grapes. Primarily alcohol, but all grapes. No wine, no beer. It's translated in my ESV as strong drink. It's just grain-based alcohol.

So, it's beer. We would think of as beer. No wine, no beer. No wine vinegar. No grape juice, which is different than wine. No fresh grapes. No raisins. Not even grape seeds or those tasty grape skins.

[19 : 36] I don't know. So, you're not going to find a Nazarite at your local pub. That's abstention number one, alcohol. Abstention number two, haircuts. All the days of his vow of separation, verse five, no razor shall touch his head until the time is completed for which he separates himself to Yahweh.

He shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of the hair of his head grow long. So, that's what every teenager wants. You just let your hair grow wild. The third thing, he is to abstain from touching a dead body.

Verse six of number six, all the days that he separates himself to Yahweh, he shall not go near a dead body, not even for his father or his mother or brother or sister. If they die, he shall make himself unclean.

Sorry, shall he make himself unclean because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation, he is holy to Yahweh. So, the last abstention, don't touch a corpse.

Even if your own parents are to die, you're not permitted to touch them or bury them, whatever it is. And once that time is complete, you lay out the timeline and once that's complete, you go to the barber, you get a haircut.

[20 : 44] Verse 18, the Nazarite shall shave his consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting, shall take the hair from his consecrated head, put it on the fire that's under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

He had brought a peace offering as well. So, you shave the head, you burn the hair on the altar, now the vow is over, now he or she is no longer a Nazarite, no longer a consecrated one, they could go and have a glass of wine, verse 20, after that the Nazarite may drink wine, verse 21, this is the law of the Nazarite.

So a Nazarite is a person who is fully dedicated to God for a season of time. And the outward symbol of that, at least the outward symbol of that time coming to an end, was a haircut.

Which becomes important in the life of the adult Samson. Now back to Judges chapter 13. No razor, verse 5, shall come upon his head, this is the angel speaking to the woman, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb.

Now it's a little hard to know how much Samson's future mom understood all of this. She seems to have grasped enough to understand what a Nazarite was. She certainly understands something very unique is happening with her.

[22 : 01] She also understands enough to obey the word of the angel of the Lord. Now the narrator of this story tipped us off back in verse 3.

And the angel of Yahweh appeared to the woman. The angel of the Lord. Did you catch that? She caught it, as we'll see in her very, the few recorded words we have of Mrs. Manoah.

Even though she doesn't refer to him as the angel of Yahweh, she refers to him as the angel of Elohim. The angel of God. Now she speaks to her husband. Verse 6. A woman came, told her husband, a man of God came to me.

His appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God. Very awesome. I didn't ask him where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name.

But he said to me, you shall conceive, bear a son, drink no wine or strong drink, eat nothing unclean for the child should be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. So the child to come is not the only special person in this story.

[23 : 05] We are meeting the angel of the Lord for the third time in the book of Judges. The first time was in chapter two when he came and just pronounced a judgment on Israel and all Israel had gathered in that valley.

When it was over they said let's call this the valley of weeping weeping Bochim. And then the angel of the Lord appeared under the terebinth tree that belonged to Gideon's dad. And now this is the third time he shows up.

And just like Gideon this woman has a pretty good idea of who this angel is even though she doesn't want to come right out and say it. And whether that was because of his appearance or something in the way that he spoke we don't know.

But it would be a terrible thing to get this wrong. Right? To say I think I'm talking to God and it was only a man. She refers to him as a man of God who looked like the angel of God who was very awesome and did not reveal where he was from nor tell me his name.

Those are clues. Clues in a story that is ripe with riddles. And this report to her husband leaves Manoah confused and that takes us to scene three.

[24 : 17] God directs a puzzled future father on the nature of his son. God directs a puzzled future father on the nature of his son. And that direction began with a prayer to Yahweh from Manoah.

Verse 8 Manoah prayed to Yahweh and said O Adonai O Lord please let the man of Elohim the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we're to do with the child who will be born.

That's his prayer. 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.

So the woman ran quickly told her husband behold the man who came to me the other day has appeared really sure why it was this way the angel coming to the woman alone.

But perhaps this was a bit of a subtle rebuke for Manoah in how God is answering Manoah's prayer. He did answer it that's for sure.

[25 : 18] Did you see that in verse 9? God listened to the voice of Manoah and the angel of God came again. When the Bible says that God listened that does not mean he simply heard what Manoah says it means he acted upon it.

He responded to it. And that should bring you great joy my brothers and sisters. God hears the prayers of people like you and me. It's right there in the Bible.

God listened. He responded. We can drift over words like that in these texts without letting their meaning sink in. The almighty God listened to the prayer of a man of little faith.

God answers prayer. But God does not answer the way Manoah expected. Manoah had prayed that Yahweh would send the man of God to us.

Plural. But verse nine, the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. And this might be God's little way of rebuking Manoah for not listening to his wife the first time there had been an angel that had delivered the message.

[26 : 27] Or perhaps to highlight the independence of the angel of the Lord. I might answer prayers, but I'm not a genie in a lamp. I'm not controlled by your prayers.

I will answer them in the way I see best. Nevertheless, verse 11, Manoah arose when after his wife came to the man and said to him, are you the man who spoke to this woman?

He said, I am. Manoah said, now when your words come true, what's to be the child's manner of life? What is his mission? I want you to notice the faith of Manoah there.

At least his faith in the reliability of the message that the angel delivered. When your words come true. That's very different from Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who would doubt the angel Gabriel's prophetic word about his barren wife Elizabeth.

Manoah fully expects the angel of the Lord's promise to his wife to come true. But he's got questions. Presumably his wife had told him everything the angel of the Lord had said on his first visit, so he knows that God has these very big plans for this little baby.

[27 : 40] He shall begin, this is back in verse five, he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. That's big news because as the first verse of the chapter told us, Israel's completely under Philistine domination.

it's going to last for 40 years. So, dad, what do you do? What do you do when an angel shows up and says, your wife is going to give birth to the next savior, to the next deliverer?

I think if I'm the dad, is there a savior school we send these children to? Should they join the military? What's a good dad supposed to do with a baby savior?

That seems to be what Manoah is asking. Verse 13, the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. 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. It's a third time now we're being told, make sure she starts while he's in the womb, making him a Nazirite. In other words, the direction is clear.

[28 : 48] it's as if the Lord is saying, I'm providing the savior. I will direct that savior's steps. All you and your wife need to do is worry about obeying what I have told you to do.

Real saviors are provided, they are not produced, they are gifted, they're not graduated. And if God chooses to work through people to provide those saviors, they are only conduits of his grace, not the cause of it.

Like always, ours is to pay close attention to what God commands, what God has revealed in the Bible, and then do it. Manoah is not putting all the pieces together yet, but he wants to honor his guest, and that takes us to the last scene, scene four.

God accepts the worship of the Savior's parents. God accepts the worship of the Savior's parents. Manoah only has one question left.

Can you stay for dinner, sir? Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, verse 15, please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you. That is very hospitable, but it's out of line with the nature of his guest.

[30 : 01] This is no ordinary angel, if that's the right way to put it. This is the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ.

This is God. How do we know that? Look at verse 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 Yahweh. For, the narrator tells us, Manoah did not know that he was the angel of Yahweh. And Manoah said to the angel of Yahweh, what is your name?

So that when your words come true, we may honor you. And the angel of Yahweh said to him, why do you ask my name seeing that it is wonderful?

It seems like everything is coming into focus now. Manoah is dying for confirmation of the thing he doesn't want to ask out loud. Are you possibly Yahweh in visible form?

[31 : 05] And the angel of Yahweh answers in the affirmative, probably not in the way you would expect, but in a way that keeps everybody alive.

The angel of the Lord said to him, why do you ask my name seeing it is wonderful? Do you remember David's reflections in Psalm 139? He uses this word wonderful there too.

He says of God, you know my thoughts, you know where I go, when I lie down, when I get up. Even before I say a word, before it's on my tongue, you know what it will be. Psalm 139 verse 6, such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high, I cannot attain it. This word wonder or wonderful is only ever used of God and God's ways in the Bible. Never used about human beings.

The Bible never speaks as a mere man as wonderful. Oh, wonderful King David. Never there, not in your Bible. Our God is wonderful and that word wonderful means he's beyond human comprehension.

[32 : 11] He is incomprehensible. wonderful. He is beyond human understanding. He is wonderful. And when this angel says, why do you ask my name seeing that it is wonderful, he is making it very clear exactly who he is.

For one's name is a reflection of one's character. And all one can hope to do when in the presence of the wonderful one is exactly what Manoah did. Verse 19, he took the young goat with the grain offering, offered it on the rock to Yahweh, the one who works wonders, same word as wonderful, and Manoah and his wife were watching.

What were they watching? I think they're watching the wonderful one. When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of Yahweh went up in the flame of the altar, now Manoah and his wife were watching, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Why did they fall on their faces? Why does anybody fall on their face in the Bible? The text tells us, verse 22, Manoah said to his wife, we shall surely die for we have seen God.

They fell on their faces because that's what humans always do when they see God. Because somehow, God can be seen at certain times.

[33 : 36] He had told Moses, you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. That wasn't a threat, it was a statement of reality. If you were to see the father in his glory, you would not live.

That is very, very clear. But our text is clear that there are people seeing God here, the angel of the Lord, as he is called. And even though Manoah is standing there talking to him, back in verse 16, look at what it says, Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord, but now that the angel has accepted the burnt offering, and has ascended to heaven in its flames, verse 21, then Manoah knew that he was the angel of Yahweh.

So God the Son can be seen, as long as he's not transfigured, or saying his name. Do you remember the moment in Gethsemane when Jesus asked the angry mob that had come out to capture him, whom do you seek?

And in John's gospel, he writes, they answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am he, ego emi, which if you translate it into Hebrew would be Yahweh, I am.

When Jesus said to them, I am, ego emi, they drew back and fell to the ground. It was as if the name of God, from the mouth of God, was too powerful for the enemies of God to bear.

[35 : 17] When Jesus said, I am, they all fell on their faces. And that suggests to us that Manoah was not too far off track here.

Manoah's response to this theophany or Christophany is right on the one hand and a little bit foolish on the other hand. It was wise and good to bow down and worship of the wonderful one who works wonders.

It was folly to conclude that they're going to die for having seen and conversed with him. And his wife helps him out with that. I was thinking about having a showing of hands. How many times has your wife helped you with the very obvious things in life?

Brothers, keep your hands down. We all know. We all agree. His wife helps him out. She says to him, verse 23, 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.

Newsflash, husband. Why would Yahweh kill us right after he promised to give us a baby? We're the most secure human beings on the planet right now.

[36 : 23] Our sacrifice for sins was accepted. We have been given direct revelation from God and this woman's faith is rewarded for not only does she become pregnant and bear a son, she's given the privilege of naming that son.

In verse 24, the woman bore a son. She called his name Samson. Samson, which means something like sunny, like the sun in the sky. Roughly translated, man like the sun.

Reminds us of David's reflections in Psalm 19 where he says, in the heavens God has set a tent for the sun which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

Samson, this son of Manoah, named after the sun in the heavens, will grow up to be a strong man too, won't he? In verse 24, the young man grew and Yahweh blessed him. Yahweh blessed sunny and used sunny, but he blessed and used sunny, Samson, in ways that you or I would never expect.

[37 : 30] Adult Samson's great deliverances were all tangled up in lies and deception and immorality and yet there he is in Hebrews chapter 11 in the hall of faith.

So just for a moment think back with me over those four scenes. God promised a son to an unlikely woman. God promised a unique son to an unlikely woman.

God directed a puzzled future father on the nature of that savior son and God accepted the worship of the savior's parents.

That sound like somebody you know? Kids, does it remind you of a story you might have just been thinking about? This last judge or deliverer or savior Samson, he was an enigma to all.

Not only in his unique birth, his nativity, Samson was a man whose great rescues empowered by God occurred in ways that none of us would have expected.

[38 : 36] And that reminds us of our ultimate savior, Jesus Christ, the one whose great salvation empowered by his father also occurred in a way none of us would have expected.

His life and his great salvation were also enigmatic, weren't they? And one cannot help to see how the nativity story of Samson points to the nativity story of Jesus and leads us to wonder.

Samson, the Lord Jesus rather too, was born of unusual circumstances. Samson's mother was barren, Christ's mother was a virgin. Jesus too was predicted by an angel and Mrs.

Manoa was visited by the angel of the Lord, Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel. Both mothers were promised sons set apart from their conception. One son would be a Nazarite in the womb, the greater son would be conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb.

And then there were their dads. Manoa had a hard time believing the story of his wife. Joseph had a hard time believing the story of his wife. And angels came and spoke to both of them.

[39 : 42] Manoa was told what to do by an angel, Joseph was told what to do by an angel, and both of these men obeyed the angelic voice. And then the wives of both Manoa and Joseph bore sons who would save.

The angel told Mrs. Manoa, your son shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. The angel told Joseph, his son will save his people from their sins.

The first savior, Samson, was named after the sun in the sky, but the greater Samson, Jesus, was named after his father in glory. Do you remember what Isaiah said?

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Christ, the Wonderful One, the Angel of the Lord, announced the coming birth of Samson to Manoa and his wife. A lesser angel would announce the coming birth of the Wonderful One to Joseph and his wife.

[40 : 48] That's just one way where Jesus and Samson differ. There were others. These two deliverers, Samson, the last judge, would never drop a touch of wine, never touch a drop of wine.

Jesus, the final savior, drank wine with his disciples and promised to drink it with us again in the last day. Both men were consecrated to God, both men were set apart to their ministry, but while Samson could never touch the dead, Jesus would grab the hand of a dead girl and raise her to life. Samson kept his strength by guarding his hair, Jesus kept his strength by guarding his heart. One man was supposed to complete his Nazarite vow with many sacrifices, the other man was the sacrifice that fulfilled God's vow to us to save us.

One man lived a life full of sins and saved his people part of the way. Another man became sin for us and saved his people all of the way.

One man was a Nazarite, we worship the Nazarene. So the first Samson reminds us of what we need. We need God's intervention and rescue. The greater Samson, our Lord Jesus Christ, provides us with what we need.

[42 : 03] God's complete intervention and eternal rescue. But this is a rescue that you must respond to in faith. just as Manoa and his wife responded in faith to the message of the angel of the Lord.

You must act upon it, not just know it, but respond to it. You're not a Christian just because you celebrate Christmas. I drove around Bremen last night and almost every house in this town had a

Christmas tree, but I doubt every soul in every house knows Christ.

A Christian is a person who has put all their hope for eternity on that finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. You don't believe you have anything to offer God except your sin and your brokenness and you grab hold of the righteousness of Christ as your only ticket to heaven.

Is that you? Is it you? Have you come all the way to the greater Samson, the greater strong man, the greater savior, the one who can fully deliver your soul forever?

If not, now is the time to repent from your self-reliance and your folly and fully rely on Jesus as your savior? Is he your savior? Can you say as we sung that he is my savior?

[43 : 18] He's the only savior the world will ever get. There's no reason to wait for another friend because he's done everything that is necessary. He is the perfect deliverer, the perfect king and the perfect prophet.

prophet. I mentioned to you at the start of this sermon some of the strangest places a child was born last year. But I don't think it would be strange at all if you were born again right here.

That you walked into Grace Fellowship Church unbelieving on this particular day and you walked out those doors trusting in the savior on this particular day. And you could say I walked into that building dead in my sins and I walked out alive in Christ.

God is able to save. But you've got to turn to him and trust on him and believe on him. May God make it so. And he will.

If you bank your life on the greater Samson the Lord Jesus. Let's pray together. Our Lord Jesus we look for no other savior than you and we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit you would do your own saving work.

[44 : 34] Not just within these walls but within this town within this state within this country and in our world. We pray Lord that your gospel would continue to be announced and that you would draw all your people to yourself.

If you could intervene in the life of Manoah who is giving no thought to you and bring from him such good news. How much more could you do this in our own lives.

Help us Lord. Help us all to rely on the true strong man our Lord Jesus. Who will return one day not to save but to judge the world in righteousness and equity.

May that day come soon we ask. And until then save all your people we pray. In the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.