

[manoah part 2]

:: judges 13.8-25 ::

Last week we saw the first part of this chapter where the Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and explained that her son, Samson, would be a lifelong Nazarite.

Today we finish out this chapter and we'll focus on Manoah, Samson's father, and how he reacted to this visit from Jesus Christ.

Judges 13.8 - Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

We don't know much about Manoah, but he does seem to have *some* relationship with the Lord. What we're going to find is that he doesn't seem to always *get it* when it comes to God's revelation and that he doesn't really listen when God speaks.

The application for us this morning is that God wants us to *get it* in this life. He reveals Himself so that we can live dynamic, meaningful lives. That revelation is trustworthy and practical for us and when we're looking for wisdom or direction, God's revelation is where we go in order to receive it.

1 Corinthians 14.33 - For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Mistakes, miscommunications and missed opportunities can be a result of us not taking God and His word at face value. However, when we listen and apply what the Lord has revealed to us, that is when God can powerfully move in our relationships and circumstances.

So here in verse 8, where we read Manoah's prayer, we see 2 signs that aren't great.

First sign: he didn't recognize Jesus in his wife's description. Remember, she had described Him as a Man who gave her great promises about a future son and whose countenance was very awesome, "like the countenance of the Angel of God."

Throughout this chapter there seems to be indication that Manoah's wife understood who they were dealing with, while Manoah struggled to grasp the situation. He had a hard time recognizing Jesus.

Second not-so-great sign: Manoah wasn't that familiar with God's word.

The son of promise was to be raised as a lifelong Nazarite. The conditions of such a vow were explicitly stated in the Law of Moses. However, Manoah seemed to be at a loss as to how exactly they were going to raise this son of theirs.

When we're unfamiliar with God's word, then we're going to be unfamiliar with God's ways. The Bible is the revelation not only of God, but also of His way of life, His will and His methods. Not every specific thing is known to us, but the Lord works hard to provide wisdom and insight for our daily living. If we want to be familiar with His ways, we must be familiar with His words.

The other issue is that of recognizing Jesus. In our lives this could apply to us recognizing the instances where God is speaking to us, or recognizing the opportunities that Jesus desires us to minister in.

Judges 13.9 - And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her.

We cannot help but see God's grace as He interacts with people in the Bible. In a sense, Manoah's prayer was, "Hey, Lord, could you send that Guy back to talk to us again because I don't get what the deal is?"

And the Lord *did* come back.

This is great grace. Again, we find a God who desires to reveal, who desires to explain, who desires to give wisdom and guidance and understanding to His people and, not only that, but then provides simple, plain and accessible avenues for us to **receive** that wisdom.

We really don't know much about Manoah, but here in chapter 13 there's an unfortunate trend of his missing out on what God is saying and doing. He's just not really locked into his relationship with the Lord, and because of that he has a lot of confusion and misunderstandings.

This may not be a fault, but in this verse we see that he wasn't out in the field when Jesus appeared. Maybe it was just a coincidence, but maybe Manoah was a bit of a couch potato. We see in verse 11 that he might have just been lounging around while his wife was out in the field.

Judges 13.10-11 - Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!" So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I am."

What are we seeing here?

First, we see that God is always longsuffering. In these Christophany passages Jesus often has to just wait around while the other people get there. He is gracious. He is longsuffering. He is patient.

Second, we see that Manoah isn't much of a listener. His wife comes and says, "Hey, the Guy from the other day is back." And when Manoah gets there he asks the Lord, "So are you the same Guy or is my wife off her rocker?"

We need to listen. For those of us who are married and whose wives are Christians, we need to listen to the things that God is telling our wives. We need to have open ears when people we know and love have things to tell us about the Lord. We should test them, but we should be listening. And we shouldn't assume that our wives or our fellow Christians just don't know what they're talking about. I think you get a whiff of that in Manoah's countenance, if only because he keeps missing the wisdom throughout this chapter.

Judges 13.12 - Manoah said, "Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life and his work?"

Again, we find a failure to listen. The boy was to be raised a Nazarite, as prescribed in the first appearance and detailed in Numbers chapter 6. His work was to be a deliverer of Israel, as explained up in verse 5. But it seems as though that conversation that Manoah had with his wife had gone in one ear and out the other.

If we want wisdom and guidance from the Lord then we must be men who listen to God's word. Our hearts and minds should be soil for God's word, not filters. The purpose of the Bible is not for us to find one or two things that really resonate with us and the rest gets filtered through as unimportant or inapplicable. Instead, our lives are soil and the word of God should take root and then bear fruit. We must listen as God speaks.

But we also need to listen as others speak. The direct application from our passage is that we need to be men who listen to our wives. Taking time and energy to listen and to hear them. I am speaking to myself here. There are many times when I'm with my wife and I realize that I just wasn't really listening to what she was saying, and that's not ok. Our relationships with our wives and with the other people around us will be greatly served if we simply determine to listen to them.

Judges 13.13-14 - So the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

Such grace here. Christ is gracious to repeat His message and impart it directly to Manoah.

It is important to note that He did not *change* His message. If we, as ministers of the Gospel, ever find the message changing, then there is a problem. God's message, His word, His commands and His plan are unwavering. We do not change the message, no matter how many times we've told it or who we're sharing it with.

Judges 13.15-16 - Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "Please, let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You." And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord." (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the Lord.)

The poor guy is still not getting it. Again, he's not recognizing Jesus. And when we fail to recognize Jesus, then we will fail to respond properly.

Practically this works out like this:

You're driving to work and you're listening to Christian radio or a Bible Study. The DJ or preacher says something that stands out brighter than the other things you were hearing or thinking about. If it's in line with the Bible (*we need to be good Bereans*) then that is an opportunity for you to recognize Jesus speaking to you.

Or you're at work and a coworker comes up to you and says that he's having a problem at home with his wife. We should recognize that situation as Jesus' intervention in our lives, transforming our job-site to a mission field where we can do some serious, eternal work.

And when we recognize Jesus' word or His leading, then we will be able to respond properly.

Manoah wasn't really responding properly. He thought maybe they should make a meal, or maybe they should make an offering, because he didn't really understand Who it was that was speaking to them.

Judges 13.17 - Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?"

Manoah's still trying to figure this situation out. He's not connecting with God and therefore he doesn't grasp that at that very moment the Creator was speaking to him and planning things for him and invigorating his life.

This can happen to us if we disconnect with the Lord. If we slip into apathy then we become numb to all the wonders of God and His words and His ways. Apathy causes a fog to sit in our spiritual lives and we miss these incredible opportunities that God gives to us to hear from Him and to do His work.

Judges 13.18 - And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?"

I like the NIV version as well. It says:

Judges 13.18 - He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding."

In one sense, you could *almost* hear the Lord making a joke. "You aren't really understanding anything else that's going on, so I don't think you'll get this either."

That's reading more into the text than is there, but what we *do* see is Christ graciously, patiently going through this situation with a man who's pretty thick-headed, spiritually speaking.

The application here is *Thanks Lord!* I am in no short-supply of thick-headedness myself. Yet our God is faithful and patient to reveal Himself to me.

Judges 13.19-20 - 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— it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—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.

Our text said that the Lord called His name wonderful. Then we see Him do a wondrous thing before Manoah and his wife.

Jesus Christ is wonderful and His desire is to do wonderful things in your life. He desires to do a wonderful work in your marriage and in your parenting, in your witness and in your devotional life. That's what He wants. He is a wonderful God who does wonderful things in and through His people.

There is some good devotional meditation on this image of Christ ascending in the flame of the altar, symbolizing our dedication and worship and willingness to sacrifice. Christ is the fire that consumes our sin, the center of our worship and He is the One who stokes our passion to serve Him. He is the source of our life and our energy and our cleansing. Jesus is the Center of it all.

But, now, certainly Manoah understands what had just happened. Right?

Maybe not:

Judges 13.21 - When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, *THEN* Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord. *(emphasis added)*

So after all that, after Jesus is gone he finally pieced it together. He hadn't really been seeing, he hadn't really been listening, but finally he understood that he had been in the presence of God.

Let's see what he said:

Judges 13.22-25 - And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" 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 told us such things as these at this time." So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

So, he knew it was the Lord, but he hadn't really listened to anything He had said. He expected imminent destruction, even though Jesus had already left them there at the altar.

Can't blame a guy for trying, but Manoah simply wasn't very familiar with the things of the Lord. In this chapter we find him as a guy who wasn't really watching for the Lord, wasn't really listening to the Lord, didn't understand much about the Lord.

BUT, God still loved him, still spoke to him, still desired to use him. And, eventually, God broke through to Manoah who finally comprehended that it was the Lord, and who then raised his son according to the Nazarite regulations.

You are men who love the Lord. You are men who get to spend time with Jesus Christ every day. Not only that, but our God is literally present with us moment by moment as the Holy Spirit dwells within us. You are men who love your Bibles, who love God's word.

Take heart. The God of these Christophanies, who showed Himself as a God who loves to reveal and give guidance, that same God is with you today. And He has prepared for you His word in totality so that you can live moment by moment in His strength and in His will.

Keep your eyes and ears open. Stay rooted in God's word. Have faith in the promises that God has made you personally and be excited by the fact that our wonderful God desires to do wonderful things as you live out life before Him in the time and place that He has set you.