

Miracle Kids

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Billions of satisfied women have testified throughout human history that *after their babies are delivered*, they soon forget their own birth pangs. Have you ever heard of a woman saying to her child: “You were a real pain in the womb!”; or, “You sure weren’t worth the pain I went through to bring you into the world!”? No, of course not.

On the other hand, millions of women *and* men have testified that after they pass a kidney stone (or have it pulverized through lithotripsy), they do *not* soon forget the associated pain. Such might be excusable for talking to their stone, saying: “You were a royal pain until I finally brought you forth from my bladder and urethra!” Now here’s a topic in which I do have personal experience! Not a few mothers have testified that kidney stones hurt more than babies trying to be born. I’m thrilled simply to take their word for it!

Yes, moms and dads, there’s something so exquisitely wondrous about bringing new life into the world that temporary discomforts and searing pain are soon forgotten; and many mothers are perfectly willing to put themselves through these same *joys* again (and again). It’s true today, but it was especially true in recorded Bible history, that our actual purpose for existence may seem totally unrealized until we produce successors to carry on our family names as well as our unrealized dreams. In fact, God’s people in Bible times looked upon infertility as a great curse. And a child born under illegitimate or otherwise questionable circumstances was automatically deemed ineligible to receive the blessings and privileges reserved exclusively for legitimate heirs.

Several Bible babies entered our world through seemingly impossible circumstances. Others survived only by means of God’s miraculous providence. I’d like to spend an hour discussing each of the nine that comes to mind . . . but due to time constraints we’ll have to settle for brief thumbnail sketches of **Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samson, Samuel, the Shunammite woman’s son, John, and Jesus**. As we reflect on the lives of these nine miracle kids, we will be able to see God’s purpose for them not only to bless their earthly parents, but also to bless the whole world in their day and clear down until the end of human history.

Miracle kid #1: Isaac. The Jewish line into which the Messiah would be born had its beginnings with Abram and Sarai. At times, this couple demonstrates exemplary faith; other times they stagger miserably and let God down. Their story is well known. Yet in the process of becoming Abraham (“father of a great multitude”) and Sarah (“princess”), they eventually procreated Isaac (“God shall hear”), just as God had predicted (Gen. 17:19). Mind you, Abraham was 100 years old at the time, and Sarah about 90 and, obviously, *barren* (Gen. 17:17; cf. 21:5; 11:30). You have to admit that God has a wonderful sense of humor; what a dramatic way He chose to launch the Messiah’s earthly pedigree!

Miracle kid #2: Jacob. We must admit that in Isaac the Abrahamic line had gotten off to a pretty shaky start. After all, unlike his young half brother Isaac, Ishmael was to receive no entitlement, as he had proven to be merely the son of Sarai and Abram's do-it-themselves scheme; and with this mistake came intertribal animosity that persists even to this day. As we have just said, baseborn sons were disqualified to carry on a Jewish family’s bloodline. As if to drive home His point, God promises an heir through Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah, but once again the wife is *barren*, and Isaac’s faith is first tested before God removes the obstacle (Gen. 25:21). The birth of twins seems to add an exclamation point to God’s promise. The struggle between Jacob and Esau regarding the all-important birthright occupies center stage, spanning some nine Biblical chapters (Gen. 25–33). Renamed Israel (“a prince of God”), Jacob begets the 12 sons who would become the nation Israel’s tribal chieftains, or patriarchs.

Miracle kid #3: Joseph. God now allows Jacob to struggle with his place in the grand plan, but “the supplanter” does a pretty thorough job of messing things up. Once again, however, God promises an heir through an *approved* marriage, and that means Jacob and his *barren* wife, Rachel (Gen. 29:31), not Laban’s surrogate Plan B wife, the younger sister Leah. Even though the artful deceiver Jacob becomes the deceived, isn’t it awe-inspiring to see how God is able to carry out His purposes still? “In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the Word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently, working out the counsels of His Own will” (Ed 173). When all is said and done, the

Abrahamic line is preserved and the whole world blessed through the birth and ultimate example of Joseph.

Miracle kid #4: Moses. Well, the Bible stories of intrigue just don't seem to quit. This time, we have a normally fertile couple, Amram and Jochebed; only trouble is, they're Jewish slaves in a kingdom whose reigning Pharaoh "knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). The pen of inspiration tells us that this Pharaoh became heir to the Egyptian throne while Joseph was still living (YI 4/8/1897), so not that many years could have passed. As it happens, both Amram and Jochebed were of the tribe of Levi, not of Judah, the Messianic line. The insanely jealous Pharaoh attempts to eliminate all potential Jewish competitors by decreeing a slaughter of the innocents, specifically, all male Jewish babies. The thrilling autobiographical narrative of just one little babe's preservation in an ark of safety, a little floating vessel of bulrushes ironically retrieved from the Nile by Pharaoh's own daughter, is stranger than any fiction. Indeed, the rescue that gives Moses his name ("drawn out") proves, in time, to be God's Own way of producing the greatest leader of His people that the world would ever know.

Miracle kid #5: Samson. Now here's a real study. Once again the Bible paints a heartrending story of infertility, this time during the period of the judges (Jdg. 13). Pity husband Manoah, of the tribe of Dan, who has that dreaded *barren*-wife problem which God seems to take particular delight in reversing. The result is the strongest human being who ever lived, Samson. Unfortunately, he doesn't remain either spiritually strong or faithful to the Nazirite lifestyle that the Angel of Jehovah had stipulated, and so Samson isn't nearly the mighty deliverer of Israel from the Philistine scourge that he might have been. Yet in death he does take out some 3,000 Philistines (Jdg. 16:27-30), and almost astonishingly we find him listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 (vss. 32, 33). Oh the tender mercy of our great God! His unsearchable ways are "past finding out" (Rom. 11:33)!

Miracle kid #6: Samuel. Are you ready for a *fourth* barren-turned-fertile-wife story? This time the Ephraimite Elkanah is married to Hannah, who has that same old "familiar" problem: She can't produce a family heir to perpetuate her husband's name. And the wonderful result of her prayer in the temple at Shiloh? At first the high priest Eli takes her to be drunk, as with quivering lips she communes silently with God. It is a sad commentary on those evil times that even religious festivals were often scenes of irreverent feasting and drunkenness (PP 570). Hannah's obvious piety soon deeply

moves Eli, however, and he pronounces his blessing that “the God of Israel grant [her] petition” (1 Sam. 1:17). Samuel (“Asked of God”) grows up to become a priest, prophet, judge, and founder/president of the six schools of the prophets scattered throughout all Israel.

It is noteworthy that the names of all six of our Old Testament miracle kids are inscribed on that famous roster of spiritual giants in Hebrews 11. It seems that God must have had in mind important roles for the performance of which He literally raised up these men. Now let’s turn to the New Testament for the final two of our nine thumbnail studies.

Miracle kid #7: The Shunammite woman’s son. How about a *fifth* childless wife story? As recorded in 2 Kings 4:8–37, a woman of Shunem provides food and lodging for Elisha. As a gesture of gratitude, God’s servant prophesies that she is to have a son, though her husband is old and they foresee no such hope. Not only does the couple bear the promised child, but when years later he suddenly takes ill and dies, Elisha returns to raise him back to life. Kindness in this case twice results in a life-giving miracle!

Miracle kid #8: John. Would you believe yet another barren-wife miracle child? This sixth and final time we have an aged Judæan priest named Zacharias; his wife Elisabeth is of the bloodline of Aaron. Now, not only is this couple past normal childbearing years, but Elisabeth is *barren* to boot (Jn. 1:7). This miracle child (unlike the pliant Samson) makes the Nazirite vow his own for life, and as John the Baptist becomes the Messiah’s herald. Since Elisabeth is a kinswoman (KJV, “cousin”) to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the two boys are blood relatives. Which brings us to our last miracle story.

Miracle Kid #9: Jesus. Isaiah (7:14) prophesied that He would be called Immanuel (“God with us”); the evangelist Matthew identified Jesus in Greek as “Jehovah is salvation” (Mt. 1:21). But the miracle of the Incarnation of Divinity as a human Baby, fully human yet remaining fully God, is completely without comparison in all of human history and defies any attempt at explanation. If it *weren’t* true, we would deem it too wonderful to *be* true! And did we mention that Mary’s Child is conceived through a mysterious process by which the Holy Spirit impregnates her with holy seed while she is yet in her unquestionably chaste virginity? Sadly, intriguingly, the ensuing slaughter of the innocents at the command of the paranoically jealous Herod I, recalls the parallel attempt by Pharaoh in Moses’ time.

However mysterious Jesus' birth as well as His resurrection and ascension, the Lion of the tribe of Judah lived out a practical life on this sinful planet for 33 ½ years, providing the lone perfect example of how the true Christian may live. The hope of His soon return ought to energize every Christian to work diligently in His harvest field until that blessed day.

Now to make a personal application of the several stories we have shared today. Do you suppose that all or some of these accounts of miraculous births are in the Inspired Record merely because they make interesting reading? If not, what do you suppose is God's purpose for including them? Could it be that He sees each and every one of us as latter-day "miracle kids" whom He has placed on the stage of action for just such a time as this? Could it even be that this is the very purpose of our birth? What *could be* more important?

With Paul we have a golden opportunity to "press toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php. 3:14). So, . . . isn't it high time we lived up to this most exalted calling?