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Great and Good
Kings and Chronicles
Series: In the Days of Elijah
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I. Introduction

A. **2 Kings 4 – Elisha**

1. Five miracles
 - a. Evidence that Elisha had indeed received a double portion of Elijah's spirit
2. Learn some things about God's use of miracles
3. Everything we needed to know we learned in Kindergarten
 - a. God is Great, God is Good, let us thank Him for our food

B. **God is great**

1. Miracles are expressions of the extraordinary power of God
 - a. Definition of miracle – something only God can do
 - b. **John 3:2** (ESV) —
 - (1) 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."
 - c. Man born blind: **John 9:30–33** (ESV) —
 - (1) 30 The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.
 - (2) 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.
 - (3) 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.
 - (4) 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."
 - d. **John 14:10–11** (ESV) —
 - (1) 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
 - (2) 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.
2. Those powerful expressions are God's vindication of His messengers, His attestation of their credentials

- a. Since only God can do these things, you better pay attention to ones through whom He does them; they are His messengers
- b. **Acts 2:22** (ESV) —
 - (1) 22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—
- c. **Hebrews 2:1–4** (ESV) —
 - (1) 1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.
 - (2) 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,
 - (3) 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,
 - (4) 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

3. **Miracles**

- a. Expressions of the extraordinary power of God
 - (1) Only God can do those things
- b. Attest to the credentials of God’s messengers
 - (1) Better pay attention to those through whom the miracles are wrought

4. **Objections**

- a. Can’t Satan do miracles?
- b. **Matthew 24:24** (ESV) —
 - (1) 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.
- c. **2 Thessalonians 2:8–11** (ESV) —
 - (1) 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.
 - (2) 9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,
 - (3) 10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
 - (4) 11 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false...
- d. Signs arising from false Christs and false prophets are false wonders (NIV – counterfeit miracles)

- (1) Like the magic performed with snakes by the magicians in Pharaoh's court
 - (a) Which Moses' snakes eventually ate
 - (2) Like the magic performed by Simon Magus in Acts 8
 - (a) He himself was dazzled by the signs and wonders done by apostles
 - (b) Wanted to purchase these powers himself
- e. 2 Thessalonians passage teaches that these signs are accompanied by the Lord's deception of those who are committed to wickedness and are perishing
- f. Satanic miracles aren't miracles at all
 - (1) Mere human magical approximations allowed by God to deceive those who are already committed to unrighteousness

C. **God is Good**

- 1. Miracles have a redemptive purpose
 - a. Expressions of lovingkindness, of grace, of mercy
 - (1) To people who are needy
 - (2) To people who belong to God; to whom God is committed in a covenant relationship
- 2. **Miracles of Jesus**
 - a. **Acts 10:38** (ESV) —
 - (1) 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
 - b. **Luke 4:16–21** (ESV) —
 - (1) 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.
 - (2) 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
 - (3) 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
 - (4) 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
 - (5) 20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.
 - (6) 21 And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."
 - c. Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus, not just to show off the power of God, but to use the power of God in doing good for those who need it

- (1) Good news for poor
 - (2) Release for captives
 - (3) Recovery of sight for blind
 - (4) Freedom for the downtrodden
 - 3. Hard to think of a miracle of Jesus that didn't have this kind of redemptive purpose
 - a. John 2 – water into wine at Cana
 - (1) Continue the celebration of the wedding feast
 - b. John 4 – healed royal official's son
 - c. John 5 – healed paralytic at Bethesda
 - d. John 6 – fed 5,000
 - e. John 6 – Jesus walked on water
 - (1) Remember – sea had become stirred up due to a storm
 - (2) Jesus' arrival calmed the sea, brought to the boat immediately to its destination
 - f. John 9 – healing of man born blind
 - g. John 11 – resurrection of Lazarus
 - 4. In every case, someone in need was rescued or assisted in some way
 - a. Sometimes the assistance was extraordinary
 - (1) Paralytic for 38 years
 - (2) Man born blind
 - (3) Resuscitation of dead Lazarus
 - b. Sometimes somewhat less significant
 - (1) Wine at a wedding feast
 - c. But always, redemptive
- D. **God is great and God is good**
 - 1. Both qualities appear in His miracles
 - 2. Both NT and OT
- E. Continue to see these qualities in the ministry of Elisha

II. **Widow's Oil**

- A. **2 Kings 4:1–7** (ESV) —
 - 1. 1 Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."
 - 2. 2 And Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?" And she said, "Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."
 - 3. 3 Then he said, "Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few."
 - 4. 4 Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside."
 - 5. 5 So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured they brought the vessels to her.

6. 6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not another." Then the oil stopped flowing.
7. 7 She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest."
- B. Woman lost her husband
 1. Evidently, godly woman; husband was godly man
 - a. He was of the sons of the prophets
 - (1) Faithful to Elisha
 - (2) Supportive of Elisha
 2. Husband had cared for her; but did so through ministry salary
 - a. When he died, she was left without economic capacity
 - b. Creditor had come to take her two sons to pay debts
 3. She calls to Elisha for help
- C. Elisha asks what she has that could help
 1. Interesting – God could have taken care of all her troubles with a word, but instead, Elisha calls on the woman to participate in her own redemption
 - a. Why?
 - (1) See about that later
 2. She answers – only a little oil
- D. Elisha tells her to borrow empty vessels from her neighbors
 1. Get a bunch of them
 2. Has her take her sons with her, shut the door (maybe to keep creditors out for a time; maybe to keep the miracle under wraps for a time)
 3. Has her pour the oil from her jar into the vessels
- E. She kept pouring, filling vessel after vessel
 1. When she ran out of vessels, she finally ran out of oil
- F. Elisha instructed her to sell the oil, pay her debts, live on the rest
- G. Miracle
 1. God was producing something out of very little
 - a. Like Jesus did when He fed the 5,000 with 7 loaves and 2 fish
 2. **God's greatness**, power was evident to this woman and her two sons
 3. **God's goodness** was apparent as well
 - a. Woman was destitute
 - (1) Likely to lose her two sons to the creditor
 - (2) Without economic capacity to keep going
 - b. But now she was able to do more than just get by
- H. What an extraordinary lesson, not just to the woman, but to her young sons
 1. Saw God provide for them when they were at the bottom

III. **Shunammite Woman – child born**

- A. **2 Kings 4:8–17** (ESV) —
 1. 8 One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food.

2. 9 And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way.
 3. 10 Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there."
 4. 11 One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there.
 5. 12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." When he had called her, she stood before him.
 6. 13 And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' " She answered, "I dwell among my own people."
 7. 14 And he said, "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old."
 8. 15 He said, "Call her." And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway.
 9. 16 And he said, "At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant."
 10. 17 But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.
- B. Elisha had a circuit for his ministry
1. First circuit rider – like the Wesleys!
 2. Would pass through Shunem from time to time
 3. Met a woman of some note in that community
 - a. Had the means to share with this man
 - b. Had the character to recognize godliness when she saw it
 - c. Always a good idea to provide for the godly when you can discern it
 4. Woman would provide for Elisha, feed him
- C. Eventually, she and her husband decided to take their provision a step farther
1. Built an apartment for him so he could stay there during his journeys
 - a. Rather sparse but adequate – appropriate for a prophet
 2. Elisha took advantage of it; stayed frequently
- D. Elisha wanted to provide something out of gratitude
1. Not that the woman made the provision in order to get something – she didn't
 - a. Woman wouldn't say she wanted anything
 - (1) Surely an example of great contentment
 - (2) Something we American Christians ought to emulate
 2. Asks Gehazi would he could do for her
 - a. Doesn't have a son; father is old
 - (1) Needs a child to continue to care for her
 3. Elisha prophesies that she will have a son within the next year

4. Woman can't believe it
 - a. While she wouldn't express it, to be childless was of great concern to women like that
 - b. Extraordinary blessing – But not out of the ordinary for the OT
 - (1) Abraham and Sarah
 - (2) Isaac and Rebekah
- E. Woman gave birth
 1. Certainly a great blessing
- F. **God is great**
 1. Power of God evident
- G. **God is good**
 1. Woman in need (in spite of her humility and contentment)
 2. Great blessing provided

IV. **Shunammite Woman – child raised**

- A. **2 Kings 4:18–37** (ESV) —
 1. 18 When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers.
 2. 19 And he said to his father, “Oh, my head, my head!” The father said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.”
 3. 20 And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died.
 4. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out.
 5. 22 Then she called to her husband and said, “Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again.”
 6. 23 And he said, “Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.” She said, “All is well.”
 7. 24 Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, “Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.”
 8. 25 So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite.
 9. 26 Run at once to meet her and say to her, ‘Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?’ ” And she answered, “All is well.”
 10. 27 And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.”
 11. 28 Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’ ”

12. 29 He said to Gehazi, "Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child."
13. 30 Then the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her.
14. 31 Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore he returned to meet him and told him, "The child has not awakened."
15. 32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed.
16. 33 So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD.
17. 34 Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm.
18. 35 Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.
19. 36 Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son."
20. 37 She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

B. Son was old enough to go out to the field with father

1. Did so one day; had a headache
2. Father took him to the woman
 - a. She held him until noon
 - b. Child died
3. Surely a time of great distress
 - a. Child was a gift from the Lord – she hadn't asked for him
 - b. Now this wonderful gift was taken from her

C. Woman responded uncharacteristically

1. Didn't prepare the child for burial
 - a. Instead took him to the prophet's chamber
 - (1) Heard about Elijah's healing of the widow of Zarephath's son?
 - (2) Remembered that the word on the street was the Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit
 - b. Perhaps it could happen to her

D. She then goes quickly to Carmel to find Elisha

1. Elisha sends Gehazi first to meet her when he sees her coming
2. She doesn't want Gehazi involved at all; tells him everything is all right
3. When she arrives she falls at Elisha's feet; Gehazi tries to pry her away, but Elisha allows her to express herself
 - a. The Lord hadn't revealed the problem to Elisha
 - (1) Wanted the woman to present her case herself

- E. Woman pours out her complaint
 - 1. What she had held in up to that point overflowed
 - a. “I didn’t ask for this child! Why did you deceive me?”
 - F. Elisha sends Gehazi on ahead with instructions for the staff
 - 1. Which doesn’t seem to have any effect
 - a. Still curious to all the commentators
 - G. Woman will not leave Elisha
 - 1. He goes with her back to her home
 - H. Healing became a process
 - 1. Elisha laid on the child
 - a. Child became warm
 - 2. Elisha paced back and forth
 - a. Prayer was certainly evident, as it had been with Elijah’s healing of the son of the widow at Zarephath
 - 3. Elisha laid on the child again
 - a. Child sneezed
 - 4. Elisha said, “God bless you!” “Gesundheit”
 - a. Or so the legend goes
 - b. But that certainly was evidence of God’s blessing
 - I. Elisha gave her son back to her
 - 1. She responded with expression of gratitude
 - J. **God is great**
 - 1. Can’t get much greater than raising the dead
 - K. **God is good**
 - 1. Woman in distress
 - 2. Ministered to by a compassionate God through merciful servant
- V. **Son’s of the Prophets’ stew**
- A. **2 Kings 4:38–41** (ESV) —
 - 1. 38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, “Set on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.”
 - 2. 39 One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were.
 - 3. 40 And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the stew, they cried out, “O man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it.
 - 4. 41 He said, “Then bring flour.” And he threw it into the pot and said, “Pour some out for the men, that they may eat.” And there was no harm in the pot.
 - B. Elisha is ministering to the sons of the prophets
 - 1. School is in session; teacher is present
 - C. Occasion – time to eat
 - 1. Stew is on the menu

- a. Ingredients are herbs and vegetables
 - 2. Evidently, sons of the prophets know more about spiritual things than about the natural world
 - a. Someone tosses in a poisonous gourd
 - 3. Result is inedible
- D. They go to Elisha and complain
 - 1. Elisha has them add some grain
 - a. Probably already some in the stew
 - b. He wants them to add more
 - 2. Probably not something particularly medicinal about the grain
 - a. But coming from Elisha's hands, had miraculous power
 - 3. God saved the soup
 - a. Thus providing for the sons of the prophets
- E. **God is great**
 - 1. Certainly was miraculous
- F. **God is good**
 - 1. Provided for hungry servants of God

VI. **20 loaves and the hundred**

- A. **2 Kings 4:42–44** (ESV) —
 - 1. 42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give to the men, that they may eat."
 - 2. 43 But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred men?" So he repeated, "Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.' "
 - 3. 44 So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.
- B. Next miracle – man shows up with some loaves for Elisha
 - 1. Character of an offering
 - a. Firstfruits of his production
- C. When he appears, Elisha tells him to feed the people
 - 1. Presumably sons of the prophets
 - a. Of which there are more than 100
- D. The attendant wonders how that can happen
 - 1. Elisha tells him to do it, they will eat, have stuff left over
- E. Attendant does it
 - 1. They all eat
 - 2. There was stuff left over
 - a. Sounds like feeding the 5,000
- F. **God is great**
 - 1. Miraculous – God made much of very little
- G. **God is good**
 - 1. Provision is made once again for God's people

VII. **Common elements**

A. **Providential care provided for God's people**

1. In every case, these people were God's people
 - a. Believers
 - b. People to whom God had committed Himself in a covenant relationship
2. People
 - a. Widow of one of the sons of the prophets
 - b. Shunammite woman
 - (1) Clearly a believer based on how she cared for the man of God
 - c. Sons of the prophets themselves
 - d. Man who came to offer his firstfruits
 - e. Attendant who delivered the food to the prophets
3. God takes care of His people
 - a. He doesn't let His people go hungry
 - (1) Sometimes leads them to the edge
 - (2) Ultimately, He feeds and cares for His own
4. You are His children
 - a. He will do whatever it takes to provide for you

B. **Faith required of God's people**

1. In practically every instance, God requires a response of faith by His people
2. Widow of the sons of the prophets
 - a. Miracle came in the pouring
 - (1) She had to pour what she had in order to see God work
3. Shunammite woman
 - a. Her faithful care of Elisha led to birth of her child
 - b. She left her dead child in the prophet's chamber in order to go to Elisha
 - (1) Itself an act of faith, hope, expectation
4. Both these women had to give up something to receive something even greater
5. Sons of the prophets
 - a. Give Elisha meal
 - b. Then had to pour out the soup to be eaten
 - (1) And actually eat it!
 - c. After their first experience, that required faith
6. Attendant
 - a. Had to do what the disciples did – give out the meager provisions to feed more than they imagined
 - b. In the giving, the food was multiplied

C. Is God asking something of you?

1. Are you to exercise some faith to receive the blessings He has for you as His children?
2. Now is a good time to ask that question

- a. He loves you; wants to care for you and provide for you
 - (1) You are His children!
- b. At the same time, He wants you to trust Him
 - (1) He desires faith on the part of His children

D. God is great; God is good

- 1. Are you faithful?