

MARANATHA: BARENNESS THAT PRODUCES BREAKTHROUGH

SESSION #2

We see many times throughout scripture and throughout human history that before a person's life became anything of significance, they first experienced a time and season of great adversity and difficulty. Star athletes and talented individuals know that the training season is always longer and harder than the performance season. Whatever they pursued and reinforced in secret was revealed on the public stage, court, field, etc. We can be assured that God is working through our life-circumstances to win our hearts and prepare us for His usefulness. The hidden must be valued before the public can be pursued, otherwise our hearts will not stand up under the lights, criticism, and pressure of the world. The hour is late and now is the time to wake up and embrace the ache. The Church of Christ Jesus is in the midst of a global reformation, and it is not being orchestrated by any human effort but by God in His jealous zeal. This preparation season is a must! The Bride must be awakened before she can be prepared.

I. THE ACHE OF THE BARREN HEART

- A. **Luke 1:7** *But they (Zacharias & Elizabeth) had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.*
- B. Many times, we see the Lord take the most barren of people and perform His greatest of miracles. Barrenness produces longing. Longing leads to hope deferred, which in turn opens the door to appealing to the God who can do the impossible. This is the essence of the maranatha cry.
- C. **Proverbs 13:12** *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.*
- D. We often forget to see the people and season before the public and popular person is known by others. John the Baptizer and forerunner of the Christ was discipled by an excellent family and mother and father.
- E. **Zacharias**- John's father
 - a. He was a priest of God to the Jewish Temple and served regularly.
 - b. He was from the tribe of Levi, as was Moses, Aaron, and many other O.T. prophets. This gave him access to the cultural influence and centerpiece of Israel's activities. It also gave him access to direct ministry and worship to God.
 - c. He followed God's law as closely as possible, being called "blameless (not sinless) before God". He served God faithfully.
 - d. He was the first person in the N.T. to speak to an angel.
 - e. He was in his elder years w/out children (similar to Abraham and Sarah).
 - f. He prayed for a child from God, even in his old age.
 - g. He didn't believe that God would perform the miracle as Gabriel declared.
- F. **Elizabeth**- John's mother
 - a. She was also from the priesthood line of Aaron, the tribe of Levi.
 - b. She followed God's law as closely as possible, being called "*blameless (not sinless) before God*".
 - c. She was in her elder years w/out children (similar to Sarah & Hannah). Her womb was closed.
 - d. She doesn't have any reference of doubt of the prophecy from the angel Gabriel.
- G. We read in the N.T. that John was born into a season of history of political and religious corruption. John was being raised in a season of history, very similar to Elijah's generation when the Priesthood of God had been compromised and corrupted. There was a syncretic mixture of religions and politics and cultures.
- H. **Syncretism**- the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.

- I. **Luke 3:2** *“while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”*
- J. It was the responsibility of the Priesthood to hear from the Lord and then declare the word to God’s people for confirmation and direction. The *“word of God came to John”* has deep implications to the assigned Priesthood and was a rebuke to those in power.
- K. **Ezekiel 44:23** *“And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”*
- L. Roman political officials had hired the High Priest of those days when John was living. We can infer then that these high priests were not of true line of the Tribe of Levi, Aaron’s line, though we are speculating. Regardless, there was an unbiblical order being followed in the selection process.
- M. There are many who speculate that Zacharias could have been over-looked as a potential high priest. Some also speculate that John the Baptizer could have met the old covenant criteria for eligibility of high priest.
- N. Like Hannah’s generation in Israel, there was no widespread revelation of God’s Word. The Priesthood of God had been neglected. In such a day, God intends to restore the priesthood through the wilderness ‘holy to the Lord’ ones.
- O. **1 Samuel 3:1** *Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.*

II. BARRENNESS BECOMES THE WOMB OF GOD’S GREATEST MIRACLES

- A. **Genesis 3:9-15** *Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”¹⁰ So he (Adam) said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”¹¹ And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”¹² Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”¹⁴ **So the Lord God said to the serpent:** “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*
- B. God first begins to speak with Adam as He confronts them for their disobedience and then unleashes His furious ruling of judgement, starting with Satan as the Father of deception, followed by Eve and then Adam. God also releases a prophetic promise to Adam and Eve and for all of their offspring of restoration of what was lost and a final destruction of the enemy who deceived them.
- C. Imagine Adam and Eve walking in perfection and communion with God, like children fully trusting their parents. They didn’t know what sin and separation was until their disobedience opened their eyes to the realities of good and evil.
- D. God starts by addressing Adam first as he was responsible for serving as His High Priest in the earth. As goes the Priesthood, so goes the people and nation.
- E. Adam and Eve became the first generation ‘Maranatha’ crying & aching people in history. Their cry? Let us birth the child who will come and crush the head of this enemy-deceiver. Cain is born! No deliverer. Able is born! No deliverer. Murder is introduced into the human experience. Maranatha aching grows. They continue to live out all of their days looking upon the walls and guarded gateway into the Garden of Fellowship. When Lord? Come, Lord Jesus!

- F. Wilderness aching will either produce sinful wanderings to attempt to numb the pain of soul or righteous longing for God's visitation.
- G. Most of the time, we do not choose the wilderness for ourselves, so God chooses it for us.
- H. **Wilderness-** (Greek- *erēmos*) *solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited; deprived of the aid and protection of others, especially of friends, acquaintances, kindred*
- I. *"Will you let Him make you a message? Be forewarned it will cost you your life. If you want to become a message, God will orchestrate circumstances you would not choose and lead you where you would not go to produce something you cannot accomplish in your wisdom and best intentions."* (**Samuel Whitefield- 'Will You Choose the Wilderness'**)
- J. The biblical description of the wilderness can be understood as a physical and literal place but can also include the difficult circumstances of life. This can be a voluntary place of intentional solitude or an involuntary life crisis.
- K. **Voluntary Wilderness-** This was John the Baptizer's lifestyle and I believe what Jesus was celebrating about John's overall life. We willingly choose: *seasons of solitude, the weakness of routine spiritual fasting, the heart posture of meekness, relying on God's provision rather than our own provision, etc.*
- L. **Hannah's Wilderness-** *'The Lord had closed Hannah's womb'* from having children. Hannah cried out to the Lord who was able to perform a miracle. Her barrenness was her wilderness and shame in the natural. The Maranatha cry had been lodged deep within her soul.
- M. **1 Samuel 1:1-7** *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 Phinehas, 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.*
- N. When we surrender our pain to the Lord, it often becomes the womb of God's promise.
- O. When Hannah continued to walk humbly before the Lord, God released a national promise. Her pain birthed the Promise of Israel's greatest Prophet, Samuel. Samuel then anointed Israel's most influential King, David.
- P. Hannah's unoffendable heart was prepared to birth the Word of the Lord to a people and season when *"the Word of the Lord was rare"*.
- Q. We are living in a very similar season of human history as Hannah & Samuel, John the Baptizer, as we pray and ask for God to birth His promises in the empty womb of barrenness in the nations. It is always about the next generation receiving the full inheritance of Jesus from the previous generation. This is true in the natural and also in the spiritual. This is the Maranatha cry. Something is missing. Someone is missing. Come, Lord Jesus!
- R. **Matthew 11:19** *"... But wisdom is justified by her children."*