

Hugo Bouter

Manoah And His Wife

"And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?" So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on".

Judges 13:18-19 NKJV

A series of Wonderful Events

The birth of Samson was a work of God, for his mother had been barren. But a divine Messenger had come to tell her that she was to give birth to a son who would be a Nazirite to God, that is a person entirely dedicated to the service of the Lord (see Num. 6). Moreover, the Angel said that her son would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Jud. 13:5).

In all these respects, Samson, however weak in himself, is a type of our Lord who:

- In a miraculous way, was born of the virgin Mary.
- Like a Nazirite, was dedicated to God all His lifetime here on earth.
- Delivered His people from the powers that held them captive.

This parallel is justified by other important events in the life of Samson, but, of course, the personal shortcomings of this judge should not be considered in this connection. His victory over a roaring lion speaks of Christ's victory over Satan (1 Pet. 5:8). In the same way as Samson gave his parents of the food that came "out of the eater" – something sweet that came "out of the strong" – so the Lord shares the glorious results of His work with His own (Jud. 14:9). Samson's defeat over more

enemies in his death than in his life is another reference to Christ's triumph on the cross of Calvary (Jud. 16:30).

The wonderful birth of Samson also reminds us of Isaac, born of Sarah who had been barren. The LORD said of Isaac's birth, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard – literally, "too wonderful" – for the LORD?" (Gen. 18:13-14).

Speaking about the miracle of the virgin birth of the Messiah, I remind you that the very first one of His names as mentioned by the prophet is "Wonderful" (Isa. 9:6). "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Christ partook of flesh and blood for the sake of His brethren (Heb. 2:14). It is an unspeakable mystery and will be a cause of eternal worship. Christ became Man in order to save men, to unite them with Him and to bring them to glory. How can we ever thank Him for it!

His Sacrifice Is Wonderful

However, it is not only Christ's birth that fills us with wonder, but even more so His sacrifice. He was born of the Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). With a view to His ministry here on earth He was also *anointed* with the Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38). But at the end of His life He *offered Himself* through the eternal Spirit without spot to God (Heb. 9:14). Burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin could not please God, but the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, did (Heb. 10:5-10).

We are taught another lesson in the story of Manoah and his wife concerning this wonderful sacrifice. A burnt offering and a grain offering were offered to the Lord upon a rock (Jud. 13:19). The grain offering was made of fine flour that was mixed with oil and anointed with oil (Lev. 2). It symbolized the pure human nature of our Lord. The burnt offering, however, was a bloody sacrifice (Lev. 1). This clearly speaks of His death to the glory and honor of God the Father. Both offerings were a sweet aroma to the Lord. Also, they both speak of our Savior as we see in Ephesians 5:2:

- Grain offering – "Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering..."
- Bloody offering – "... to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

It is an offering that is unfathomable to man. Christ's sacrifice for our sins was at the same time a burnt offering that went up to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. While He had to be forsaken by God on the cross as He took our place in judgment, yet He was the One in whom the Father was well pleased (Matt. 3:17). During those dark hours on Calvary's cross, He reflected God's wonderful love, justice and holiness.

It is interesting to note that Manoah offered a young goat. This was sometimes a sin offering in the Old Testament, but he offered it to God as a burnt offering. The burnt offering was linked with a grain offering (Jud. 13:16, 19). When Christ poured out His soul unto death, this was of infinite value to God. For this holy, humble Man not only glorified God during His life here on earth, but He also desired to glorify Him by His death. What a wonderful Savior, who not only met our needs but at the same time satisfied all God's righteous demands!

His Return To Heaven Is Wonderful

Another wonderful thing that is mentioned in these verses is the miracle which was done by the Angel of the LORD. This Messenger was the Old Testament representation of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Mal. 3:1). As the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, He ascended in the flame of the fire. Not only was the name of the Angel wonderful, but so was His behavior: He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on (Jud. 13:18-19). In other words, He acted in accordance with the wonderful secret of His person.

This miracle is a sign teaching us that, having offered Himself without spot to God, Christ ascended on high *by virtue of His sacrifice*. He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high! The One who descended is also He who ascended far above all the heavens (John 3:13; Eph. 4:9-10). Who is able to fathom the wonders of His person? As a Man, He returned to heaven and was crowned with glory and honor. His glorification in heaven was God's righteous answer to His humiliation here on earth.

When pondering these things, the only response that is proper for us is to worship at His feet. Just like Manoah and his wife, we shall be deeply moved by what we have seen. We will kneel down before our Lord to worship Him and pay Him heartfelt homage. It would appear that Manoah did not understand as much of God's gracious intentions as his wife, who had more spiritual insight. What about us? When we behold the miracles of the work and the person of Christ, do we take the place of intelligent worshippers?

In Psalm 118:22-23 we read about the miracle of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” The once rejected Christ, who sacrificed Himself and stooped to the depths of death, has been exalted by God and “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9). He is the Cornerstone in whom we have put our trust. He is the Rock on which the Church is being built as a spiritual house. This is the great miracle of God’s grace which He works in our time. And in keeping with the words of the psalmist, we can only acknowledge that He has done all this according to the wonderful counsels of His will. It is wonderful and marvelous in our eyes. And we are looking forward to the soon-coming day when we shall see Him as He is and worship at His feet.

Note by bro. Rossier

Manoah and his wife feared the Lord, listened to His voice and spoke to one another (see Mal. 3:16). They are like those who waited for the true Messiah, the Savior to come, and others of the future remnant, who, passing through the tribulation, will follow the paths of righteousness, waiting for their King.

What characterizes a remnant at all times is Naziriteship – entire separation unto the Lord. The wife of Manoah had to take upon herself Naziriteship, because she was the vessel chosen of God to present to the people the promised deliverer.

In other words, the Naziriteship of Samson involved that of his mother. In order to do honor to this deliverer of Israel, it was needful that his witnesses bear the distinctive marks of his own character before the eyes of all. This is true at all times. Applying this lesson to us, if we do not manifest Christ down here in His character of entire separation to God, we are not witnesses for our Savior. Christ having come, permanent separation should characterize the saints as it does the Lord; and the more the ruin, or departure from God’s ways, increases, the more apparent will this become.

—Henri L. Rossier, *Meditations On The Book Of Judges*