

'I gave birth to him in pain'

1 Chronicles records the family tree of the nation of Israel, from Adam onwards. In the midst of the list of name, in chapter four, we find Jabez. The Bible records his name and a prayer he offered to God. He asked God to bless him, to help him in his work, to be with him in all that he did and to keep him from all evil. *'And God granted his request'* (v10). Jabez is noted for being *'more honourable than his brothers'* (v9) and in 1 Chronicles 2:55 we read that a town was named after him such was the esteem that, through God's grace, he developed.

Who was this Jabez? The Bible doesn't tell us much. One thing we do know however is that the name in Hebrew sounds like the word pain. Indeed his mother had given him that name saying, *'I gave birth to him in great pain'*. It is unlikely that this simply referred to the normal pain of birth since he would have been named more than a week after being born and, in most cases, normal birth pains are marginalised once the baby is born. This was either a much more traumatic physical birth or one defined by great sorrow. We don't know either way. Nevertheless, Jabez's mother was so deeply affected that she gave him a name in remembrance of her suffering.

Pregnancy from rape/incest creates great sorrow. It can be hard to imagine that anything good could come from it-it is something to 'get through' rather than enjoy. Yet we have in God's word great encouragement for all mothers who, for whatever reason, bore their child in great pain. We have in God's word great encouragement for all who were born in such difficult circumstances. God was with Jabez: he became a man of God, highly honoured, who relied on God and trusted him. The legacy of his name was nothing compared to the power of God. He prayed. God answered. He is remembered as the man his mother bore in pain. He is remembered after thousands of years for his prayer. He is remembered for that prayer being answered.