

“A PROPHET GREATER THAN MOSES?”

THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOR FOR THE CHURCH

JUDGES 13

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What makes God wonderful? Many aspects of his Person and character make God wonderful. In the Bible, God particularly reveals His WONDERFUL-ness in the salvation of His people.

God works on behalf of his people to deliver them from sin and evil. God shows his grace to folks who do not deserve it! What makes God wonderful is the grace and mercy he shows to sinners. After the great salvation event of the Exodus, Moses described God as the One who does wonders, or is wonderful in his power and grace:

ESV Exodus 15:11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? מַלְאֲכֵי

We see this wonderful God revealed in his mighty power and grace today in our passage from Judges 13.

God shows his power and grace as he seeks out His people who are not seeking Him to provide them with a set apart man to begin to deliver them from the Philistines. God grants to His people a set apart Judge-Warrior-Deliverer-Savior named Samson who has a supernatural birth and a holy mission.

Samson is like Israel, but a bit too much. Israel desperately needs a Savior-Deliverer who will be a prophet greater than Moses, but Samson like Israel struggles with his identity of being God's chosen man, and does what is right in his own eyes.

In our last couple of sermons we learned of “King” Abimelech, the king that Israel deserved. We then considered Jephthah a Judge-Savior who was the last on anyone's list to be Judge of Israel, but whom God used mightily and who is listed among the faithful of Hebrews 11 who demonstrated saving faith (though with many mistakes made by Jephthah).

God has shown himself to be wonderful many times to Israel; God has shown his might and power and grace in the Exodus from Egypt, and from the many mini-exoduses which he has delivered his people in *The Book of Judges*. Yet Israel is still sinfully in trouble, and no prophet greater than Moses has appeared to permanently deliver them and give them peace as God dwells in their midst..

We have seen much irony in the Book of Judges; we have seen some comedy; we have seen evil and God's retributive justice and judgment; we have seen spiritual degeneration in Israel; *we now focus on tragedy*.

We should consider these themes in Samson's story as representative of Israel as we proceed to learn from the Samson Cycles in Judges. Samson was set apart but lives like he does not know his true identity at times; Samson constantly has identity issues or crises because of his love of the world. Why does Samson so often forget who he is as a set-apart and consecrated man?

Samson has great strength and God grants him great abilities by His Spirit, but he does not realize the strength that God would grant him by faith to overcome sin: the world, the flesh and devil.

In many ways Samson *is Israel*; Samson is a picture-representative of the Church. Samson was set apart like Israel, but doesn't know who he is; Samson struggles with living in the identity that God had granted him by grace just like Israel. Israel went a-whoring after foreign gods and Samson chases the skirts of foreign women.

When Samson as a consecrated, set-apart representative of Israel does what is right in his own eyes, he is doing that which is evil in the eyes of the LORD.

Again, the problem with Israel was not just being enslaved under oppressive and sinful people in the Land of Canaan, but there was a problem with Israel's sinful hearts. Israel was delivered and then once again did "evil in the sight of the LORD" (v. 1). This time God handed them over into slavery under the Philistines for 40 years.

ESV Judges 13:1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

ESV Judges 2:11-12: And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹² And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.

ESV Judges 10:6 The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the LORD and did not serve him.

The Philistines were a sea people; they were known for their treachery and oppressive rule over defeated nations whom they ruled over. God allowed the Philistines to chastise Israel according to His purpose and will.

Then in this context, the author introduces the characters of this wonderful story.

Manoah of the Danites had a barren wife and had no children (v. 2). Every virtuous woman in Israel hoped to be fertile and fruitful not only to fulfill the creation mandate of being "fruitful and multiplying" as God commanded in Genesis 1:26-28.

But every believing Israelite woman wanted to fulfill the gospel mandate that through the Seed of the Woman a child would be born to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) as Moses had written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Mrs. Manaoh had no hope to be the fertile, fruitful mother who might give birth to Israel's Warrior-Deliverer- - a Prophet greater than Moses.

The Angel of YHWH appears (again very important scene; extremely significant events happen when He appears). He promises Manaoh's wife that although she was barren, she will supernaturally conceive a son (v. 3; In a nutshell, we observe the History of Redemption in this passage: *promise and fulfillment*).

This is the "almost incarnation". Israel is awaiting a Great Savior-Judge who will be greater than Moses if you recall from Moses' words of promise from Deuteronomy:

ESV Deuteronomy 18:15-19: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen-¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken.¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Is this the one greater than Moses who will be born? This is a similar birth story and announcement. Birth stories in the Bible are recorded births of important redemptive-historical figures and this is so also for the announcement of the birth of Samson. If you recall the other important birth stories in Holy Scripture such as the birth of Moses, the birth of Samuel, and John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus in the New Covenant, you will see similarities in the stories.

The similarities are there in these birth stories or narratives because not only was child birth a great blessing of God (Psalm 127-128), but the hope of Israel was that God would crush the head of the serpent through the Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15). The people would live in peace with God and each other, and that the effects of the fall as far as the curse was found on the earth would be removed and creation restored!

GOD IS WONDERFUL IN BRINGING LIFE OUT OF NOTHING BY HIS POWER AND GRACE.

Barrenness was considered a covenantal curse of God's blessing at this time in redemptive-history. Barren women were shamed and the barrenness was interpreted by the majority of folks that the woman was not righteous before God (although this certainly does not seem the case with Mrs. Manaoh).

ESV Exodus 23:26 None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

ESV Deuteronomy 7:14 You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock.

Mrs. Manahem was barren (we are told this repeatedly by the author to emphasize the hopeless situation). But she was in great redemptive-historical company! Before Mrs. Manahem, Sarai, Rebekah, and Rachel, the Matriarchs of Israel were barren; later Hannah and Elisabeth:

ESV Genesis 11:30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

ESV Genesis 25:21 And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

ESV Genesis 29:31 When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

ESV Judges 13:3 And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

ESV Luke 1:7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

In the Old Covenant, the way that God showed his covenantal blessings to the people was through earthly blessings that pointed to heavenly realities (this is where in our interpretation we should note the continuities and discontinuities between the Old and New Covenants). In this time in redemptive-history, children were a sign of God's blessing on the people in the land.

Children would cause Israel to be numerous in strength and "lights" of righteousness to live and light up the dark and sinful world. Children were the way to build the church and the strength of the church, and would cause a family's name and a father's name to live on. Children would have increased the ability of each family to prosper within their communities and live (not that things are radically different in the New Testament, but we are talking about the significance of children presently under the Old Covenant time period).

ESV Psalm 128:1-4: A SONG OF ASCENTS. Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! ² You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. ⁴ Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

So barrenness was considered an Old Covenant realization of a curse.

Professor Daniel Block writes of childbearing in the ancient Near East: "In the ancient world barrenness was reckoned as punishment for an offense against the gods whose special domain was that of reproduction. In Israel children were a mark of the blessing of God, and barrenness was the sign of divine reproach, displeasure, his curse" (NAC, pgs. 400-401).

Although Mrs. Manaoh was barren she would give birth because of God's power and grace. Mrs. Manoah's hope would be that this one set apart and consecrated to God might be not only the Savior to crush the head of the serpent, but be the Prophet Greater than Moses who would speak to the people and lead them faithfully on behalf of God.

We should compare Mrs. Manaoh with Israel in this passage. Mrs. Manaoh was like Israel *spiritually*. She was barren, *truly barren*, but she was also a matriarchal picture or symbol of the *spiritual barrenness of Israel at this time in redemptive-history*. Again, verse 1 describes Israel in this way:

ESV Judges 13:1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

Later in redemptive-history, the Prophet Isaiah would use the imagery of barrenness to describe Israel's long idolatrous disobedience and the consequences of it in chastisement and humiliation in the exile.

Israel was always taught by God under His law in order that she might recognize her spiritual barrenness before God- -her sinfulness and inability to do righteousness apart from grace.

ESV Isaiah 49:21 Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?'"

ESV Isaiah 54:1 "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.

The passage from Isaiah reveals to God's people a Great and Saving God just as our passage in Judges. Notice the ***eschatological reversal*** in Isaiah. Even though Israel was barren, believers (remnant) who are trusting in God can sing!

Barren folks can sing because of God's supernatural grace. Because of God's wonder-working power and grace revealed to his people, the barren will have more children than the fertile ones who are married (see the Apostle Paul's interpretation of this passage in Galatians 4:27 where Paul says that True Israel is blessed by being given supernatural birth from above, but unbelieving Israel is under a curse)!

In other words, a person can be fruitfully fertile physically and be barren spiritually, so also a person can be barren physically and by God's power and grace made fruitfully fertile.

This is all of grace and we see this in our passage beautifully revealed! God by His power and grace is WONDERFUL because he turns around Mrs. Manaoh's *and Israel's* barren situation through supernatural birth!

GOD IS WONDERFUL BECAUSE HE SEEKS AND SAVES HIS PEOPLE BY HIS POWER AND GRACE.

This passage in Judges 13 also particularly emphasizes the pursuing power of the grace of God. Israel is silent; they are ruled by the Philistines, but they are quiet about calling out to God as in previous circumstances. Israel has set up ethnic distinctions and boundaries (as we see in our next sermon, 14:3), but they are not driving the Philistines out as commanded to them by God.

Now, the Israelites live among their enemies, and do not call out to YHWH for help. Israel is spiritually in such a state that they do not cry out to the LORD this time for any help at all.

In the past in the *Book of Judges* whenever the Bible has told us that God "gave the Israelites into the hands of _____," the next thing we hear is: "And Israel cried out to the LORD" (Judges 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:7; 10:10; cf. Exodus 14:10; formerly Israel called out to the LORD even though it was not true repentance, Israel still knew where to go in order to be released from oppression and bondage).

NOW, the situation has changed. Israel is not calling out to God. Israel is silent before God. Israel has become so much like the Canaanites and Philistines that they merely live among them *as if that were their destiny*. Israel has gotten used to being enslaved; they think and act more like the world than like the Church.

In short, Israel is revealed to be barren spiritually because she seeks after and worships and serves other gods and has ceased to call upon the Name of the LORD (I want to keep reemphasizing this because I believe this is the point that the author wants us to see with Samson's parents).

BUT! BUT! God in his grace and power will make himself known- -AGAIN! Although Israel is barren; although Israel is seeking after, worshipping and serving false gods; although Israel has become accustomed to worldliness; God seeks and saves his chosen people. God still makes his grace and power known to those who are truly barren, but more importantly to those who are spiritually barren.

I think this is a wonderful Old Covenant picture of Ephesians 2:1-4:

^{ESV} Ephesians 2:1-4: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is

now at work in the sons of disobedience-³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body¹ and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But¹ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...

Although Israel is “dead and trespasses and sins” and “following the prince of the power of the air” through their idolatry; although Israel is living in the passions of their flesh by doing only what is right in their own eyes, and carrying out the desires of the body and the mind; although they are children of wrath by nature... God is RICH IN MERCY.

Nevertheless, (“But God...”) God in his pursuing power of his people seeks and saves the lost. God reveals himself to a barren woman with no hope of normal child-bearing or rearing to reveal his grace and power to Israel.

Israel has no will to call out to God, but God supernaturally pursues his people through a supernatural child birth.

God grants a child to a woman in Israel in the midst of her barrenness to provide for the physical problem because of sin; God grants a Savior to Israel in the midst of her barrenness to provide for the spiritual problem because of sin.

In other words, God is calling an insignificant nameless woman who is barren to bring about his salvation. God is saving and delivering his people out of nothingness. God speaks into nothingness and brings hope and salvation.

GOD IS WONDERFUL BECAUSE HE ALONE GETS THE GLORY FOR HIS POWER AND GRACE.

We all want to be a part of God’s saving us, but God will not have it- -God will call something out of nothing; God will take something ignoble to bring about his noble purposes; God will take foolish things and weak things to make his wisdom and power known.

God will call things that are NOT as those things that ARE – all to the end that it might glorify God alone and reveal God as the Savior of sinful mankind (1 Cor. 1:26-31):

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,²⁹ so that no human being¹ might boast in the presence of God.³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.³¹ Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

God likes to make his power and grace known in weakness. God likes to make his WONDERFUL-ness known through his power and grace so that he will be glorified. We cannot share in God’s glory- -“To God ALONE be the glory!” We should cry as his people! We remember with Gideon how God commanded him to reduce his troops in

order to be victorious. We remember the Apostle Paul saying that when we are weak then we are truly strong. God ALONE should be glorified!

God sought Sarai, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth and Mrs. Manaoh so that salvation would be revealed as by grace alone! This is what we are specifically taught in Romans 9. The Apostle Paul tells us that the true children of Abraham and Sarai, the True and Believing Israel, are those who are not merely the seed of the flesh, but the seed of the promise which comes only through grace:

Romans 9:5-8: To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

The Apostle Paul is teaching that God's going to the barren in the Old Covenant to grant them grace by his power was to show that the true offspring or seed of God are those supernaturally born from above because of God's salvation power (see John 3:1-16). No man can add to or contribute to God's power and grace in salvation- -God alone is to be glorified!

If the bearing of children is hard and needs God to bless in order for it to happen, how much greater is the bearing of spiritual children and good fruit before the Lord by sinners! How much more do we all need God's grace, power and mercy to bear spiritual children, and spiritual fruits? This is what the Apostle Paul goes on to teach in Ephesians 2:

ESV Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What do we contribute to our salvation? Nothing- -but our faith in what God says he has done, is doing or will do. We believe God's Word.

I am told that when cake mixes first came out (the Duncan Hines and Betty Crocker stuff), homemakers were perplexed that all they had to add was water. They could not fathom that in order to make the cake their own special contribution or ingredient to the mix was not needed. This troubled homemakers and they did not easily buy the product because they wanted to add something of their own to the mix.

Advertisers got wise to this and realized that if they were to sell this cake in a box mix stuff, that they had to give the homemakers something to do. So, they decided that they would advertise that the homemakers would add their eggs and milk to the dry stuff to make cake- -then everyone bought it.

Why? Because we all cannot believe that something can be completed without a little help from us *and from our friends!* We want to contribute something to the wonder of making cakes from a mix, and we especially want to contribute something when it comes to making our salvation and deliverance a reality- -we cannot just depend upon a God who calls something out of nothing, and make possible the impossible (story of the cake mix comes from Dr. Dale Ralph Davis in his book on Judges).

But God makes salvation from scratch. God takes the barren and causes them to be fruitful in delivering his people.

The Angel of YHWH informs Manaoh's wife (who is never named interestingly) that this son whom she will conceive will be a Nazarite from birth (vv. 4-5; Again, I think the author does not tell us Mrs. Manaoh's name because like Israel she is insignificant in the eyes of the world, but that's another sermon, see 1 Cor. 1:24-31).

Simply put, this important son whom she will conceive by God's grace and power will be set apart, sanctified from the womb. He will be set apart to accomplish God's mission of salvation for His people. Samson was given a mission before he was ever born.

Samson was set apart to accomplish God's will even before he was in his mother's womb. This again shows to us the sovereign grace of God. God calls us and knows his own before they are ever even born; the elect are *known by God* (Eph. 1:3-14). God sovereignly ordains the mission of his people before they are born as we learn in Romans 9 of Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:8ff).

But what specifically was a Nazarite? From the Hebrew *nazar* which means "to separate" or "to consecrate". A Nazirite was a person who was wholly separated or consecrated to God in the Old Covenant period and took special vows (Numbers 6). These vows were voluntary and usually for a limited time (Webb, *New Bible Commentary*, pg. 279).

Samson was made a Nazirite by God. Samson was set apart and consecrated by God not merely for a limited time, but until the day of his death (13:7). Samson was to be dedicated, devoted and consecrated to God from within his mother's womb until the day of his death; from womb to tomb, he was to be God's chosen instrument of salvation and deliverance.

This Nazarite would "begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines (v. 5b). We should note that what he will perform will not be fully accomplished, but will be a partial accomplishment of redemption. This would have taught the people of Israel to look to Samson to deliver them, but to ultimately anticipate and wait upon another who would come in the future fully to deliver them. This means the people of God would still ultimately live between promise and fulfillment-deliverance.

Mrs. Manaoh immediately went to tell her husband the great news! You can imagine this declaration of truth-revelation and how it must have encouraged her heart- -and she was

anxious to spread this great news of this son who would be born; “a son who would be giv’n.”

Mrs. Manaoh described to her husband the awesome presence of the “man of God” who appeared to her glorious like an angel of God (v. 6).

The summary of Mrs. Manaoh’s message: 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'" (v. 7)

Samson would not fully deliver and redeem Israel. Even as the strongest of the Israelites, he would not redeem them; he could not resist temptation fully himself; he was not without sin and the dreadful taint of it.

You see people of God, although Samson was set apart from birth and although he was granted to the people through supernatural birth, he was still tainted with original sin. ***Samson’s birth was supernatural, but it was not the birth of one without sin- - and there is a great and WONDERFUL difference.***

So Samson was like Israel, and we could say that Samson was “too close” or too much like Israel to save her completely. Israel needed a Savior who was like her, but who was unlike her in that He was not tainted by sin himself.

How could this be accomplished?

Only by God’s grace and power.

GOD IS WONDERFUL IN SENDING A SAVIOR NAMED “JESUS” WHO’S NAME IS WONDERFUL AND WHO TRULY SAVES HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS BECAUSE OF GOD’S POWER AND GRACE.

No man tainted by original sin could accomplish the redemption that was needed- -the spiritual redemption from sin, death and hell. Like the barren womb, Sheol, Hades, or Hell never will get enough:

ESV Proverbs 30:15-16: The leech has two daughters; "Give" and "Give," they cry.¹ Three things are never satisfied; four never say, "Enough":¹⁶ Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, "Enough."

So who will be the Savior of Israel? Who will be the Savior of God’s people, the One Greater than Moses? Who will redeem God’s people from not merely the Philistines, but from sin, death and Sheol-Hell itself!

Who can conquer their sin and flesh? Who can conquer death itself? Who can open up the place of the dead and release the captives? Who can take the spiritually dead and make them alive?

Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Jesus, whose Name is “Wonderful”; Jesus, who releases the captives; Jesus who is a gracious and powerful Savior of His people!

Many years after this, another angel of YHWH named Gabriel would appear to Mary, a young girl betrothed to Joseph of Bethlehem. To Mary, a woman who had yet to be married and who had yet to conceive, an angel would appear to announce the conception by the Holy Spirit in her womb, the one who will come and obey all the teachings of Moses, but also will successfully deliver Israel (Luke 1:30ff). Christ is set apart from the womb to deliver God's people and save His people from their sins.

Mrs. Manaoh's son Samson would not save his people from their sins; Samson was tainted by sin too. But Mary's son Jesus would indeed accomplish this mission. He would be without sin and so fully able to accomplish from the womb his holy mission from God.

What would be his manner of life and mission? Jesus Christ's manner of life would be one of perfect law-keeping and obedience to God's covenant. Jesus Christ's mission would be to save those who had failed and could not keep the law perfectly. As the Apostle Paul says about Jesus Christ with regard to God's Law:

ESV Romans 8:3-4: For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,¹ he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Jesus would crush the head of the serpent in his work of death, resurrection and ascension-glorification to God's right hand. Jesus would be the prophet greater than Moses, and would rule and reign over heaven and earth as Prophet, Priest and King revealing God's Word to those who have ears to hear.

Go and live righteous lives by faith knowing that you have been united NOT to Mrs. Manaoh's son, but united to Mary's son by faith alone.

Go in the Name of our Savior who is WONDERFUL, displaying the power and grace of He who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Go in the hope of being fruitful (not barren) as Jesus promised to believers in John 15:5:

“I AM the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Believers: Your spiritual barrenness has been healed- -so that you can live fruitful lives in Jesus Christ by faith!

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Scripture Lesson/ Responsive reading from Psalms: 113

^{ESV} **Genesis 11:30** Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

^{ESV} **Genesis 25:21** And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

^{ESV} **Genesis 29:31** When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

^{ESV} **Judges 13:3** And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

^{ESV} **Luke 1:7** But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 54:1** "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.

Romans 4:19-25: [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was

"counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:1-10:** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body¹ and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But¹ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.