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A Man With a Nature Like Ours

Kings and Chronicles

Series: In the Days of Elijah

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The Village Church

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I. Seriously? A Nature Like Ours?

- A. **James 5:17** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...
 - 1. Really?
- B. What have we seen from Elijah so far?
 - 1. **1 Kings 17** – bursts onto the scene, prophesies a drought that he indicates is entirely under his control (“except by my word”)
 - 2. God hides him
 - a. First at the brook Cherith
 - (1) Drinks from the brook
 - (2) Fed by ravens
 - b. Then in Sidon, in Zarephath
 - (1) Fed by widow
 - (2) Miraculous provisions during time of drought and famine
 - 3. While in Zarephath
 - a. Raises the widow’s dead son
 - b. Brings the Gentile widow to faith in Yahweh
 - (1) Thus becoming the first prophet to the Gentiles
 - (2) Bringing in a convert from outside Israel proper
 - 4. Led to confront Ahab
 - a. Sends message through Obadiah to meet Ahab
 - b. Meets Ahab, challenges his prophets and Jezebel’s to contest on Mt. Carmel
 - 5. Engages the contest of prophets on Carmel
 - a. Outnumbered – 850 to 1
 - (1) 450 prophets of Baal
 - (2) 400 prophets of Asherah
 - b. Sets up a contest of sacrifices
 - (1) Two oxen, one for each altar
 - c. Baal prophets go first
 - (1) Try as best they can to get their god to begin the fire that would consume their sacrifice
 - (2) Even to extent of extreme ecstatic behavior – cutting themselves, throwing themselves on the altar
 - d. Elijah even mocks their attempts, mocks Baal
 - (1) Might be absent, away or asleep!

- e. Eventually Elijah has his chance
 - (1) Stacks the deck against him
 - (a) Water on the sacrifice
 - (b) Water around the altar in a trench
 - (2) Prays that God's honor would reign supreme
 - f. God consumes the sacrifice
 - (1) Vindicating Elijah as a prophet of the true living God
 - g. Takes the prophets of Baal down to the brook Kishon and kills them
- C. Sound like a man with a nature like ours?
 - 1. Yep, we that kind of thing every day!
 - 2. I don't know anyone like that!
- D. Then comes 1 Kings 19
 - 1. **1 Kings 19:1-5a** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.
 - b. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."
 - c. 3 Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.
 - d. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree.
 - e. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."
 - f. 5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. ...
 - 2. That sounds more like a man with a nature like ours
 - a. Ministry is tough
 - b. Elijah has stood up against 850 prophets of idolatry
 - (1) He has defeated the 450 prophets of Baal in a great contest
 - (2) The Lord Himself vindicated him
 - c. The a woman stands up, tells him she's going to kill him
 - d. Scares the wits out of him
 - e. He runs away
 - 3. Before – God told him to hide himself
 - a. And God provided for him
 - b. Hiding was in God's plan
 - 4. Now – he doesn't run because God told him
 - a. He runs because he's scared of a woman
 - 5. In his running he realizes, "I'm no better than anyone else"
 - a. "Prophet! What a joke!"
 - b. "I'm pathetic. Just let me die"
 - c. "Jezebel wants to kill me. That's really what I deserve."
 - (1) "I just don't want her to kill me"
 - d. "So God, just take my life"

- e. “That’s it for me. No more prophet stuff. I’m finished”
 - f. “I’m going to sleep. I don’t ever want to wake up”
- E. Have you ever felt like that?
 - 1. You’re finished; fed up; tired; defeated; discouraged; depressed?
 - 2. You’re just going to give up; not worth it any more
 - 3. That’s Elijah
 - a. Man with a nature like ours
 - b. He’s finished
- F. Trouble is, God’s not finished with him
 - 1. Jezebel wants to kill him
 - 2. He wants to die
 - 3. But God isn’t going to let him die – ever!
- G. Story that unfolds reveals what God does to take this discouraged, demoralized, depressed saint, and bring him back to fruitful ministry

II. Observations on the depression

- A. Followed immediately upon the greatest success
 - 1. 850 to 1 – and he wins
 - a. Better than David and Goliath
 - 2. When Jezebel sends her message, he finds himself running away
 - a. Surprising to him
 - 3. Sometimes we can find ourselves overwhelmed even after great success in ministry
 - a. Testimony of many pastors who have fallen into moral problems, that those falls have come following great ministry success
- B. Times of discouragement can come at any time
 - 1. Many people find the going rough, with little success, and that can lead to discouragement
 - 2. Missionaries have worked in unfruitful fields for a generation with no converts
 - 3. But the time when depression rises up and bites us unexpectedly is after we have success
 - a. And when it happens, it becomes a tool in hands of Satan who mocks us
 - b. “You think you’re something special? Some prophet of the Lord?”
 - c. “You’re just a weak excuse for a prophet; a wannabe prophet”
 - d. “You’re useless”
- C. Doesn’t matter what kind of ministry it is
 - 1. Doesn’t have to be as significant as Elijah’s prophetic ministry
 - 2. Any kind of ministry can have those characteristics
 - a. Waves of discouragement send us into a tail spin; want to quit

III. God’s Therapy

- A. God gives him a break
 - 1. Elijah goes to sleep because he wants to die
 - a. God’s not going to let him die
 - b. But God is going to let him sleep

2. We don't know how long God let him sleep
 - a. But there was no condemnation in his sleeping
 - b. Sometimes we just need a rest
3. But the sleep is not endless; not the only thing we need
 - a. We need nourishment
 - b. So an angel wakes him up and says, "Dinner's ready"
4. **1 Kings 19:5b-6 (ESV) —**
 - a. 5 ... And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."
 - b. 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.
 - c. And he ate and drank and lay down again.
5. Goes back to sleep
 - a. That's ok – for now
 - b. But not forever
6. Sometimes it's ok to take a break
 - a. But those breaks are not permanent
 - b. When you take a break, you need to understand that it's not to die
 - c. It's just that you need a break
7. So God gives him a break
 - a. But not forever

B. God leads him to commune with Him

1. Elijah needs rest, needs food
 - a. But even more, Elijah needs God
2. God comes and says, "Let's take a walk"
3. **1 Kings 19:7-8 (ESV) —**
 - a. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."
 - b. 8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.
4. Long journey
 - a. Tempted to say Elijah needed exercise
 - (1) Probably true
 - (2) Though doubt that's what this journey is really all about
5. God leads him to a sacred place
 - a. A place where He's met with His servants before
 - b. Horeb – where God met Moses in the burning bush
 - c. Same mountain where God met Moses after leading Israel out of Egypt
 - d. Maybe even in the same cave where God hid Moses when God showed Moses the backside of His glory
6. God leads him to a place where meeting with God is the only thing that happens there
7. When you're discouraged

- a. Get some rest
- b. Eat something
- c. Then go find God
- d. To a place without distraction

C. **God lets him express himself**

1. **1 Kings 19:9–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it.
 - b. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”
 - c. 10 He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.
 - d. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”
2. God loves to ask rhetorical questions
 - a. “Why are you here?”
 - b. God knows exactly why Elijah is there
3. God asks the question because it provides an opportunity for Elijah to reflect on what has happened
4. Elijah very easily complies
 - a. Probably been thinking about a lot of these things; hadn’t put his thoughts together in any kind of coherent form
5. Elijah’s complaint
 - a. “I’ve done my part”
 - b. “Been zealous for you, Lord”
 - c. “But it hasn’t worked”
 - d. “These people – these Israelites – they continue to forsake your covenant, tear down your altars, kill your prophets”
 - e. “Even after all I did to show them who You are”
 - f. “And nobody else is helping”
 - g. “I’m all alone in this”
 - h. “I can’t keep going without any help from anybody”
 - i. “And I get absolutely no respect from these people”
 - j. “Worse – they want to kill me”
 - k. “Even after all I’ve done for them”
6. God doesn’t really answer his complaint
 - a. Important observation for anyone who wants to do counseling
 - (1) Sometimes you just listen
7. Even if Elijah is not entirely accurate in his assessment
 - a. He’s not – as we shall see
8. But God lets him vent

D. **God reminds Elijah of who He is**

1. **1 Kings 19:11a** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” ...

2. Again, maybe the same cleft of the rock in which God showed Moses the backside of His glory
3. **1 Kings 19:11b-12** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 ... And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.
 - b. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.
 - c. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.
 - d. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.
4. The Lord wasn't in these things
 - a. He's bigger than these things
 - b. He's above these things
 - c. He controls these things
 - (1) Hurricanes
 - (2) Earthquakes
 - (3) Fire
5. God's not in those things
 - a. They're just His messengers
 - b. **Psalm 104:4** (ESV) —
 - (1) 4 he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.
6. God: "I cause these things"
 - a. God reminds Elijah of His power
 - (1) His overwhelming power
7. But there's more to God than power
 - a. We see that God deals with His people out of mercy and tenderness
8. God doesn't smack Elijah around with the wind, earthquake and fire
 - a. Gentle blowing is what brings Elijah out to meet God
9. **1 Kings 19:13** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.
 - b. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
10. Same question from God
11. **1 Kings 19:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.
 - b. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."
12. Same answer from Elijah
 - a. Or is it?
13. First time

- a. With indignation: “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”
- 14. Second time
 - a. With resignation: “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”
- 15. So God meets Elijah
 - a. He has the same complaint
 - b. But something has changed
- E. **God gives him a job to do**
 - 1. Doesn’t answer his complaint – at least not directly
 - a. Counseling session is over
 - 2. **1 Kings 19:15–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.
 - b. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.
 - c. 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.
 - 3. “Now, Elijah – get back to work”
 - a. “One of the things My prophets do is anoint people”
 - (1) “That’s what you’ll do – anoint Hazael, Jehu, Elisha”
 - 4. There’s a time for counseling to end
 - a. Pity party is over
 - b. Man up – do what you’re supposed to
 - 5. Interesting dimensions of this job that does address his complaint
 - a. Complains that Israel continues to reject God and the covenant; that nobody is helping him
 - b. He’s to anoint Hazael and Jehu and Elisha
 - c. What for?
 - 6. **1 Kings 19:17** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death.
 - 7. God’s going to judge these people
 - a. “They’ve rejected your word, Elijah. That’s doesn’t mean your word is useless”
 - b. “My word will not return void. It will accomplish all that I desire”
 - c. “In this case, I will hold these people accountable. They will pay for their transgressions.”
 - d. “And you won’t have to do that part. Somebody else is going to do that job for Me – Hazael, Jehu and Elisha”

8. "You don't have to do everything by yourself"
- F. **God encourages Elijah**
 1. **1 Kings 19:18** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."
 2. "By the way. You're not alone"
 3. "I always have a remnant"
 4. "You can't always tell what good you do when you work for me"
 5. "I'm always working behind the scenes"
 6. "I will accomplish everything that I desire"
 7. "My people will walk by faith and not by sight"
 - a. "You do what I call you to do, and let Me worry about what get's accomplished"
 - b. "Trust Me"
 - c. "There are 7,000 faithful in Israel. I've kept them. They're mine, in spite of the despicable culture they live in"
 8. **1 Kings 19:19–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him.
 - b. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"
 - c. 21 And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.
 9. Elijah finds Elisha
 - a. Third on the list of people that Elijah was to anoint
 - (1) But the first one to encounter
 - b. Why?
 - (1) He was the one who would help Elijah
 - (2) Wasn't going to be Hazael or Jehu
 10. Elisha ministered to him
 11. God
 - a. "I know you feel all alone. You're not – there are still 7,000 who are faithful. But you do need an assistant"
 - b. "He will take over from you eventually. But I'm not finished yet"
 - c. "In the meantime, you need help. He'll help you"
 12. So God encourages Elijah
 - a. So Elijah is back in action
- IV. **Application**
 - A. How should we handle discouragement?
 1. Don't amazed when it surprises you

- a. Sometimes it comes when you least expect it
- 2. Take a break
 - a. Get some rest
 - b. Get refreshed
 - (1) Eat something
 - (2) Get some exercise
 - c. But don't think it's permanent
- 3. Meet with God
 - a. Remind yourself, through the scriptures, of who He is
 - b. Voice your complaint
 - c. Then listen
 - (1) As He gently restores you
- 4. Get back to work
- 5. Receive His encouragement
 - a. His assurance that your ministry is not in vain
 - b. That He is responsible for the outcome
 - c. That He will bring alongside whoever you need to do whatever it is that you are called to do
- B. Whatever you do...
 - 1. ... never give up