

2 Kings 2:23-25

Introduction.

- A. It's shocking and cruel that Elisha cursed little children and called out savage bears to kill 42 of them, just for mocking his baldness.
- B. This proves the cruelty of the God of the Bible.

I. The story.

- A. God told Elijah to pick Elisha as his successor (1 Ki. 19:16).
- B. Elisha went with Elijah to Jericho then crossed the Jordan River.
- C. Elijah asked what he could give Elisha before he left – a double portion of Elijah's spirit (cf. 2 Ki. 13:21).
- D. Elijah was swept up to heaven by a chariot and horses of fire.
- E. Elisha took Elijah's cloak that had fallen.
- F. Crossed back over the Jordan.
- G. Cleansed the water for the people of Jericho.
- H. Mocked at Bethel.
 - 1. Called down a curse upon his mockers.
 - 2. Two female bears came out of the woods and mauled 42 of them.

II. Understanding the story.

- A. Bethel.
 - 1. A place of idolatry.
 - 2. Established by Jeroboam as an alternate place of worship (1 Kings 12:25-33; cf. 13:6).
- B. How old were the children?
 - 1. The word for children is "na'ar."
 - a. The baby Moses (Ex. 2:6). b. Absalom (2 Sam. 14:21; 18:5 – 30 years old). c. Servants (Ge. 22:3). d. An armor-bearer (Jud. 9:54). e. A king's official (2 Ki. 19:6). f. A priest (1 Sam. 2:17). g. Soldiers (1 Ki. 20: 13-15). h. Joseph (Gen. 37:2 – 17 years old).

2. The word for young is “qatan.”
 - a. Small, little, young.
 - b. Solomon (1 Ki. 3:7).
3. These “children” were probably young men in the service of the priesthood at Bethel – a gang of young thugs.

C. Baldness.

1. Probably not literal baldness.
 - a. Rare in ANE.
 - b. Men typically covered their heads, so wouldn't be seen.
 - c. Elisha was about 25 years old.
2. “Empty headed” or “Liar.”
3. Shaved head as a sign of mourning.
4. A rejection of Elisha's prophetic authority.

D. “Go up.”

1. Same word to describe Elijah's going up to heaven (vs. 11).
2. They were wishing that Elisha were dead.

E. The curse – to call down God's judgment upon someone or something.

F. The bears (cf. Lev. 26:21-22).

1. Females more ferocious than male bears (Hos. 13:8; 2 Sam. 17:8)).
2. Mauled (not killed) 42 of the thugs.

III. Conclusion.

- A. God takes seriously the mocking of him and his messengers.
- B. Payday someday.