

A Foretaste of Incarnation- Samson

Pastor J. Christopher Smith

As we enter the glorious season of Christmas and begin to focus our minds on the supernatural incarnation of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are looking at the 13th chapter of Judges. In the times of the Judges, Israel had turned away from the one and only true God. With biblical morality thrown aside, the practices of the nation of Israel became increasingly deviant and vile. The sins of the surrounding Canaanite culture became the sins of God's people. The morality of the nation became characterized by relativism and pragmatism, as evidenced by the well-known description of life during that time: everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

You don't have to dig too deeply to find parallels in our culture, in Judges the nation was fragmented and divided. The people called after gods of their own creating. Morality became a subjective thing that tolerated sin; what God declared wrong became right in the practices of the people. Life was cheap and the voice of God was hardly ever followed. Occasionally when things got so bad, the people would cry out to God and ask for His help. That cry of desperation sets up a pattern of Rebellion, Retribution, Repentance, Restoration, and Rest that we see throughout the book - a pattern that was repeated over and over and over.

In an attempt to restore righteousness to the nation, God would raise up individuals to act as leaders to bring stability to a nation in crisis. These leaders were called Judges. One judge was Samson. The rebellious Israelites were under the control of the Philistines for forty years. One day the Angel of the Lord (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus) appeared to Samson's mother (un-named in Scripture), the wife of Manoah, and tells the barren woman that she will conceive and bare a son. Similar to what the angel Gabriel said to Mary before the birth of Jesus. Samson's mother was told (v.5) that she would have to follow a special dietary regimen because the child was to be a Nazirite to God from the womb and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. As Samson grew, the Lord blessed him, and the spirit of God stirred in his heart. Samson was off to a good start. Although he won a tremendous victory over the enemy, he was not the hero Israel needed. Samson's birth was important because it was a sign. It was a light in the darkness of the Philistine oppression indicating that a true hero was coming.

Samson's birth was not an ordinary, natural occurrence. Samson's no-name mother was barren and unable to conceive any children, yet in God's time she was enabled, by God, to become pregnant and bring a son into the world. Although this type of birth was not unprecedented, it was unusual enough to cause people to take special notice, so when it happened again later in Israel's history, there would be legitimate reason for recognizing and affirming the truthfulness of the event. Despite Israel's disobedience and sin right up until the time of Christ, God had been gracious and deliberate in communicating to them that the true Messiah and Savior was going to come.

Judges 13:5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”

In this passage there is a clue as to what God is doing. It is clear that Samson was going to start something, but someone else was going to finish it. Samson began the work of deliverance from the Phillistine oppression, but we know from the New Testament that the Lord Jesus was the one to completely finish the work to deliver people from their greatest oppressor; their own, personal, sinfulness. What Samson could only do in a symbolic sign, Jesus would accomplish in perfection by the giving and sacrificing of His own life on the cross at Calvary.

When Jesus was coming to the end of His own torment on the cross, Jesus cried out to His Father in a great shout of victory, it is finished! The work of salvation was done. There was nothing else that needed to be added. It was complete, it was perfect, exactly as God had designed because Jesus Christ had died and given His life at Calvary. He had done everything a Holy God required for the salvation of sinners. And so there is nothing else that you can do today, there is nothing else that you can add to the salvation that Jesus Christ has provided for you. It is finished. Jesus finished the work that God said centuries ago was going to take place when Jesus came to the earth.

Jesus was truly unique. As the God-man, He was the only Person who could have provided the atonement that sinners desperately needed. When Jesus said that I am the way, the truth, and the life, He was speaking the truth. There is no other way, there is no other Savior, no other path that you have to follow - Except to commit your life to the Lord Jesus Christ believe on Him for the salvation of your soul.

Both Samson and Jesus were born into a world of great darkness, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. The world in which we live today is also a world of great darkness that seems to be getting darker every day. But there is still hope. Wherever the darkness exists, there is hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is hope for your personal life, maybe you have been searching all of your life for something that fills that emptiness that you constantly feel within you. You may have sought all kinds of things to fill that emptiness, but nothing has provided satisfaction for you. That longing, that emptiness can only be satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your hope of salvation today - there is no salvation in any other, except through the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are still searching today, you need to come to Christ and receive Him as your Savior from sin.

There is hope for the future. What will the world look like 40 or 50 years from now if Jesus does not return? Our hope is not in what happens here on the earth in the future, we believe that Jesus is going to come, and He is going to lead all believers in our ultimate hope of life in heaven with Jesus for ever and ever; and all the cares and problems and issue of this world will be gone forever. Jesus Christ is our ultimate hope. True life, true salvation, true blessings, are only found

in the Lord Jesus Christ, Savior, and Messiah. Maybe He is the one you've been waiting for all your life. If so, receive Him today; accept Him as your Savior.

Born Again to a Living Hope – The Church

Andrew DeLorme

Scripture as a whole points to Christ, and even on this side of the Cross, we are still looking to Christ; both looking back at the cross and forward to His return, because He is the centerpiece of it all.

Each birth that we looked at served a specific purpose. In Samson, born for the purpose of beginning to save Israel as a nation. Salvation was begun, but not completed, that salvation would be coming in the form of someone greater: the Lord Jesus Christ. In Samuel, he was a sign of God's faithfulness to Hannah, and Hannah's faithfulness to God. God is ever faithful to His people. In John the Baptist, who broke the deafening silence of 400 years of Scripture, by declaring the gospel and paving the way for the Messiah. A miraculous birth that God used to bring the gospel to the world. In Jesus, who if he did not come to earth born of the virgin Mary, live a sinless life, die on a cross for our sins, and be raised again to life, we would have no salvation. We would have no promise or hope of eternal life, dead in the trespasses that we were walking in.

In focusing on the birth of the church, what do these miraculous births mean for us personally, in our desire for obedience and to live out our calling in the way that is expected by God for us, and how we live. We will seek to answer three questions: Where did the church come from; Who is the church today; What is the church called to be?

Where did the church come from?

1 Peter 1:1-3 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Who are the people that Peter is writing to? He is writing to the church. At that time, the fellowships spread across Asia Minor, but today, to us the church. The Greek word for church, Ecclesia, means called out ones, meaning a group of people called together and lifted out of something and set apart for a specific purpose. The church was born for a specific purpose; we have work to do. The church is a collection of people, a building that is built brick by brick of living stones; we, the church are the living stones.

Matthew 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The church of Jesus Christ was created by Jesus Christ. We are His church, we are His people, we are part of His kingdom. Christ is the builder and sustainer of the church.

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus is the basis of His church. So, by God's power and by Jesus' authority, the church miraculously bursts into action. Jesus established it, He built it, and He protects it. At Pentecost, the church, in an instant, was created. Each member of the church is a living stone. In other words, the church was established by Jesus Christ, and each living member becomes a part of the Ecclesia, from the foreknowledge and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

How then does a person become a member of Ecclesia? We can become members of a church, but that depends on the fact that we have already become members of Ecclesia.

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This is the cost of entry: one must be born again. One must experience a second birth, a spiritual birth, to gain entry and be a member of the Ecclesia. This transformation (being born again) is dramatic because the old life cannot be salvaged, it is dead, it can't be fixed; we are crucified with Christ and born into a new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

When we are born again, we are immediately welcomed into Ecclesia. In other words, the church was established by Jesus Christ, and each living member becomes a part of the Ecclesia, from the foreknowledge and saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Who is the church today?

As members of Ecclesia, as members of the church, we have an inheritance. The church has existed for thousands of years and has gone through many trials and sufferings, and by God's mercy our inheritance is kept safe by God.

1 Peter 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our inheritance has no expiration date, it is undefiled, it cannot be spoiled, and we cannot be cheated out of it, and it is unfaded, it hasn't lost its luster and is kept secure in heaven held by God. We as members of Ecclesia are kept secure by God's power, not one is ever lost even though we endure trials and suffering.

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notice how the section on suffering is bookended by 1 Peter 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! and 1 Peter 1:7 - and may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though no one wants or desires suffering, suffering for the gospel is a necessary part of the testing of our faith that develops perseverance. Testing by God proves faith, because trials are a necessary part, if we wither and are cast away then we have to wonder if there really was faith. Faith is the anchor; faith is what gets us through; the testing proves the faith. And faith proves grace, grace provides salvation, and salvation brings us hope. Therefore, since suffering is necessary to prove faith, a lack of suffering could indicate a lack of faith.

To experience persecution from the outside we have to live like we have indeed been called out by God and set apart. To be called out by God but repeatedly step back into the world to the point where there is no discernable difference between us and the next guy, you shouldn't be surprised if there is no persecution. If the church doesn't step out into the identity we have in Christ and be confident and uncompromising in its rigor, we can wind up in a situation where people cannot see a difference; they can't see the reason for the hope that lies within us. We will be accepted and loved and embraced by the world if we are seen as no different than the world.

What is the church called to be?

Considering what has been outlined here, what is the church called to be? This next section of 1 Peter answers the question:

1 Peter 1:13-16 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

This is a call to action, for the church and us as individuals. We are stepping into something big and meaningful and there are consequences for getting it wrong, so we need to be prepared for what lies ahead. Does it feel like life or pieces of life are just slowly slipping away and slipping out of reach and frustration builds? We cannot control every aspect of our life, but what Peter is saying is we need to make sure there are things that we do not leave unchecked, unnoticed, or are caught unprepared for. Call yourself to action. Prepare yourself. We cannot afford to be unprepared when it comes to our eternal condition. Embrace adversity and enjoy the confidence that it brings.

Freedom is found in bondage to Christ. Why would you want to be in bondage to Christ? Can't I be free to be me and do what I want to do? Not exactly, because the alternative to being in bondage to Christ is to be enslaved to sin, which is the condition that we are born into. We all have a master, no one is truly the master of their own life; so, what are you chaining yourself to? Shouldn't you want to chain yourself to eternal life and have the living hope within you?

Elect exiles; strangers and aliens. People who don't fit in, but rather stick out like a sore thumb. Being distinct is the enemy of fitting in, and in our culture, we have made the distinction that distinctions are bad and that everyone should be included in everything. And that you should be included in whatever you wanted to be included in as your heart leads you. If anyone could be anything regardless of worldview or calling, then what common standards or purposes bind us together? In other words, what are we?

If I call myself a Christian, but want to identify with the things of the world, what am I? **As lost as everyone else.** The Ecclesia, if it is not called out by God, purchased by God, then what is it and what purpose does it serve? If it is not willing to take a stand and be uncompromising on the issues that matter, what purpose does it serve? The sad answer is *nothing*. You can call it what you want, but that doesn't mean that's what it is.

So, prepare your minds for action - be sober minded - because if you want to be a Christian, this is the standard. We are called by our founder Jesus Christ to keep the holy standard of excellence that God has set upon us. Anyone can come to church, but to be a living stone of the Ecclesia you must be born again. Our purpose as a church is to proclaim the gospel to the lost and not keep running back to our lost nature.

Faithful to His Word-John the Baptist

Pastor Jimmie Van Sant

Has someone ever promised you something and not delivered on that promise? Some people are not faithful to their words for a lot of reasons, but we live in a world where promise keeping is not a high priority. Look at marriage, promises were made and even in the Christian community, the promises are broken. Thirty percent of lawsuits involve breaking the contract; someone not keeping their part of the deal. Less and less, people are faithful to their word.

In the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew, there was nothing in respect to a word from God. Four hundred years of silence. Then we come to this account in Luke, the birth of John the Baptist. John was brought into the prophetic picture as God began to speak to prepare the way.

“When you look at the Cross, what do you see? You see God’s awesome faithfulness. Nothing – not even the instinct to spare His own Son – will turn Him back from keeping His word.”

~ Sinclair Ferguson

GOD REMEMBERED HIS WORD

After 400 years, maybe God has forgotten us. God chose Zechariah after 400 years because God remembered, and Zechariah's name means - God Remembers. No one looks back over 400 years of life, but how about 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, where you have struggled before God, waiting on God, looking for something to change, looking for something that God would do that you have sought His face for; and it's just been silent. In this passage, God breaks in and He begins to speak, and He remembered His people. From ancient times, men and women of God have testimony that God remembers His Word. God has been faithful in the past, faithful throughout ancient times, but for 400 years God has been silent.

Zechariah knew that God was faithful in the past, but now the time has come for Zechariah to know that God is faithful in the present trials. In Zechariah's time, Israel was under Roman occupation, ruled by an evil king Herod; Israel was the low rung of the ladder. And where is God in all of this? While burning incense in the temple, Zechariah sees an angel, Gabriel. Most likely Zechariah had never seen an angel before, but out of nowhere, there stands Gabriel who begins to speak to him. At the end of the conversation, Zechariah is left mute and deaf because he did not believe that the angel was telling him the truth. After all, 400 years have passed. Why would this priest be expecting God to speak to him?

Contrast Zechariah's reaction to that of Simeon and Anna, who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem, waiting with expectation for that day to arrive. And they are at the temple waiting when Jesus is brought there by His parents. And Zechariah, a priest, burning incense before God, being spoken to by an angel. His response: How shall I know this, how is this possible; we're too old? For you and I, who have known the Lord

for many years, things have passed over the years and we have become accustomed to certain things. We have prayers that have not yet been answered, we have situations that have not been changed. We read the Word, we pray, we worship on a regular basis, but our relationship, our sense of expectation of God breaking into our lives has grown less than stellar. It's like we've lost our first love.

Do we believe God? Do we find that He is faithful to His Word? After his son was born, the people asked Zechariah what his son's name would be, and he wrote his name is John. Immediately, Zechariah begins to speak:

Luke 1:67-68 *And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people*

Zechariah is now excited, he's exuberant. Why? Because God has now remembered. God has made Himself known; He is no longer silent. God did and will always remember His people; God is always faithful to His Word. All that he studied, all that was grasped and searched out by Zechariah as a priest, had begun to come to fruition: The foretelling and then the arrival of the Messiah.

GOD KEPT HIS WORD

Elizabeth's name means God Has Promised, and God has promised so very much throughout the ages.

Luke 1:24-25,58 *After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.*

The neighbors had come, the day had arrived when John was born, and they rejoiced with her that the Lord had shown great mercy to her. Their joy was based on the fact that God had promised to Zechariah that his prayers have been heard, Elizabeth will give birth. When God speaks, He is faithful to His Word. In the faithful promised mercy to Elizabeth, God is also faithful to the promised mercy of long ago:

Luke 1:72-74 *to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,*

God is faithful to His holy covenant, to deliver His people, and God will not be going to court due to a breach of contract. Perhaps due to the nine months of silence that he had to go through; Zechariah had made the connection that John will play a role in God keeping His holy covenant.

GOD SPREAD HIS WORD

John's name means The Lord is Gracious. Out of a world of legalism, a world of works and man's effort, suddenly, a young man is brought into the scene by the name of John, God is gracious. Grace enters picture; grace and truth come from the Savior, but the forerunner's name announces that it is coming.

***Luke 1:76-77** And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,*

After 400 years of silence, God has visited His people, and yet there is so much more to come. As God visits, He visits His people with redemption, with strength, with blessing, with provision, with the keeping of His promises now. John was called by God to be a prophet, not a priest like his father which would have been the custom. God did not call John to wear priestly robes and serve in a beautiful temple, but to wander in the wilderness wearing rough clothing eating locusts. He was called, not to do what was customary, but to do what God had planned.

There was a need for revival, a need for reconciliation to God and a need for repentance, a need for forgiveness; and he was the prophet sent to forthtell that it was time to come back to God. John was sent to prepare the way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins. John was sent to give knowledge and insight; to be a luminary – a light. Do we go in the knowledge of a Savior who has come, a Savior who has yet to come again, and show light to a world that's incredibly lost in darkness. John prophesied on the promises of God, establishing the fact that God was doing something new and different; and that God is always faithful to His Word.

Heart Lessons from the Miraculous Incarnation- Jesus

Keith DeLorme

We examine the events of the miraculous incarnation and learn valuable heart lessons from the person of Mary who shows us how to respond to (and join) God in His divine activity.

A HUMBLE heart (v.26-29) When it comes to Mary, people tend to go to one of two extremes. They either magnify her so much that Jesus takes second place, or she is ignored, and therefore diminished to the point of being almost irrelevant. Both extremes are wrong. The angel Gabriel said two significant things to Mary.

(v. 28a) Gabriel said, *“Greetings, O favored one!”* Why was Mary “favored?” She wasn’t favored because she was better than all the women on the planet at the time, and not because of how holy she was. God had sovereignly created Mary and chosen Mary to be the recipient of this news and be the woman to carry God’s Son in her womb. Mary was favored because God chose her. And God didn’t look at Mary and say, “I know she’s going to choose to be righteous and holy and so therefore she is worthy of carrying the Second Person of the Trinity. She is good enough to earn my favor.” God set His love on her, and she responded to His divine call in obedience to this task.

As Christians - we’re “favored.” If you’re humbly submitted to the Lordship of Christ, then you’re favored. Your name is recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and you’re eternally secure because He chose YOU before the foundation of the world for salvation. And when Adam and Eve sinned, they made it necessary for God to become man, to come to the earth, to be born in a smelly stable, and go to a Roman cross 33 years later. From heaven to stable to cross to grave – He ascended back into heaven and is coming yet again. This is DIVINE HUMILITY. Are you humbled by this...by His love? Are you in awe? Are you joyful about His condescension? Are you merry about Christ, this Christmas?

(v. 28b) Gabriel also said, *“The Lord is with you!”* This refers to God’s presence and power to enable her to do what He is about to say. God is with you to accomplish the task you are about to receive. Mary knows nothing about getting divinely pregnant, giving birth to the Messiah, or anything else attached to this miracle. All she knows is an angel has appeared to her and God has shown her favor, and the Lord is with her. Mary knows she is a sinner and did not understand why God has favored her. I think this is genuine humility. We don’t have to be perfect to be used by God. A humble heart submitted to the LORDSHIP of Christ – will be used by God.

A TRUSTING heart (v.30-35) Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. I think we can understand why Mary would be confused and disturbed before and after hearing this news. Faith is simply trusting what God says. Notice Mary’s question, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

This is not a question of doubt, but implementation. She had faith and trust in God to do what He said He would do, but her question was concerning the how - “How are you going to do it?” It seemed impossible, but she believed God could do it. Sometimes God answers the question

of “how.” Mary received the news by faith and her perspective is this: “God knows what He is doing. He is perfectly wise and can be trusted.” Whether we understand or agree with how God is going to implement His plan is not the issue... We don’t need to know all the details; we don’t need to be privy to the particulars of God’s activity. The issue is simple: we need trust Him with the matter and the situation and do what He says to do and rely on Him. This is A TRUSTING heart. Mary had a trusting heart.

A SERVANT heart (v.35-38) Luke 1:38 *And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. “Servant” - gives us insight into Mary’s heart. “Servant” – a bondservant. In the context of our salvation (relationship to God), who is a bondservant?*

- A bondservant willingly serves God. A bondservant is someone who loves their master and considers it a blessing and honor to serve him and officially becomes their servant for life. A bondservant renounces all other masters and gives exclusive allegiance.

- A bondservant lines up under God’s authority. Mary essentially said she was under the Lord’s leadership. Mary is saying, “He is the master, I am the servant.” A bondservant lines up under God’s authority. We are bondservants, and we line up under, as Mary did.

- A bondservant belongs to the Lord. Mary saw herself as belonging to God, and thus it is with us. We don’t see ourselves as belonging to an evil/cruel master, but to a loving, gracious, and generous Master who wants us to experience victory in our lives! A bondservant wants to live for Him and lives to die for Him. A bondservant belongs to the LORD.

- A bondservant willingly gives up their rights. A bondservant says, “I love my master so much and I am so blessed to serve Him that whatever He wants me to do, I will do.” Mary willingly gave up her rights to be a bondservant. What rights? Her right to a normal conception, a normal pregnancy, a normal betrothal, a normal marriage, a normal community. We say that “...all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” If we believe that, then we will do what Mary did: we’ll give ourselves to God in complete abandonment, and we’ll surrender all our “rights” to serve Him. Isn’t that what Christ did?

(v.38b) *“...let it be to me according to your word.”* A statement of faith which commits to accepting the outcome, whatever it would be. When Mary heard what was going to happen, she knew she would face several difficult things, like awkwardness and fear of Joseph and family, the appearance of adultery, and the inevitability of a “torpedoed” reputation. But her love and commitment to God was so strong that she could say with humility and honesty to God, “...let it be to me according to your word.” God has a plan and a purpose for your life. We may have uncertainties and concerns about what God is doing or going to do, like Mary did. But whatever God has planned, may we be able to say like Mary, “Let it be according to your word.”

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

We have examined the events of the miraculous incarnation, learning valuable heart lessons from the person of Mary. Mary had: a HUMBLE heart, a TRUSTING heart, and a SERVANT heart. In these qualities, we see the LORD Jesus Christ:

- In humility He came down from heaven to earth. He is God the Son, yet He left His throne.
- To die for you and for me – to take the Father’s wrath against sin upon Himself, giving us instead His righteousness for those who believe.

Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant King! The promised Savior, Messiah, who came for the humble, trusting heart. This is the most important lesson of the Miraculous Incarnation.

Wait Patiently for The Lord- Samuel

Pastor H. Lee Thompson

Elkanah loved Hannah even though the LORD had closed her womb, but Peninnah provoked Hannah to irritate her because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb. Because of being childless and the constant harassing of Peninnah, Hannah was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.

***1 Samuel 1:11** And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."*

After arriving in Shiloh, the next morning Elkanah's family rose early and worshipped the LORD; then they went home to Ramah. Elkanah and Hannah enjoyed a time of intimacy, and the LORD remembered her.

***1 Samuel 1:20** And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."*

After the child was weaned, Hannah offered her only son back to God. The son she waited so long for, she gave back to God. Hannah left Samuel at that early age with Eli the High Priest in Shiloh because Samuel was destined for great things.

Why does God allow bad things to happen? There are three things to remember: The Sovereign God has a plan, Mankind has rejected God, God has a plan to reverse that curse.

God's Plan. God has a purpose for life, for everything in life, for everything in each our lives. He is the Creator God, and His plan from the very beginning of creation was to bless His people forever. Every one of us has a purpose because God has made each of us with a specific purpose in mind. Each of us are made, like cogs in a wheel, to bring about the purposes of God. God's goal in this context is to eradicate sin and Satan forever. And that's what He is doing. As we move into the Christmas season, we see God's plan in action - the Messiah has come, and that sets the stage for the next part of God's plan – Jesus' return as King and Judge. The result of God's plan for us is an eternity of peace with God forever.

***Revelation 21:3-4** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

Rejecting God. Adam and Eve sinned, choosing the curse that God had declared rather than God's plan to bless His people. They sinned and rejected God on our behalf and they're sin was "credited" to our account. Sin separates us from God. God warned Adam and Eve that in the day

that they ate of the prohibited fruit, they would surely die. We are all born into this state of separation and are spiritually dead. Why is there pain and suffering? Because there are consequences to sin and disobedience. Our sin is our problem, not God's.

***Genesis 3:17-19** And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

Reversing the curse. All human history is about God defeating sin and reversing the curse. God is at work reversing the results of that curse. God has a plan, but plans have steps to them; they have timing. Hannah suffered, she sought God, and eventually God answered Her prayer. We need patience in suffering. We need to realize that God is at work, He is using everything in our lives; He did not cause them, but He is using them. We have rejected Him and His way and now He is using the suffering and all the negatives of our lives to bring about His will - but we need patience. God is at work.

He uses the things in our lives to drive us to the point where we trust Him and not try to take things into our own hands. Hannah had been suffering because of her husband and the other woman in the marriage. Elkanah, when Hannah didn't produce children, tried to jump ahead of God and resolve the situation for himself.

If we are seeking God as Hannah sought God, we will see a resolution to our problems, but we must come back to God's Word, we must see His Word as our guideline and live according to the Word of God and apply it to our lives. God does not cause our suffering, He uses it. Through the pain and suffering God brings us back to the point where we will seek after Him. We don't know what God does in all these situations, or what He allows in all these situations - it's a mystery to us, but the just shall live by faith.

We are confident in God. We know that He is sovereign, that He is loving, that He is faithful in all that He does. And that is enough. Just because we don't know what God is doing and how He is doing it, it doesn't mean that He has rejected us. God is not trying to destroy us; He is trying to give us a future and a hope. God is at work to reverse everything that was caused by our rebellion against Him.

Hannah wept, but she promised to give her son back to God. And when the time came God remembered Hannah, and Hannah remembered the Lord and His promises. We need to trust God and not try to take matters into our own hands. But the account wasn't just about Hannah, the account was greater than Hannah. God performed His miracle in His way, in His time.

What about Hannah's son? Samuel became one of Israel's greatest prophets. Her son restored godly leadership to Israel. God had ceased to speak to Israel, for years He had not spoken with

them, but now God is speaking again to Israel through Hannah's son Samuel. And God used Samuel to anoint David, Israel's greatest king, and establish the kingdom that will stand forever because one day Jesus, Son of David, will sit on that throne forever. God has a purpose for your life, and He is bringing you to that place. Do not walk away from God, seek Him, obey Him, and God will do great things in your life.