

INTRO: Each of the three Wednesday mid-week Advent services studies a 'miracle baby' from the Bible. My definition of a miracle baby is: one born only by divine intervention. Last week the baby was Isaac, born to 90-year-old Sarah and 100-year-old Abraham. Tonight our miracle baby is named Samuel.

1. Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. 2) And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3) This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, the priests of the Lord, were there. 4) And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. 5) But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb. 6) And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb. 7) So it was year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her, therefore she wept and did not eat. 8) Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" 9) So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the door post of the tabernacle of the Lord. 10) And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. 11) Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head. 12) And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Elli watched her mouth. 13) Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14) So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!" 15) And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord 16) Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken until now." 17) Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." 18) And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. 19) Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. 20) So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord."

I. ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF SAMUEL'S BIRTH

A. From Abraham to Joshua

1. Isaac's son Jacob had 12 sons; Jacob re-named Israel
2. favored Joseph (Rachel) sold by brothers; Egypt
3. dream ability; fat/lean years; family all moved to Egypt
4. in 450 years, numbered 2.5 M; infanticide
5. Moses led Exodus; 40 year wandering
6. conquest of Canaan under Joshua; God raised 'judges' as needed

B. The cycle of judges

1. priesthood, but no 'Moses' or 'Joshua'
2. "each man did what was right in his own eyes"
3. copied Canaanites; syncretistic; Philistines came; prayed...
4. 'judge' defeated oppressor; cycle repeated

C. And now comes Samuel

1. Elkanah an Ephraimite; Hannah/Peninnah; vv.5/6 Lord closed her womb
2. Eli, aged high priest, observed Hannah's silent prayer
3. retracted accusation; assured Hannah of her request/vow
4. v.19 Lord remembered her; conceived; Samuel = Heard by God
5. 'weaned' boy taken to Eli at Tabernacle at Shiloh
6. Hannah sewed priestly garments for him each year

II. AN EXCURSUS ABOUT BIGAMY

A. Descriptive vis-a-vis prescriptive

1. because Jacob, Elkanah, David, Solomon did it, is it okay
2. most bigamists' households experienced strife, idolatry

B. A biblical definition of marriage

1. (a) God's institution of the (b) lifelong union of (c) one man and one woman for the purpose of (d) mutual companionship and with the (e) intended result of bearing children
2. Biblical basis: a = God brought Eve to Adam; b = death, no marriage in heaven; c = the two shall be one; d = not good...alone; e = blessed them ...be fruitful (except Sarah, Hannah)

III. SOME PARALLELS WITH YOUNG SAMUEL AND YOUNG JESUS

A. Very few 'child' stories in the Bible

1. Samuel 3 times, "Speak Lord, your servant heareth"

2. Luke 2:42 boy Jesus in temple, "Father's business"

B. Their mothers' psalms

1. 1 Sam.2:4 ...bows of the mighty are broken (Hannah)
2. Luke 1:52 put down the mighty from their seats (Mary)

IV. SAMUEL'S ROLE IN THE ANCESTRY OF JESUS

A. Unique: cp. prophet, priest, king

1. last of judges; because his sons were sinful, like Eli's
 2. exerted authority as judge; instructed Saul when king
 3. not from tribe of Levi, yet grew up with the high priest
 4. ch. 13 incident, Saul waited 7 days for Samuel; offered sacrifices
 5. preeminent prophet from childhood!
- (6) Jesus king of spiritual kingdom; prophesied with each word; supreme sacrifice

B. Samuel anointed two kings

1. usually the job of the high priest
2. although prophet Elijah was told by God to anoint
3. Samuel anointed Saul, as per God's directive
4. and also David; Jesus is 'son of David' literally and symbolically

V. MIRACLE BABIES POINT TO JESUS' INCARNATION

A. God speaks through miracles

1. "Look here, can you do this?"
2. God is in charge, totally
3. miracle baby calls attention to a miracle message
4. Samuel: speak, Lord, your servant heareth
5. Samuel: David, God has a purpose for your descendant

B. David's greater Son came at Christmas

1. the miracle of True God in a True Baby Boy
2. Jesus came to do what we have not and cannot
3. Baby Jesus was born to die, for us, and for the whole world
4. oh, one more miracle: Jesus rose from death

CONCLUSION: I believe in miracles, don't you? God's miracle babies in the Bible get our attention. They prove God's gracious plan for all who believe Him. Oh yes, I believe in miracles. Amen.