



Many Needs, One Provider

Text: 2 Kings 4:1-7, 38-44

Note: The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

2 Kings 4:1-7

1 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves."

2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil."

3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors-- empty vessels; do not gather just a few."

4 "And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured it out.

6 Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not another vessel." So the oil ceased.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest."

2 Kings 4:38-44

38 And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."

39 So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were.

40 Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it.

41 So he said, "Then bring some flour." And he put it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people, that they may eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

42 Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley

bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat."

43 But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'"

44 So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.

What role did each person have in seeing the miracle come to pass?

They each had to take a step of faith note that this is a pattern of all of the personal need-meeting miracles in the Bible.

What was special about Elisha that God chose him to work miracles through him?

Elisha was God's prophet chosen by Him to communicate God's Word to the people.

What role did the miracles serve in establishing Elisha's credentials as a prophet of God?

They showed that Elisha spoke for God since only God could produce these miracles and these miracles coming to pass exactly as Elisha said they would made it clear that Elisha was tuned in to what God was doing.

Do we have these kind of miracles today?

This is a trick question. If I were to ask, do we have miracles today, the answer is very definitely yes. But the question is in regards to the type of miracles Elisha was a party to. I contend that these kind of miracles are not normative for today. Notice I didn't say they would not happen today but just that they are more rare than we see in Elisha's ministry.

What is different between Elisha's day and today?

For one thing, people had more basic needs... notice that there was a famine in the land in the case of the food being multiplied. There are places in the world where I believe this type of miracle occurs more frequently to show God's provision for our needs. But even then I think there are differences...

Do we need miracles to authenticate God's prophets today?

No. The canon of Scripture is closed, meaning the Word of God is complete. We have no need to be recording Scripture today...

Revelation 22:18 - For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

This warning certainly applies to the book of Revelation but since Revelation was the last book of the new Testament to be written, I believe it applies to the whole Bible.

Since Scripture is not being written in our day does this mean there is no spiritual gift of prophecy today?

We do have the gift of prophecy within the church today in that it is forth telling God's Word. Today's prophets are not giving us new revelation from God because He has already revealed to us everything we need to know in Jesus Christ...

Hebrews 1:1-2 - God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, Jesus and the apostles formed the foundation for the church. A building only needs one foundation...

Ephesians 2:19-22 - Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Since the Word of God is complete, why don't we need miracles that authenticate God's spokesmen today?

We can authenticate God's spokesmen today with the Bible because if someone is speaking for God, whatever they say must be consistent with the Bible. Paul commended the Bereans for doing this...

Acts 17:10-12 - Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Paul also taught that God's Word is consistent and could not contradict itself so it should be used for authentication...

Galatians 1:8 - But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Likewise, I would encourage you to check out for yourself what I say and if I teach anything that is counter to the Bible point it out to me. I have not arrived and still have much to learn. Learning is a life-long pursuit.

Were miracles authenticating God's spokesmen even normative during Bible times?

We think that they are because the Bible documents a lot of miracles but a careful study would reveal that the kind of miracles that authenticated those speaking for God were pretty limited: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the Apostles.

What was unique about the ministries of these three sets of God's spokesmen that He used miracles to authenticate them?

They were key times in God's dealing with Israel and the Church. During Moses and Joshua's day God was establishing the Law and Israel as a nation in the promised land. Elijah and Elisha were prophets during a critical time when Israel was turning away from God and compromising with the world. This led to God raising up Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel for their sins as a nation. And of course Jesus came as God's Anointed to make the way for us to be saved and established the kingdom of heaven. The Apostles completed the Bible and established the church.

There are many more prophets besides the ones who had miracles to authenticate them, how did these other prophets establish their credentials?

The other prophets established their credentials by prophesying about near term events along with things in the distant future. If the near term events came to pass, the people knew that the prophet was a legitimate spokesman for God and that the longer-term prophecies had to be true as well.

What happened to false prophets in the time of Elijah and Elisha?

Per the Law God gave Moses, those who were proven to be false prophets were to be put to death...

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 - But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'-- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Will there be any future times when Scripture will be written, when there will be more revelation from God?

I believe that during the tribulation when Israel as a nation recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, God will again work through Israel to bring people to Him. And part of that working through Israel will include prophets...

Joel 2:28-31

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

How do we know that this passage is talking about the tribulation period?

It refers to wonders in the heavens along with darkening the sun and the moon which is an event that occurs during the tribulation per other passages of Scripture (do your own concordance study of this and check it out for yourself). Also, the passage clearly says that these things happen "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" which is a reference to the Lord's return to earth to end the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the tribulation.

But wait a minute, didn't Peter say that this passage was fulfilled at Pentecost? See Acts 2:16-21...

Acts 2:16-21

16 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

21 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

What happened at Pentecost was a partial fulfillment. Certainly we are living in the age of Grace when whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And God has indeed poured out His Spirit on us. And during the First Century there certainly were prophets who gave us the New Testament. But I believe that the pouring out of the Spirit during the tribulation will be special in that it will enable people to prophecy. Certainly the tribulation is a key time period in Israel's history and the history of the world. I base this belief on the following passage which is just a few verses before the passage in Joel telling about future prophets...

Joel 2:23 - Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the

former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you-- the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

This passage is certainly in context of God pouring out His Spirit and while this has a literal application in the pouring out of God's blessing in the form of rain which is so important in arid Israel, I believe that for those with spiritual discernment, it also has prophetic application to the pouring out of God's Spirit. This idea is infract re-enforced by James...

James 5:7 - Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

I believe that there will also be more revelation from God when Jesus Christ is physically ruling on the earth for 1000 as He has promised. This millennial kingdom will begin immediately following the tribulation and end when the Lord recreates heaven and earth ushering in the eternal state. The following passage addresses this...

Micah 4:2 - Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

So is God out of the miracle business then today?

Certainly not. God's miracles are seen every day for those with discernment.

Who has discernment?

Those who know the Lord and are in active fellowship with Him...

Hebrews 5:13-14 - everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

What kind of miracles are normative for today?

Answers to prayer. Individual believers today in this age of grace have the privilege to petition God directly, we don't need to seek out priests or other special people to intercede for us. This is a promise of God, Jesus said...

John 14:13-14 - And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

If the Lord Jesus has promised us that whatever we ask He will do, why doesn't He answer my prayers?

Jesus promised to meet our needs, not our wants...

James 4:3 - You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Note that the promise Jesus made in John 14 was that He would do whatever we asked in His name... What does it mean to ask for something in His Name? Does this mean we tack on “in Jesus’ name” at the end of our prayer to get Him to answer?

No, we add in Jesus’ name at the end of a prayer to serve as a reminder that we believe our requests to be in His will and that we are acknowledging that the only reason God the Father will even hear our prayers is because of what Jesus did for us.

What kind of things do we know that God will answer when we pray for them?

God always answers a prayer for our most pressing need, a prayer of salvation...

Romans 10:13 - For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God will supply our genuine physical needs in this world so prayers regarding these needs will be answered...

Matthew 6:25-26 - Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

God always answers a prayer for wisdom...

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

God desires all people to be saved and will answer prayer associated with the salvation of other people...

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Does God always answer prayer the way we expect Him to? Why?

Of course not, God has a bigger perspective than us. He comprehends ramifications far beyond our ability to know. Also He delights in doing things in a way that is clear to us could only be from Him.