



The Landing

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**“The Miraculous Birth: God Gives Joy”
1 Samuel 1:1-20**

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1 Samuel 1:1–20

“There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?”

After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. 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.”

As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.” But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.” And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 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.”

Introduction: Samuel's Birth Points to the Birth of Jesus Christ

All miraculous births in the Old Testament point to the world's most important birth, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this brief Advent series we are looking at three Old Testament miraculous births to see how they reveal Christ's birth to our hearts and souls.

The Setting: Israel, 1000 years before Christ.

This family we will meet lives in Israel, in the land of Ephratha which is the region including Bethlehem, at the time of the judges, when there is no king in Israel, and everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Israel's faith is desolate. True believers are a tiny remnant. And sin, chaos, disunity, war and evil are on the ascendency. But God will have his way. God will have his people. God will keep his Word. God will raise up a king, in the person of King David. And the spiritual lineage of David begins with this family, this rural family, Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah. Do not despise the day of small things. God is willing to use the sling-shots, mangers, and mustard seeds to accomplish great and mighty things in his kingdom and in eternity.

The greatest question behind I and II Samuel is this: are God's promises to be trusted? Is God to be trusted? Do you trust God? Look at our precious and beautiful sister Hannah and you will find an answer: Is God to be trusted? The most important question for you and your family this morning is the exact same: can God be trusted? Do you submit, surrender, depend on and trust God?

Let's look at this family and see how through their trust in God, we can see God himself, and pray he will grant us the gift of trusting him too.

Verse 1, *"There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. He had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other, Peninnah. And Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."*

So hill-dwelling farmer named Elkanah took a wife named Hannah. Her name means God's favor or God's grace. And she was unable to bear him children. But in the Ancient Near East having heirs was as important as the American dream in our culture: you must have it, at all costs. We bow before the dead idols of money and wealth and power in our culture, and the church is right in the mix of it, so to with Elkanah. He was not going to be childless. So he takes another wife, Peninnah. Her name means "Pearl." Peninnah bears her polygamist husband children.

Remember that polygamy is a most heinous form of adultery and adultery breaks the seventh commandment and therefore Paul reminds us adulterers will not enter the kingdom of God. So we trust and hope that Elkanah repented of his sin of adultery, so he is not lost.

I. God's Miraculous Blessing to a Mother's Faithful Prayer

There are signs of great hope for this family aren't there. Elkanah loves Hannah, he doesn't love Penninah. That surely leaves disunity and strife between the two women. How could it be otherwise? Elkanah leads his family every year to a holy city in Israel called Shiloh. And with all the other Israelites, and in the presence of the high priest Eli, they make sacrifices and enjoy family meals at the festival celebrations.

Hannah's Grief (vs. 3-8)

I want you to see Hannah's grief. Look at verse 3,

"Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year. As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?'"

Hannah's womb was closed by God. God gives barrenness. Bow before the God of all reality who rules with unstoppable might over every detail of every life. God opens and closes wombs – for her joy and for his glory.

Elkanah feels sorry for Hannah. Maybe he prays a special prayer she will conceive. Maybe he feels guilty for his willingness to get children by adultery? In either case he gives Hannah a double-portion at the family picnic. And everyone sees it. Penninah has children so she has more food, food for all her brood. But God's favor is on Hannah. But at this moment, her being singled out only pierces her heart deeper with the dagger of shame and sorrow.

Verse 6 says Penninah, now called Hannah's rival; can you see it? A rivalry between the two wives? How could it not be so? Her rival would grievously nag her because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb. "Can I help you Hannah? Do you need anything Hannah? You must be so sad Hannah, ohhhh you poor thing." What secret sins had Hannah committed? Why was God angry or displeased with her?" This taunting wasn't a rarity. Penninah did it year after

year. It was a character pattern for her. Why? Probably because she was insecure. That's why everyone boasts in themselves: they are afraid of being exposed by their own failures. Penninah was forever second. And she knew how her husband looked at Hannah. He loved Hannah, he only used me for making babies. Her double-portion of meat proves it.

So Hannah sits alone with her double-portion and eats nothing. Her husband comes to her asking, *"Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"* Sometimes husbands can be such dolts. Elkanah is not the sharpest knife in the drawer. "I could ask you the same question Elkanah. You have your sons Elkanah. I have none. You committed adultery and brought the other woman into this family; she attacks me for years. And I am left to wonder if God opposes me too."

Such pain in this family as in so many families. Maybe yours too. The problems are complex. The solution so simple: seek God. Humble yourself before God and confess your sins before God. That's what Elkanah, and Penninah should do. We don't know how Penninah responds, but we get a strong hint of Elkanah's repentance later.

Hannah's Vow (vs. 9-11)

But notice how Hannah responds in her pain. Instead of taking her pain and running away from God, Hannah takes her pain and she runs directly toward God. This is her greatness. This is her beauty. This is the evidence of God's grace and favor in her life. In heart-crushing sorrow, she runs toward God.

Look at verse 9,

"After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. 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.'"

Hannah's pain did not drive her away from God, but it drove her to God! She prays not just in request of a child, but vows a vow: if God grants a child, she will give him back to the Lord!

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.'"*

Hannah's idol was not motherhood, nor a child, nor her family. Her treasure was God. How do we know? She vowed to give any child she receives back to the Lord all the days of his life, as a Nazirite, a man of holiness, never cutting his hair.

Make your vows to the Lord. And keep them. In your distress cry out to God. What mother has not been in distress? All motherhood is a call to suffering. Bring your pain to God and make your vows then keep them. What your children need most from you is not perfection; but a heart that seeks God.

Dear Sisters: Whether you are widowed, single, divorced, married, with children or without, what every-one around you needs most and what God commands of you, is not a façade of perfection; but a heart that flees to God in your sorrow.

Hannah's Joy (vs. 12-18)

Look at carefully at Hannah's joy. It comes before her prayer is even answered. And it leads to righteousness after her prayer is answered.

Verse 12, "As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad."

Hannah's joy returns and grows before she had any answer from God. Eli, the disobedient high priest, still speaks God's Word and it comes to pass (v.17), even though he is not a faithful priest. He confuses Hannah with a worthless woman; but it is his sons who are worthless men. His sons are lost, Hannah is not lost but found. They are without faith and she is filled with faith. Those son's future is dire; but her future is wonderful.

Hannah's joy is granted to her by God, not by her circumstances. This has got to infuriate Penninah. Penninah-types boast in the pleasant circumstances they think they create for themselves. What they never seem to realize is that God opens and closes wombs and holds the keys to the floodgates of heaven's blessing. No one's blessing should ever be taken as God's approval. Nor pain

every be taken as God's blame. God is the great determiner of reality, of your life and of all eternity. But this grand truth Hannah is learning well.

God Keeps His Word

Look at how Eli's Word to Hannah comes to pass. 1 Samuel 1:19–20, *"They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 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.'"*

The LORD remembered her. It wasn't as if God forgets. The Hebrew word *Zachar* (זָכַר) often translated "remember" means here "has mercy." You know there is no verb for mercy. Mercy is a noun, but to mercy on someone is to 'remember' them compassionately. The Lord has mercy and compassion upon Hannah and she conceives and bears her son Samuel.

The order of their lives models all who seek God: worship, intimacy, blessings. Worship, intimacy blessings. That's the rhythm of life for all who seek God. Is your family in upheaval? Are your relationships strained? Is temptation and chaos and disorder threatening? Return to God's order: worship, intimacy and blessing. Then turn the results to God and give him thanks.

Can you imagine the joy when little Samuel is born? "I have asked him of the Lord" that's what his name will be. "The one asked for of the Lord." It isn't just that Hannah has a son. It's that in having a son, God gave her what she asked. God is real and God is on the move. That's where the joy comes from! Hannah's joy is in God! She is not drunk with wine; she is filled with the joy of the Lord!

Hannah's Vow Fulfilled

Hannah doesn't forget the Lord. She remembers her vow and gives lavishly back to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:21–28,

"The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, 'As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever.' Elkanah her husband said to her, 'Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish his word.'" So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and

the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD. And he (Samuel) worshiped the LORD there."

Hannah kept her vow. And when she went up to offer her son to the Lord, they brought a bull and an ephah of flower, and a skin of wine. This was a massive offering. Some ancient versions read that they brought three bulls. No matter the detail: it was a lavish, opulent, extravagant act of worship to God. Now three or so years later, Hannah reveals herself to Eli, and says, "I am the woman who prayed for a child and you said God would grant me my request. So here he is. I give him to the Lord all the days of his life." Hannah's treasure is not her son, nor peace in her broken home. Hannah's treasure is God.

How well her private moments with her son are now on display. Look at the last phrase: "*And he (Samuel) worshiped the LORD there.*" Even as a young boy, Samuel knows to worship the Lord at the Temple. Hannah's faith is not just public piety. She taught Samuel worship in the most private of family moments.

II. Four Longings

This account reveals in all of us four longings. Here they are.

A. We long for truth and wisdom

We ache for someone to wisely tell us the truth about our true identity before God. Who will put away all the campaigns or deceptions and marketing gimmicks and cruel curses about us and just tell us the truth about who we are in God?

B. We long for spiritual and real power

We ache for the power to overcome the sins of others and the sins within our hearts! Who has the power to cause us to rise above the past?

C. We long for faithful protection

We ache to be protected in the future from others, from evil and from our own sins, and from God's wrath. Who could achieve such a great protection?

D. We long for lasting and deep peace.

We long for peace in the world, peace with others, and most of all peace with God. Not just the ending of conflict, but true, united, integral, deep peace.

Only God can supply these longings. God's answer in this passage is to send a miraculous child, Samuel. His name means "Asked of God."

But what if God doesn't grant our request? What if God sends no Samuel? What if the barren woman remains barren, and the simple Elkanah gains no insight. What if Penninah keeps nagging and Eli never gains genuine faith, nor control over his sons? What then? Do we just live dull lives of struggle and meager pleasure and then we die? Is joy rooted only in our circumstances? No. Listen, joy is rooted in the person of God in Jesus Christ. You were meant to have a real and supernatural joy that surpasses your circumstances.

Listen to Habakkuk 3: 17-18,

*"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my
salvation."*

This is a bold, courageous, fierce joy that is not the house of cards you've carefully set hoping nothing topples it. This is joy like an ancient castle that no storm or earthquake can move.

No matter what division lies within your family. Jesus predicted it. No matter what hardship you face. No matter what opposition you face. No matter what battles with sin you wage. No matter what attacks from the enemy you endure. Trust God. Look to God. Rejoice in God. Make him the joy of your salvation.

III. The Birth of Jesus Christ Fulfills Our Deepest Longings: Hannah's Song
Samuel was not God's final answer. His life pointed prophetically to God's answer yet to come.

Notice in Hannah's song, she is not singing about God's personal blessing to her and her husband, that she finally has born to him a child. No. She is rejoicing that God's promises are coming to pass for Israel! God is tearing down wicked leaders and raising up godly ones. That's what makes Hannah sing for joy.

And Hannah knows of this future answer so she prophesies in a song: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

"And Hannah prayed and said,

*"My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD.
My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.
"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a
God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows
of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger."*

*The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.
The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the
ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set
the world. "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked
shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.
The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them
he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."*

Hannah's Joy in God's Salvation

Notice how Hannah begins with soaring joy before God in verse 1,

*"My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD.
My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation."*

What is the cause of Hannah's joy? Is it that she is pregnant? No. It is that God is on the move to save his people. "I rejoice in your SALVATION!" Look at verse 2,

"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God." Do you know what "Rock" means in Scripture? It means salvation. You can see this in II Samuel 22:3, *"my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence."*

Hannah is rejoicing in God as her salvation and the salvation of all who take refuge in him!

A. Jesus Christ is Our Wonderful Counselor

What fuels her joy? God's wisdom and counsel.

Look at verse 3,

"Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed."

B. Jesus Christ is Our Mighty God

And she exults in God's might. Look at...

1 Samuel 2:2

*"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God."*

And verse 4,

"The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength."

And verse 6,

“The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.”

God will kill Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phineas (1 Samuel 2:25).

C. Jesus Christ is Our **Everlasting Father**

And her joy comes from the way God is a kind father to her and all those who trust him. Look at

1 Samuel 2:5–7:

“Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.

The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.”

Verse 8a, shows what blessing his children inherit

“He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.”

D. Jesus Christ is Our **Prince of Peace**

And we need a future ruler whose rule creates peace for all his royal subjects. Look at...

Verse 4, *“The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.*

Vesre 8b, *“For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, and on them he has set the world.*

Verse 10, *“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”*

Hannah prophesies a future Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace and the Everlasting Father. Takes these four titles for the baby born, and see how many ideas in Hannah’s song match these four titles of Christ.

A King Will Come

Remember there was no king in Israel. But look at the very last line of Hannah’s song:

(v.10b), *“The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”*

Hannah sings of God’s future judgement by a king, and the strength God will give to his king. And more than that, this King will also be the Messiah. She

says, may he exalt the horn of his anointed. That is, may God exalt the strength of his Messiah, his Christ.

And her son Samuel is the key prophet and judge that God appoints to raise up Israel's greatest King, King David, Hannah's spiritual descendant. But David is not Israel's final king. Nor is he the final King of the True Israel, the global and invisible church, that is David's eternal Son, Jesus Christ.

Another lowly woman of faith, whose name is Mary, 1000 years later, in this same community, Bethlehem, at the fullness of time will miraculously conceive a bear a son who will sit on David's throne and rule not just national Israel, but all the nations and their leaders. Revelation 1:4–5,

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, [5] and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”

Here is a king who came to die and pour out his blood. This God who in pure righteousness condemns sinners to hell, and saves whom he wills, this God is the judge of all the earth and he will do right. Be reconciled to this God. Don't blow this off. Don't fall into the arrogance of Penninah, or Eli or Saul. God will not be mocked. Repent of all sin and be reconcile to God. Only God gives real joy; and gives real joy He does indeed.

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