

Judges 13B

- Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ
 - The moment when the Creator condescended to become flesh
 - The Son of God became a Son of Man
 - A baby in a manger
 - A child born to bring peace and joy to men by making possible the reconciliation of sinful mankind with a holy and just God
 - But as important as that moment was for the world, it was also very important for two parents, Mary and Joseph
 - That day some 2,000 years ago, they became parents for the first time
 - And new parents are always faced with the same questions and worries
 - How do we raise this child? How do we feed him? What if he gets sick?
 - What if I lose him in the temple some day?
 - Ok...not every parent has *that* worry, but still...
 - But every parent wonders about what their son or daughter will become when they grow up and enter the world as an adult
 - We all have great dreams for our children
 - Though I think we're just hoping they don't turn out like the kid who grew up to invent the talking clock

A young man moved away from his parents to become a student. Proudly showing off his new apartment to a couple of his friends late one night, he led the way to his bedroom where there was a big brass gong. "What's that big brass gong?" one of the guests asked. "It's not a gong. It's a talking clock," the man replied. "A talking clock? Seriously? Asked his astonished friend! "Yup," replied the student. "How's it work?" the 2nd guest asked, squinting at it. "Watch," the student replied. He picked up a hammer, gave it an ear-shattering pound and stepped back. The three stood looking at one another for a moment.

Suddenly, someone on the other side of the wall screamed: "You idiot, it's 2:30 in the morning!"

- But Joseph and Mary didn't have to wonder about such things
 - They had been told by an angel of what to expect in the case of their special Son
 - Mary knew so much about her child even before He was born
 - She knew He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
 - She knew He was the promised Messiah, the One to deliver Israel
 - She was even told his name would be Jesus
 - But even though this Son, Jesus, was about to be born as a man, He existed from eternity
 - As Jesus Himself said to the Pharisees, before Abraham was, I am.
 - So we can see Jesus at work even in the Old Testament, long before He came into the world as a man
 - When He appeared in the Old Testament days, the Bible refers to Jesus as the Angel of the Lord
- Currently, we're studying the book of Judges on Sunday mornings, as you know, and in our last study we saw another couple about to receive their first child
 - Like Mary and Joseph, this couple was told in advance that their son would be someone special according to God's purposes
 - Their son would bring to free Israel from oppression by the Philistines
 - He will live under a Nazarite vow, setting him apart from all men in service to the Lord
 - And as we'll learn later in our study, God will endow him with supernatural power to accomplish the mission God gives him
 - The man will be known as Samson, and in many ways he pictures the later arrival of Jesus Himself

- So how appropriate was it that Jesus appeared to these parents in the form of a man or prophet to announce the arrival of Samson
- As we studied last Sunday, Jesus appeared once to the mother-to-be
- But when she reported the news to her husband, Manoah, he had questions and concerns
 - So the couple prayed to the Lord to send the “man” back to answer some questions
 - And what follows reminds us of the true purpose of Christmas

Judg. 13:8 Then Manoah entreated the Lord and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.”

Judg. 13:9 God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.

Judg. 13:10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me.”

Judg. 13:11 Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” And he said, “I am.”

Judg. 13:12 Manoah said, “Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy’s mode of life and his vocation?”

Judg. 13:13 So the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Let the woman pay attention to all that I said.

Judg. 13:14 “She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.”

Judg. 13:15 Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.”

Judg. 13:16 The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat 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.

Judg. 13:17 Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?”

Judg. 13:18 But the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”

Judg. 13:19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the Lord, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on.

[Judg. 13:20](#) For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

[Judg. 13:21](#) Now the angel of the Lord did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord.

[Judg. 13:22](#) So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."

[Judg. 13:23](#) But his wife said to him, "If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time."

- The husband prayed that the "prophet" come back to guide them on what to do with their son
 - They did what every godly parent should do, seeking the Lord for guidance in raising our children
 - In their case, they had all the more reason to ask, because they had already heard that their son would be very special
 - The Lord answers their prayer with another visit
 - He appears to the woman in the field, leading her to call her husband
 - And the two return to inquire of Him
 - The Lord confirms He was the One Who visited earlier
 - But the couple still don't realize this "Person" is the Lord Himself
- The father begins to ask the "prophet" for more information about what will happen to his son
 - Specifically, he wants to know more about his son's future
 - This is understandable, certainly
 - We would probably want to ask the same question
 - But that's not a healthy request for any of us
 - When you're asking the Lord for more details of the future, you are putting yourself in a position to evaluate what you hear
 - And then you decide whether you like that future or whether you might act to accomplish something else

- Knowing too much about what God has planned is counterproductive to our obedience
- So the Lord tells us only what we need to know to be obedient
- Then the test becomes will we obey?
- Notice the Lord's response to him was to repeat what the Lord had already told the wife in His first appearance
 - The Lord simply says just do what I've already told your wife
 - In other words you have enough information for now
 - And if you do as I've instructed then you and your son will end up in the right place
- Later in Samson's life we'll watch the man move beyond the Lord's instructions and fall as a result
 - He remains a Nazarite for his entire life
 - But he doesn't follow his parents' pattern in resting in God's revelation and provision
- Meanwhile, the father wants to honor the One Who brought this great news, as he should
 - So he offers the customary meal to a stranger
 - And what follows is a scene similar to the one Gideon experienced earlier in the book of Judges
 - In chapter 6 Gideon wanted to make a meal for the Angel of the Lord and in that chapter the Lord gave a similar response
 - He would not accept a meal, but He would attend a sacrifice to the Lord
 - At this point, the husband seeks to know the name of the man
 - The Lord answers him, but our English doesn't carry the sense of His response very well
 - The Lord answers the question by asking a question in response
 - To paraphrase, He asks "What is this question you ask... 'what is your name?'"

- The Lord is asking why would you ask such a question?
- He isn't saying this because they should have already known His identity
 - Rather, He's emphasizing that humanity could not know His name
 - Because the Messiah's name had yet to be revealed to men
 - Men cannot know God apart from what God chooses to reveal about Himself
 - And even then, our finite minds cannot begin to grasp all that is God
- But once the Lord reveals Himself to us, then it falls to us to recognize what God has done and accept it as such
 - This man and woman have heard from the Angel of the Lord
 - So they should understand
- So the Lord responds with a name given to Him in Isaiah
 - Isaiah says that the Messiah will be called Wonderful

**Is. 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

- Obviously, the Lord is referencing Himself by way of that prophecy
- Jesus is the one Isaiah spoke about centuries before Jesus was born
- Interestingly, this comment by the Angel of the Lord is coming centuries before Isaiah was born
- So here we have the Lord speaking prophetically... about something a future prophet would speak prophetically... about the future day the Lord Himself would arrive as a man
 - Isaiah says this child will rule the world

- He will be called a wonderful counselor
- He will be a mighty God
- He is both the eternal Father and the prince of Peace
- Don't miss the way those details work together
 - Jesus is both a human child and the eternal God, One with the Father
 - Today, He is a wonderful counselor in our hearts by way of His Spirit, and one day He will return to rule the world
 - Jesus declared these things about Himself in advance so that we might know we can trust His word
- The story of chapter 13 ends in a way almost identical to Gideon's encounter
 - The Lord proves His identity through miracles including ascending to Heaven in the flames of the fire of the sacrifice
 - At once the man and woman recognize they had an encounter with the Living God
 - And His departure causes them to fall down in worship and awe
 - The husband remarks they should be dead since they saw God
 - But then the wife realizes that if God wanted to kill them by His appearing, it would have happened
 - So the fact that they live proves that the Angel of the Lord came to bring life, not death
 - And that life will come in the form a special child
- Samson's life is a picture of Jesus in many ways, but that parallels start here with the birth of Samson
 - We'll study those parallels in coming weeks, but we can already see some remarkable connections already
 - First, the name Samson means son of light as Jesus will be called the Light of the world
 - Samson enters the world to begin the defeat of the Philistines

- The word Philistine has been said to mean “one who crawls in the dirt”
- This reminds us of Satan, the serpent of old who was condemned to crawl in the dirt because he brought sin to men
- The sin of the Garden brought all mankind under a curse of death, so that if men and women are to ever rise above this curse, God must do something to remove it
 - So the Father promises to bring a Savior to conquer the enemy and take our curse for us bringing peace and rest to the world
 - The Son will be conceived supernaturally, arriving in an unexpected way
 - He will be the Light of the world set apart by the Spirit
 - He will conquer the enemy by taking our course, enduring the sting of sin which is death
 - Nevertheless, He will be resurrected and one day return to judge the world in righteousness
 - Ruling the world in power and might
- Now we see Samson, the son of light, coming to a man Manoah, whose name means peace and rest
 - Who comes from the tribe of Dan, which means judge
 - And the town of Zorah, which means painful sting
 - Samson will be set apart from the womb, as pictured by the Nazarite vow
 - And even his mother will follow the Nazarite practices
 - And in that way, she pictures not Mary, but John the Baptist as the one who introduced the Messiah to the world
- All these parallels between Samson and Jesus were carefully planned by the Lord so that you and I would recognize the Messiah when He came to us
 - Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Bible teaches about God’s mercy and grace to sinners like you and me

- Just as the Lord promised, He delivered a Savior to the world in a most unexpected way
- He told the world Jesus was coming
- And He kept that promise
- But He went even further, showing the world in words and pictures the story of Jesus even before Jesus came
 - Even using the Lord in a preincarnate form to tell His own story in the life of Samson
 - Don't let the Christmas myths of Santa and elves distract you from the powerful, life-changing truth of a promised kept
 - Jesus is God Himself, Who took on the form of man because that was the only way He could make a way for you and I to enter Heaven
 - Someone has to pay the penalty for our sin, but God so loved the world that He willingly gave Himself in your place
 - He lived a sinless life as a man so that He could stand in our place, taking the penalty for our sin
- The only question remaining is whether you have accepted this gift of salvation?
 - Can you see on the pages of your Bible how the Lord foretold a Wonderful Counselor, a Prince of Peace?
 - Do you recognize He came to save you from the penalty of your sin?
 - Are you finally ready to confess this truth and receive the salvation the Lord has prepared for you?
 - This Christmas, let's accept the greatest gift the world has ever known
 - Accept Christ as your Savior, believing in your heart that He is the Lord Who died for your sins