

Luke 1:5-25

Barren Women and the Purposes of God

Barren women appear frequently in the Old Testament as key players in the plans of God. At critical junctures in Israel's history, God grants to these women children who play crucial roles in God's purposes. Consider the following examples:

Sarah - God promised Abraham that he would bless Abraham with many descendents and that the whole world would ultimately be blessed through him (Genesis 12:1-3). However, God's plans for Abraham (and for the whole world!) were blocked by a slight problem: Abraham's wife Sarah could not have children. But years after this promise, three heavenly visitors arrived at Abraham's tent and they promised that within a year Sarah would have a son (Genesis 18:1-10). Like Elizabeth, Sarah was old and past the age of childbearing (v 11), and like Zechariah she expresses disbelief in God's promise (vv12-15). But despite her unbelief, Sarah gave birth to Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7) thus miraculously beginning to fulfill God's promises to Abraham.

Rebekah - Abraham's son Isaac married Rebekah, who also was barren. Like Zechariah, Isaac prayed and God enabled Rabekah to become pregnant (Genesis 25:21). Rebekah's son Jacob would become the next link in God's promise to make a great nation out of Abraham.

Rachel - Jacob's second wife, Rachel, was barren. But God heard her prayer and enabled her to give birth to two children: Joseph (Genesis 30:22-24) and Benjamin (Genesis 35:17). God would use Joseph to save both his father, brothers, and the entire ancient world around Egypt from a great famine.

Manoah's wife - During the period of the Judges, a certain man named Manoah had a wife who was childless (Judges 13:2). As in Zechariah's case, an angel of the Lord appeared to her and promised her a child (v3). And like John, this child would be under the Nazirite vow for life (vv4-5). God would use this child, Samson, to deliver Israel from the Philistines (v5).

Hannah - Hannah had no children for her husband Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:1-2). Like Zechariah, Hannah went to the Lord's temple to pray (v9-10) and promised God that if he were to give her a son, she would dedicate her son as a lifelong Nazirite (v11). God answered her prayer and she bore Samuel, who became a great judge of Israel and the last judge before the period of the kings.

Cling to the Promises of God

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20

... being confident in this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who've been called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28