

dreadful time of His arrest and the Crucifixion was to fear not. Angels appeared following the Resurrection with the same message, "Fear not ye."

There is a beautiful illustration in the Book of Judges which should give us much comfort and, at the same time, point out the clarity of vision which faith possesses, as compared with the cloudiness of vision which fear possesses. The illustration comes from the lives of Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson.

The account is given in Judges 13, and we will see how the Lord's ways of working brought great faith to Manoah's wife. In verse 1 we read:

*"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years."*

Evidently things were not so good at this period of Israel's history. Having been in the hands of the Philistines forty years was not the type of national life which Israel appreciated. However, Israel was undergoing one of her many times of correction at the hands of her enemies. It was at such a time that God sent an angel to announce to Manoah's wife that she would have a son who would begin to deliver Israel.

Verse 5: "For, lo, thou shalt

*conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."*

When Manoah's wife informed him of the incident, Manoah prayed that he, too, might be allowed to see the angel and talk with him. The Lord heard Manoah's prayer and granted his request, as we read in verse 9: *"And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her."*

Since Manoah was not with his wife at the second appearance of the angel, she ran to get him, and the three of them met together. After conversing awhile with the angel, Manoah offered the angel food and asked the angel his name. The angel refused the food and replied that his name was secret; but suggested that Manoah offer his offering unto the Lord, which he did.

In verses 19 and 20, we read of the miraculous things that happened to the offering which Manoah offered, and of the angel's disappearance. *"So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wonderfully; and Manoah and his wife*

*looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground."*

We will see now the reaction of these two people, husband and wife, to the events that occurred. Both had spoken with the angel. Both had seen the angel's marvelous working and his ascension. Both had seen the flame consume the offering. But they reacted quite differently to the events!

In verse 22 we read, *"And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God."*

Manoah looked for death and destruction. He was fearful and certainly far from rejoicing in the promise of a son who would begin to deliver Israel from her enemies. He was a humble man and a believer in God; yet in this instance, his faith faltered and fear afflicted.

Let us look at how Manoah's wife responded. In this case, she provided the words of comfort to calm and steady her husband. They were precious words of faith, and we read them in verse 23:

*"But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering*

*at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."*

Let these words sink into the very fibers of our being, for they are applicable to us today. And they are applicable to America as a Christian nation. Perhaps we should read this verse as a question, paraphrasing it just a bit, as follows:

*"If the Lord were going to kill us who believe in Christ, would He have accepted His only Son as our burnt offering and as our meat offering? And would the Lord have shown us His Word, as He has done, and put His Spirit within us, and at such a time as this have opened to us the parables of His Kingdom?"*

Can we see the strength and the hope, the faith and the courage that this verse gives us in these days? God has accepted the offering of His Son as a complete offering - for the national redemption of His Israel people, as well as for the Church. If He were going to kill us, would He have shown us all these things, and would He have told us to "Fear not"?

In closing, let us be reminded that it was the Christ Who said, *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32)