

Miraculous Birth Gives Miraculous Life

A couple once asked me if they could meet with my wife and me to talk about a personal matter. We agreed to meet with them after the evening service. When we were together, they shared with us that they could not have children. So they were looking at different methods for conceiving a child. One of the methods they were considering was IVF (In Vitro Fertilization). It is artificial insemination, and they explained the procedure to us. They were concerned that in the process some fertilized cells effectively would be aborted. Their question was what biblical principles would apply to their circumstances. So we gave them a biblical perspective.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN BIRTH.

Today, couples who cannot conceive children can look at a number of options. One of them is IVF. Another one is to use a surrogate mother, and some adopt. Just as there are surrogate mothers,

I have learned that some men will for a charge impregnate a woman to enable her to bear a child. Our culture is doing so many things that are so very wrong. Sometimes the techniques that are tried in order to get pregnant do not work including IVF at times. Science and medical techniques do not always have the answer.

There is one way to have a baby that is for certain. That is

when God decides a woman is to bear a child. There is one person who does not need any new medical techniques to accomplish this goal. He is God, and when He chooses to give a couple a baby, a child is born - really simple. He can also choose to make a woman barren or unable to have a child. God is ultimately in control of who is born and when. We are told in the pages of scripture that He forms us in our inward parts while we are in the womb. God decides when you are going to be born, and where you are going to be born, and to what parents. I was a young child when it finally

dawned on me that God had me born to my parents, in the state of Washington, and in the USA. I was amazed to think that I could have been born 2,000 years ago, I might have been born in the future, but God had a time, parents, and the location planned. It was His choice. God is the one who is in control of and



Abraham & Isaac

causes children to be born.

ABRAHAM'S PLAN TO FULFILL THE PROMISE. Let us look at some examples from scripture of women who were barren or without children. The first example is Abram and Sarai. Turn to Genesis 12:1-3 where God gives a promise to Abram. If you were to read the last part of chapter 11, you would find that Abram and Sarai are up north in what prob-

ably was southern Turkey, They were living in Haran. Verse 1 of chapter 12 says,

Now the LORD said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you . . .
Genesis 12:1 (NASB)

It is amazing that Hebrews tells us that when Abram left, he did not know where he was going. He just trusted God and God directed where he was going. He ended up in what we today call the land of Palestine. Verse 2 says,

And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.
Genesis 12:2-3 (NASB)

Now there are three promises here that God gave to Abram. The first is that God would give him the land of Palestine. I find it amazing today when people protest and say, “The land of Palestine where the Jews are is not their land.” Yes, it is; God gave it to them. That is the simple answer as to why it is their land. That is what verse 1 said. In verse 2, God said that He is going to make him a great nation. That means he was going to have a lot of children and grand children. They in turn would continue having many descendants until in time there was a great nation. Verse 3 says, “and I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” If you have an opportunity to bless Israel, you should do so. Never curse them.

Verse 4 tells us how old Abram was at this point.

So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old

when he departed from Haran. Genesis 12:4 (NASB)

This verse tells us that he was 75 years old. If you were to look at Genesis 17:17, you would find out that Sarai was ten years younger. In that verse Abram was 99 and we are told that Sarai was 89. So when this promise is first made, he was 75 and she was 65. What a great promise was given to him, motivating him to leave Haran and go elsewhere. When you get to chapter 15, we are told,

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,

“Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.” Genesis 15:1 (NASB)

Time had elapsed when the Lord appears to him and tells him that he is going to have a reward. Now watch what Abram does in verse 2. He says,

“O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless,
and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”
Genesis 15:2 (NASB)

How does Abram respond? He says that he is childless or without children. Is that not a problem? If God had promised that you were going to become a great nation and you were childless, what does that reveal? There is a problem, if a prophecy is going to be fulfilled! Abram was childless, and so he had a plan. He asked God if Eliezer of Damascus was to be his heir. Notice what he said, “and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.” In verse 3 and 4 we read,

And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” Genesis 15:3-4 (NASB)

You can imagine what Abram was doing. He was thinking about the fact that God gave him a promise and time had

gone by. He was without a child. I think about five years has elapsed. Scripture does not say precisely. Most likely Abram and Sarai were probably trying to have a child. How long did they try? We do not know how long. All we know is that in the next chapter, Abram is ten years older. In this chapter, he is somewhere between 75 and 85 and they are struggling, wondering how this promise is going to be fulfilled. So he thought that perhaps Eliezer of Damascus was the answer. But God said, “No, that is not the heir that you are going to have.”

Here is verse 5 and 6,

And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:5-6 (NASB)

Is that not what the New Testament says about Abram? He believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. This is the passage that tells us how he believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Abram had his own plan, but God said no. God said, that is not My plan. Look at the sky, see the stars, that will be the numbers of your descendants. We are told that Abram chose to believe God. He believed that God would fulfill the promise that God gave to him.

SARAI’S PLAN TO FULFILL THE PROMISE. Let us move on to chapter 16 where we are told in the first verse that Sarai had not yet given birth.

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children . . . Genesis 16:1 (NASB)

They were still childless. If we look at verse 3, we find Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan and he was 85 years old. Verse 2 tells us that Sarai now had an idea. She was trying to fulfill the promise of “you are going to be a great nation.” Sarai said to Abram,

“Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing chil-

dren. Genesis 16:2a (NASB)

It is interesting the way she puts it. She says, “The Lord has prevented me from bearing children.” She is correct.

Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. Genesis 16:2b (NASB)

What she actually said was, “I have a good idea, you have sex with my maid, and we will have children and fulfill the promise.” Her plan does not work out as she thought it would. If you read the rest of the chapter, you will discover that Ishmael, Abram’s son by Sarai’s maid, was not going to be the heir for Abram. Verse 16 says,

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. Genesis 16:16 (NASB)

This latest plan happened when he was 85 years old, and the child was born when he was 86 years old.

GOD’S PLAN TO REPEATED. Now we will look at chapter 17:1.

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old . . . Genesis 17:1a (NASB)

A lot of time passed in the white spaces between chapter 16 and 17. Thirteen years went by, and we are told the Lord appeared to him again.

. . . the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him,

“I am God Almighty;

Walk before Me, and be blameless.

“I will establish My covenant between Me and you,

And I will multiply you exceedingly.”

Genesis 17:1b-2 (NASB)

God is still giving Abraham the promise that he will be the a great nation. How long had he waited?! The promise was given when he was seventy-five years old. Now he is nine-

ty-nine years old and God is still giving him the same promise twenty-four years later. You can just imagine all that they have been trying in order to have a child during those twenty-four years. Look at verse 15 of the chapter:

And then God said to Abram,

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" Genesis 17:15-17 (NASB)

He just cannot believe what is happening. He is ninety-nine years old and anticipating a child in one year.

And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac . . . Genesis 17:18-19 (NASB)

They have been waiting for twenty-four years for a promised heir. Have you ever prayed to God for something and because it took a couple of weeks or months, did you have a problem believing and trusting in God? It is easy to think that God did not answer your prayer if it takes one month. With Abram, this was a promise from God where God made Abram wait for twenty-four years before Sarai conceived! The child's name was even given to them in advance. So now they knew the child would be a boy. This is just really incredible, when you think about the practical application to our prayer lives. Have you ever prayed and became discouraged thinking God was never, ever going to answer your prayer? Maybe He will do it in the last year of your life, the last month, or even on the last day. I know a woman who was praying for the salvation of one of her children, and she never saw the salvation of that child. But her child became a Christian the day after she died as a direct result of the mother's death. God's timetable is different from ours. So

the promise had been given. Twenty-four years had gone by, and now they know the name they are going to give the child.

Let us read now in Genesis 18:6 where we are told,

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah . . . Genesis 18:6a (NASB)

In verses one and two we are told that three men had arrived. Abraham sees them and runs from the tent door. Then in verse 6 we are told,

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes." Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" Genesis 18:6-12 (NASB)

Notice Sarai's surprise. From a human perspective, what other reaction could be expected! They were really old, too old to have children. Again, from a human perspective, it was impossible to have a child. Even IVF would not have been able to help. In our culture today, you would not be able even to adopt a child at ninety-nine years old.

And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'" Genesis 18:13 (NASB)

BIRTH OF ISAAC. The next event in this drama is revealed in Genesis 21:1-3.

Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Genesis 21:1-3 (NASB)

Then in verse 5 we are given Abraham's age:

Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Genesis 21:5 (NASB)

What an amazing event happened! Abraham was one hundred years old. Sarah was ninety years old, and they have a child! Then in the opening verses of chapter 22 we learn that Abraham was told to sacrifice his son. Verse 7 tells that when Abraham and Isaac arrived at the place where they are supposed to offer the sacrifice ...

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Genesis 22:7-8 (NASB)

What is the message? The message is that Abraham was planning to sacrifice his son, the son for whom he waited twenty-five years until he was one hundred years old. He waited and waited, and now he was going to sacrifice his son. Incredible!

ISAAC — A TYPE OF CHRIST. Now please turn with me to Hebrews 11:17-19.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. Hebrews 11:17-19 (NASB)

This is an important verse. Here we are told that Abraham was willing to offer his son because he believed that God would raise his son back to life in order to fulfill the promise God had previously given him. Talk about faith! God had said Abraham's descendants would come through Isaac. So if Abraham was going to kill Isaac, then he had to believe that God would raise him back to life. Scripture states that Abraham believed that. This is an amazing story! Did you notice the word at the end of the verse - "type"? Isaac was a type of Christ. This gives us a principle. There is a parallel between Jesus and Isaac. The parallel is that God caused the miraculous birth of Isaac, and God also caused the miraculous birth of Jesus.

BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST. You may be wondering if we were ever going to talk about Jesus and His birth! Luke 1:26-31 says,

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus." Luke 1:26-31 (NASB)

Stop now and ponder what we know about Jesus at this point. There were prophecies that dated back thousands and thousands of years. This time it was not just 25 years previously that the promise of a child was given before the baby was born. This time it was thousands of years. But is that not the way God works? God is not in any hurry to fulfill His promise. We are going to find out that He does it at the ... right time, in His timing.

There is something else that is interesting. The name of this Child is given by God before the Child is born. The same thing was true of Isaac. In addition, just as Isaac was born miraculously to a couple who was 100 years and 90

years old, this second Child is going to be born in an even more spectacular way. He is going to be virgin born.

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” Luke 1:32-35 (NASB)

We have seen the incredible birth of a child that God made possible for Abraham and Sarah. But this birth was even more spectacular. Our God is the God of miracles.

And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. Luke 1:36 (NASB)

CHILDLESS WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE. If you were to search the Old Testament, you would find many women who were barren but ended up having children. In Genesis 25:19-21 we have the story of Rebecca and Isaac. She was barren. Isaac prayed for her and God honored his prayer. She bore children. Scripture tells us of Rachel and Jacob in Genesis 29:29 - 30:24. Rachel was barren. The reason was that Jacob loved her more than he loved Leah, his first wife. God closed the womb of Rachel and would not let her have a child. Eventually God opened her womb and she bore two sons. In Judges 13:2-3, we learn that Manoah and his wife were barren. Later, she bore a child named Samson. Do you know what God did in every one of those cases? He waited for the right time before giving these parents children. In 1 Samuel 1 Elkanah and Hannah were childless. In verse 16 we learn she cried bitterly to the Lord and the Lord heard her prayer and gave her a child. Her son was Samuel, who served God as a priest.

Now let us return to the account in Luke 1:6-7. Zacharias and Elizabeth have been praying for a child. Gabriel

appeared and announced to Zacharias that they are going to have a child and he is to name his son John. Think about every one of these cases, every one of these situations where a woman was childless and God gave them a child. Every time it has been a significant birth. Each time God has made them wait. Zacharias and Elisabeth are advanced in age. Another miraculous birth has occurred. There are incredible parallels between the births of Jesus and Isaac. Let me give you a second parallel.

PARALLELS BETWEEN ISAAC AND JESUS. Here we discover the second parallel is that God prophesied both of the births. God prophesied the birth of Isaac and He prophesied the birth of Christ. How about a third parallel? God gave the names of the children to the parents in advance of their births. We have already mentioned that one. The fourth parallel is that the announcement of both children seemed impossible to the mothers. Remember what Sarah did? She laughed! And Mary asked,

“How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Luke 1:34-37 (NASB)

What is impossible with God? According to scripture, nothing is. It does not matter whether you are childless or have children. If you are childless, God knows how to give you children. In Mary’s case sexual activity was not even involved. She did not need a man this time in order to conceive, because God can do the impossible; He does the miraculous.

And Mary said, “Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38 (NASB)

FIFTH PARALLEL BETWEEN ISAAC AND JESUS. Let me

give you another parallel. The births occurred at the right time, in God's timing, when He wanted them to occur. Look at Galatians 4:4. We are told,

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law . . . Galatians 4:4 (NASB)

This says the birth came at the fullness of time. If you were to look at Romans 5:6, you would find that there we are told it was at the right time. So we are not sure exactly what the right time is, or the fullness of time is, from our perspective, but from God's perspective Jesus' birth was at the right time - just as the birth of Isaac was at the right time.

SIXTH PARALLEL BETWEEN ISAAC AND JESUS. The sixth parallel is that God had a unique purpose for each birth. Isaac was to become the father of a great nation. Jesus is the Savior of a great number of people who by placing their faith in Him would have their sins forgiven and spend eternity with God. In Matthew 1:21, Joseph is told by the Angel Gabriel that Jesus will die so that He can forgive the sins of many. 1 John 4:9 says,

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:9-10 (NASB)

The message of the two verses is that God showed His love to us by sending His son into the world so you and I can have new life.

May I be personal now with you? God miraculously caused your spiritual birth. You did not do it. In John 3 we find Jesus and Nicodemus talking to one another. Nicodemus was having a hard time understanding how to gain eternal life. He asked, "What may I do to gain eternal life?" Jesus eventually asked him, "Do you not understand that you have to be born from above?" We often read that as "born again." Actually, a better translation of the Greek text is "born from above." The message is that we become a

Christian because God chose to give us new life. It is miraculous life. Jesus came to earth by a miraculous birth. He walked among us and then died on a cross. He came back to life and that was proof that He was God. He was the perfect sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world. Now what happens if we put our faith in Him? We receive miraculous new spiritual life. Scripture teaches us we are a new creation, a new person. The miraculous birth of Christ occurred in order to make possible our miraculous new life. That is why Jesus came.

The second parallel is that God prophesied your spiritual birth would occur. Read Isaiah 53. It talks about the suffering Savior who is going to come and die for the sheep who had gone astray.

And the third parallel is God gave us names before our spiritual births. In Revelation 2:17 God gives us the following promise.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. Revelation 2:17 (NASB)

Then the fourth parallel for us as Christians is our new lives seem impossible to us. Almost every time I ask somebody, "How are you going to get to heaven?" They tell me, "I am a good person." Just recently one of the men in the church joined me to visit a man in the hospital. For only the second time in my life I had somebody tell me that they were going to go to hell for what they had done in their life. I was surprised he said he was going to hell. Most people find it hard to believe that you do not have to do anything or work to be saved or to receive new, spiritual life. Most believe that you have to do something in order to get new life. I have had people tell me, "I am working to get better, and when I get good enough, then I will accept Jesus as my Savior." That is not the way it works! You actually will go to hell if that is what you are trying to do. If you are really trying to earn your way to heaven by working and doing good things, you are going to send yourself to hell, because the scripture

tells us that eternal life is a gift. It comes to us by faith, not by working. The idea is that you give up trying. You humble yourself. You say, “Jesus, I believe that you died on a cross for my sins. I am repentant of my sins. Take charge of my life. I just want my sins forgiven and to go to heaven.” That gives you new life. That surrender to Christ brings new life to a sinner, and it all occurs at the right time. That timing is the fifth parallel.

The sixth parallel is that God has a unique purpose for each one of our spiritual births. Did you know this morning if you are a Christian, there is a purpose for your spiritual birth? There is a purpose that God has for you, and it is our challenge to find out exactly what it is. But I will tell you one thing we are supposed to do. Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB)

Our new lives are to glorify God. Jesus’ miraculous birth occurred in order to give us miraculous spiritual life. Let us pray.

Thank you, Father. We thank you that you love us. We thank you that you sent your son. We thank you Father that by simple faith in Jesus Christ and repentance and turning from our sins, we can have our sins forgiven and spend eternity with you. There is nothing we have to do, except to believe in You that You did everything that was necessary for us to have our sins forgiven and spend eternity with you. We thank you for this time of the year when we remember specifically why Jesus came. We thank you in Jesus’ name. Amen.