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A Parade of Personalities
Kings and Chronicles
Series: In the Days of Elijah
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- I. Introduction – **In the Days of Elijah**
 - A. What does prophetic ministry look like in the days of growing apostasy?
 - 1. What does God do when it seems genuinely faithful people are few and far between?
 - 2. This timely study from Kings and Chronicles will help the church prepare for such a time as this.
 - 3. We will see how Elijah and Elisha are models of courageous faithfulness when the surrounding culture is collapsing.
- II. **History is His Story**
 - A. Bible records history (much more so than theology!)
 - 1. Narrative account of a people over the course of several thousand years
 - a. It is history as accurate (or more) than any other history book
 - b. Stories it records are recorded as true accounts
 - (1) We have no reason to doubt the biblical accounts
 - (2) After two centuries of critical attacks on the historical reliability of the OT and NT
 - (3) Still no attack on reliability has stood the test of time
 - c. For those attacks to be credible, you have to import alien philosophical assumptions
 - (1) Ex: Elijah didn't raise the dead because miracles are not possible
 - (2) Must have an anti-supernatural bias in order to discredit the biblical accounts
 - 2. But the Bible is not the dispassionate history of a Ph.D. dissertation
 - a. This is history with a purpose
 - b. Centers around a people who worship Yahweh (Jehovah)
 - (1) Mostly, the people of Israel
 - c. Religious history
 - (1) Narrative describes the relationship between a people and God
 - 3. Because it is religious history, it is His Story
 - a. All history is His Story
 - (1) Because God is sovereign over the whole world
 - (2) No event escapes His gaze

- (3) He has a purpose for every event under the sun
 - b. Especially the Bible is His Story
 - (1) Explicitly descriptive of His acts regarding the people who seek to follow Him
- B. Much of the Bible is **Deuteronomic History**
 - 1. Before Israel entered the promised land, under Moses' direction, Deuteronomy was presented as the name suggests – the 2nd giving of the Law
 - 2. Law had been given by God through Moses to Israel on Mt. Sinai
 - a. Tablets placed in the ark of the covenant
 - b. 40 years as Israel wandered around the wilderness, the Law was the central feature of Israelite worship
 - 3. Just before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses was passing from the scene
 - a. Law was reiterated
 - (1) This time in a form designed for its application, not to a caravan of wandering tribes
 - (2) But to a people who were to settle in a land – in Canaan, the Promised Land
 - 4. The books that follow Deuteronomy are history books
 - a. They recount the life of the nation of Israel as lived in the Promised Land
 - b. All of those books take as their reference point Deuteronomy
 - (1) Successes were seen in relation to covenant faithfulness
 - (2) Failures were seen in relation to covenant unfaithfulness
 - c. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings
 - d. Some scholars even believe that all those books are Deuteronomic history because they were compiled, using original sources, by the same pre-exilic author (like Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, or Jeremiah himself) because of similarities of literary style
 - e. I wouldn't go that far
 - f. But it is clear the Deuteronomy is the reference point for the history that follows
- C. So the Bible is History
 - 1. It is His story
 - a. It is Deuteronomic history

III. **Bible is the History of Personalities**

- A. Interesting to study biblical history because in unfolding His story, God has decided to accomplish it through certain personalities
 - 1. Key people whom God uses to accomplish His purposes
 - 2. Those key people often loom larger than life itself
 - a. They are revered by the people of God for their courageous faithfulness

3. Yet the Bible records these personalities truthfully; flaws are recorded along with their triumphs
4. Nevertheless, much of the biblical history is the history of these personalities

B. **Noah**

1. At the very earliest stages of redemptive history, when the world was literally falling apart
 - a. With seemingly every human being disintegrating in the spiritual and moral degradation
 - (1) There appeared on the scene a man chosen by God known as Noah
2. You all know the story
 - a. God determined to destroy the earth due to its sinfulness and essentially start over with one godly man and his worshipping family
 - b. God comes to Noah in the desert because He found favor with Noah (**Genesis 6.8**)
 - (1) Didn't mean Noah was perfect or sinless, just that God found in Noah an element of faithfulness not found in others
3. **Genesis 6:13–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.
 - b. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.
4. **Genesis 6:17–18** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.
 - b. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.
5. **Genesis 6:22** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.
6. Biblical history is often understated and described in sparse terms
 - a. Don't have the record of the interior of Noah's mind, his private thoughts upon hearing of God's instructions
 - b. Don't know how Noah responded to the certain ridicule of others who derided him for spending years building an ark in a desert when it hadn't rained appreciably on the earth
7. All we know is the Noah was faithful to God, obedient in spite of where the rest of the world was headed

C. **Abraham**

1. Pagan from a pagan family (probably sun worshipers) in Ur of the Chaldeans (which would be the area known as Babylon)
2. God comes to Abraham sovereignly, somehow appearing so as to clearly communicate to Abraham that He is the true God, sovereign over all things (including the sun)
 - a. And He tells Abraham to leave his families land to go to a land
 - b. Where?
 - (1) God doesn't give him a map or explain to him the benefits of his relocation
 - (2) No real estate agent had ironed out the details
 - (3) No GPS to help him find his way
3. While they were on their journey, and again when they arrived at Canaan, God established a covenant with Abraham
 - a. Promised the land, great nation, blessing to all the families of the earth
4. Interestingly they never actually owned any of the land God promised them
 - a. Only piece of ground he owned was his own burial ground
5. Covenant faithfulness was tested when Abraham grew old, He and Sarah were childless
 - a. How could you have descendants without having children?
 - b. After an abortive attempt to help God fulfill this promise with a concubine, they did give birth to the child of the promise – Isaac
6. Even then, covenant faithfulness was tested, as Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac (**Genesis 22.1-18**)
7. Thus Abraham's covenant was confirmed by God
 - a. The figure of Abraham looms large over biblical history
 - b. Father of the faithful; the friend of God
 - c. All because of his covenant faithfulness

D. **Joseph**

1. Abraham had Isaac; Isaac had Jacob; Jacob had 12 sons
 - a. 2nd youngest was Joseph
2. Various personality characteristics and his father's own favoritism produced jealousies between Joseph and his brothers
 - a. Brothers sought to do him in; eventually sold him into slavery to an Ishmaelite; convinced Israel he was dead
 - b. Ishmaelite sold him to Potiphar, the head of Pharaoh's house in Egypt
3. While in Egypt, Joseph had some rough times
 - a. Falsely accused of adultery by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned
 - b. Left in prison for a time
 - c. Eventually, his gift for interpreting dreams enabled him to interpret Pharaoh's dream regarding an eventual famine
 - d. Joseph was then released from prison, given the administrative responsibility for preparing for the famine

- e. Eventually, he grew in power until he was the second in command of all of Egypt
- 4. While in that position, the famine brought many people to Egypt searching for food (Egypt was the only place that had supplies thanks to Joseph)
 - a. One family came from Canaan – Israel’s sons, Joseph’s brothers
- 5. Joseph was in position to help provide for his family
 - a. Enabled them to settle in Egypt where they would grow and prosper for several hundred years (**Genesis 45.1-15; 50.15-21, 24-25**)

E. **Moses**

- 1. After Israel had been in Egypt 400 years, Joseph had long been forgotten by Pharaoh
 - a. Now Israel had grown to about a million strong; threatening group to the Egyptians
 - (1) Egyptians enslaved them; sorely oppressed
 - (2) Hebrew male babies were to be killed
 - b. Somehow, baby Moses was spared; raised in Pharaoh’s household
- 2. Eventually, Moses, who never forgot his Hebrew roots, came to the aid of his Hebrew brethren and killed an Egyptian slavemaster
 - a. Forced to flee for his life; lived in the desert as a shepherd in Midian
- 3. But He was the one God would use to free His people from their slavery (**Exodus 3**)
- 4. In spite of Moses’ many objections, he became the central figure in OT history
 - a. Mediator of the Law of God
 - b. Leader of the Israelites, a stubborn, rebellious bunch, as they wandered about the desert wilderness for 40 years until the disobedient generation would pass from the scene
- 5. Moses would become the reference point for Jews for literally centuries – even among orthodox Jews today, he stands as the central figure due to his relation with God and His Law

F. **Joshua**

- 1. Moses wasn’t perfect
 - a. His sin when he struck the rock in order to get water instead of speaking to the rock meant that God would not let him enter the Promised land
 - b. Instead, he would die in the Transjordan
 - (1) Joshua, his assistant, would take the people into the Promised Land
- 2. Joshua – great warrior of Israel, known for his great courage
 - a. God’s charge to Joshua Jos 1.1-9
- 3. **Joshua 1:5–9** (ESV) —

- a. 5 “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.
- b. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.
- c. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.
- d. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
- e. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”
- 4. Joshua’s encounter with God
 - a. **Joshua 5:13–15** (ESV) —
 - (1) 13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?”
 - (2) 14 And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?”
 - (3) 15 And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

G. **Judges – Samuel**

- 1. Time of cyclical decline in the spiritual and moral life of Israel
 - a. Downward spiral
 - (1) Israel sinned
 - (2) God disciplined them according to the sanctions in Deuteronomy; overrun by enemies within and without the Promised Land
 - (3) Israel would cry out for relief
 - (4) God would raise up a judge to deliver them
 - b. About a dozen such cycles
 - (1) About 7 of which are described in great detail
 - (2) Some of those judges are famous
 - (a) Deborah
 - (b) Samson
 - (c) Gideon
- 2. None of those judges ranks with the last of the judges – Samuel

- a. Born to Hannah in answer to that barren woman's cry; given to the Lord to minister as priest in the corrupt household of Eli (**1 Samuel 3**)
- 3. Eventually, Samuel grew old; sons didn't walk in the ways of God
 - a. People demanded a king like the other nations
 - b. **1 Samuel 8:7-9** (ESV) —
 - (1) 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.
 - (2) 8 According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.
 - (3) 9 Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

H. **David**

- 1. First king – Saul
 - a. Abortive attempt at having a king
 - b. Saul's disobedience disqualified him from being the first king
- 2. God anointed young David through Samuel
 - a. David would become one of the top three figures in OT history (other two being Abraham and Moses)
 - b. Defeated Goliath; great warrior
 - c. Artistic – accomplished harpist
 - d. Poet – composed about half the psalms
- 3. God made a covenant with David
- 4. **2 Samuel 7:8-16** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.
 - b. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.
 - c. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly,
 - d. 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.
 - e. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

- f. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
- g. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,
- h. 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.
- i. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' ”

5. What an incredible, larger than life figure!

I. **Solomon**

- 1. David's son – extraordinary reign at the height of Israel's power and prosperity
- 2. Solomon's claim to the throne was contested
 - a. Took an aging David along with Bathsheba to make sure God's promises to have Solomon on the throne would be fulfilled
- 3. Solomon consolidated his reign
 - a. Did so ruthlessly – eliminating his enemies; sowing the seeds of later enemies
- 4. Solomon started well (**1 Kings 3.5-14**)
- 5. Solomon didn't finish well
 - a. God appeared to Solomon with an ominous warning
- 6. **1 Kings 9:3-9** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 And the LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.
 - b. 4 And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules,
 - c. 5 then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’
 - d. 6 But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,
 - e. 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.
 - f. 8 And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’

- g. 9 Then they will say, ‘Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.’ ”

7. **1 Kings 11:1–6** (ESV) —

- a. 1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,
- b. 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love.
- c. 3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.
- d. 4 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.
- e. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.
- f. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done.

8. **1 Kings 11:9–13** (ESV) —

- a. 9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice
- b. 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.
- c. 11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.
- d. 12 Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.
- e. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

J. Following Solomon

- 1. Rehoboam – Solomon’s son couldn’t sustain control
- 2. Jeroboam – opposed Rehoboam in the north
- 3. Divided the kingdom
 - a. North – Israel
 - (1) Center of governing and worship – Samaria
 - b. South – Judah
 - (1) Center of governing and worship – Judah

4. Both halves tended toward spiritual and moral decline – covenant unfaithfulness
 - a. North faster than the South

IV. **In the Days of Elijah**

- A. During the period of the divided kingdom, the next larger than life figure would emerge
 1. Elijah
- B. Elijah looms large in the history of Israel
 1. Exploits are legendary
 - a. Miracles follow him everywhere
 - (1) Fed by ravens
 - (2) Provides miraculously for a widow's provisions
 - (3) Raises her son from the dead
 - (4) Extraordinary contest against prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (hundreds of prophets of Baal die!)
 - (5) Taken up to heaven in a chariot without dying!
 2. Looms large in the NT
 - a. Appears in the transfiguration with Moses and Jesus
 - b. Due to prophecy in Malachi – comes as John the Baptist as the forerunner of Messiah
 3. Figures largely among Jews today
 - a. His chair is the vacant one at the Passover meal as Jews do not believe Messiah has come and they await the Malachi fulfillment
 - b. He is invoked every week at the conclusion of Shabbat in Jewish worship rituals
- C. Elijah is in many ways like the earlier larger than life personalities around which biblical history revolves
- D. Elijah is also different
 1. Unlike all the others
 - a. Elijah is not in charge of anything or anyone
 - b. Has no political power
 2. Not Solomon or David – kings
 3. Not Samuel – greatest judge
 4. Not Joshua – greatest commander of an army
 5. Not Moses – greatest leader of a nation
 6. Not Joseph – greatest administrator of all of Egypt
 7. Not even Abraham or Noah – leader of families
 - a. Have no record that Elijah even has much of a family to lead
- E. Even though his personality is larger than life, he doesn't fulfill the same kinds of roles as the other biblical personalities
 1. His ministry marks a distinct change in God's dealing with His people Israel
- F. **Period of the Prophets**
 1. Judah and Israel would have their kings

- a. Their performance would always be judged in reference to Deuteronomy
 - (1) Covenant faithfulness would determine whether or not they would be allowed to remain in the Land
 - 2. God would raise up prophets to be the conscience of the divided kingdoms
 - a. Always calling Israel back to covenant faithfulness
 - G. Perspective of the prophets is backward
 - 1. Usually, that's not the way we think of them
 - a. Prophecy, we think, is oriented toward the future
 - (1) While that happens, that's not their most important function; not their primary purpose
 - 2. Primary purpose is to cause the nations to look back to the covenant, to the Law, to Deuteronomy
 - a. This is still Deuteronomic history
 - H. Prophets are always calling the kings back to covenant faithfulness
 - I. Elijah is the first of this new kind of personality in biblical history
 - 1. Larger than life
 - a. Not without his flaws
 - 2. Really, without any earthly power or position
 - a. Truly a prophet
 - J. Elisha, his successor, carried Elijah's mantle well
 - 1. And in his own right, is a remarkable personality
- V. Application
 - A. As different as Elijah is from us
 - 1. With all his miracles
 - a. He shares with us one commonality
 - B. He lives within a nation and culture that has turned away from God
 - 1. His ministry is prophetic
 - a. He is to be the conscience of his nation
 - C. That's the kind of ministry we are called to have
 - 1. To be the conscience of our nation
 - D. If we're not the conscience of our nation, we will deteriorate as quickly (or more quickly) than Israel
 - 1. We live in a highly politicized culture
 - a. When respect for life hangs in the balance
 - b. When truth and honesty are replaced by political expediency
 - c. When freedom and responsibility are endangered
 - 2. The church can learn much from Elijah