

Chariots of Fire: 2 Kings 2:19-25 Explained

Scriptures for Today: 2 Kings 2:19-25

2 Kings 2:19-25

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. 20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. 21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. 22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake. 23 And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. 24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. 25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

INTRODUCTION

Let me ask you a question. What is the strangest story you've ever read in the Bible? For many people, this one is near the top of the list. A prophet heals a city's water supply. Then a group comes out mocking him. Then two bears come out of the woods. And forty-two children are torn.

Most people read this passage and immediately ask: What just happened? But let me suggest a better question. Why did God preserve this story? Why is this in the Bible? Because this passage isn't really about bears. It's about authority. It's about respect. It's about how people respond when God sends His messenger.

Let's look at this passage closely and see exactly what happened here.

I. THE CITY HAD A PROBLEM

2 Kings 2:19-22

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. 20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. 21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. 22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

Notice how the story begins. Not with judgment but with mercy. Look at verse 19 closely. "The situation of this city is pleasant." The city looked good. The location was good. The scenery was

good. Everything appeared fine. But there was a hidden problem. The water was bad. The land was barren.

Have you ever seen something that looked good on the outside but was broken underneath? That happens often throughout our life. A house. A business. A marriage. A life. Everything looks fine. Until you get closer.

There's a lot of church people that look great on the outside but once you get closer it can be very broken. Imagine living in that city. You draw water. The water is bad. Your crops fail. Your livestock struggle. The problem affects everybody. Water is very important to life. Imagine not having good water. We don't realize how important water is to everything we do.

Imagine being a farmer in Jericho. You plant the seed. You wait. Nothing grows. You water the field. The crops still die. Year after year the same problem. Everybody knows something is wrong. But nobody can fix it. Then Elisha arrives.

Now take a look at verse 20 and 21 again. Elisha throws salt into the spring. God heals the water. The curse is removed. The city is blessed. The chapter begins with healing. The chapter begins with mercy. The chapter begins with blessing. Don't miss that.

All of this started with the men of the city telling Elisha that the situation of this city is pleasant. And then the waters and the lands are healed.

The situation in this city of Louisville is not pleasant. Every morning another headline. Another overdose. Another shooting. Another family destroyed. Another life ruined. People ask: "What's wrong with this city?" The problem isn't a lack of programs. The problem isn't a lack of money. The problem is sin.

The situation in this city is not pleasant. People, in general, are not choosing to do the right things. This area won't be healed until people decide to do the right things. No amount of money, force, police presence, or attention will heal the waters and the land. Why? Because the situation is not pleasant. The only one who can heal this area is the Lord God Almighty, and that's why we're here. That is our mission. We're going to fight back.

II. THE NEW PROPHET ARRIVES

2 Kings 2:23

And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

Notice the contrast. The men of Jericho, in verse 19 through 22, came to Elisha seeking help. They respected Elisha.

But this next group comes to Elisha for a completely different reason. One group respected God's prophet. The other group mocked him. And the outcome could not have been more different.

How does everybody know Elisha truly represents God? How will God establish him? How will God confirm his authority?

Imagine the scene. Elijah is gone. The chariot of fire has already appeared. Elisha has crossed the Jordan. He has just healed an entire city's water supply. Now he's walking down a dusty road toward Bethel. Alone. No army. No bodyguards. No crowd. Just Elisha.

Then suddenly a crowd appears. First one voice. Then another. Then another. Soon the entire crowd is shouting. "Go up, thou bald head! Go up, thou bald head!" Imagine standing there watching. The crowd is laughing. The crowd thinks this is funny. Nobody expects what happens next.

III. THE MOCKERY

These little children, the Bible says, begin to mock Elisha. "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Most people read that and think: They're making fun of his hair. He doesn't have any. There's mockers on You Tube, without videos or pictures by the way, that constantly want to mock my hair. Same type thing here.

They hate God's words being shared so they mock. They are weak people. Elisha's hair and my hair is not the point here, though.

What does: "Go up" mean? What just happened in the previous chapter? Elijah went up into heaven. They're basically saying: Why don't you disappear too? Why don't you go away? We don't want you here.

This is not innocent teasing. This is open rejection of God's chosen prophet. Imagine a newly ordained pastor arriving in a town. Before he even preaches a sermon, a hostile crowd gathers and begins mocking him publicly.

That's the atmosphere right here. And there's many people that don't want us here. There's a church really close to here with a pastor lady that started calling me a wolf when I was out preaching the Gospel. The Bible specifically says over and over again that a pastor must be the husband of one wife. She's not a husband. So therefore, according to God, she's not a pastor.

But she wants to sit over there in her car mocking me as I am out preaching the Gospel. It's similar to this right here. And then I hear she says things like, "Wait until he sees what's it like to have a church in the hood."

She doesn't want us here. But I don't really care what she wants. She openly shows her disobedience to God's word every time she acts as if she is a pastor. She's a mocker of God's words.

So, you have these 42 little children mocking Elisha as he's walking along the way. Most of you and most Christians would give advice to Elisha to simply ignore these 42 children. They're just playing. They're just kids. Kids will be kids. It's okay to mock the man of God. Just ignore them, Elisha.

Well, let's see what Elisha does here. You might remember this when reading your Bible. It's hard to forget this if you were paying attention when reading your Bible.

IV. THE SHOCKING JUDGMENT

2 Kings 2:24-25

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. 25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

This is the moment everybody remembers. Imagine you were watching this happen. Elisha walking down the pathway. The crowd appears. The little children start mocking Elisha. They know what happened with Elijah being taken up in the whirlwind. News like that travels quickly.

Imagine standing there viewing this scene. Elisha keeps walking as they are mocking. Then Elisha stops. Uh oh. Oh boy. What's happening. What's Elisha about to do. He turns around. The laughing suddenly stops. He looks directly at them. He pronounces God's judgment. He curses them in the name of the Lord.

Then movement in the trees. Branches shaking. Two she bears emerge from the woods. In seconds everything changes. Now it's not so funny any more to the little children.

So, in the Bible, we see blessings upon people and cursings upon people. To bless someone is to ask God to show favor to them. To curse someone is to call upon God to judge them. Elisha cursing them means he is declaring God's judgment against them because of their rebellion and mockery.

In other words, "May God judge you for what you are doing." Did you know I can ask for that? I can curse people in the name of the Lord. "May God judge you for what you're doing." That's a cursing. I have that power. God's people have that power. When people do me wrong here, they aren't just doing me wrong but this entire church. That's dangerous.

Some people have come here and have done us wrong. The worst people will do wrong to the people who helped them. You don't want to do that. That's pure evil.

The passage doesn't say that Elisha got his feelings hurt and was trying to get back at the kids for hurting his feelings. Elisha didn't lose his temper. He didn't start cussing. He cursed them in the name of the Lord. And then what happened?

The bears happened. Did you know God's creation works for Him whenever He wants? Two she bears come out of the woods. And what did the two she bears do? Most preachers love to skip over this because deep down they believe God did wrong. They are ashamed of God's word. I am not, and I will not be ashamed of God's words.

The two she bears, the Bible says, came forth and tare forty and two children of them. The Bible clearly says Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord and two bears came out and tare 42 children. Tare, T-A-R-E, means ripped, mauled, or tore them apart. The bears attacked the children violently.

Now, am I supposed to minimize that and say: "Well, maybe they were older children. Maybe the Bible doesn't mean little children. Maybe it was something else." Look, the Bible is very clear.

"There came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him. And tare forty and two children of them."

So, this is not a question of "Why was Elisha offended?" The real question is "Why was God offended?" Because Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord. And they were torn apart by two bears. The children lost their life that day. And for anyone out there who wants to mock God over this, maybe you need to read the story again.

Why would God respond this way? Was God defending Elisha's feelings? No. This isn't about hurt feelings. This is about God's authority.

Who were they really mocking? Elisha? Or God? God had just established Elisha as His prophet. To reject Elisha was to reject the God who sent him.

Imagine tearing up a letter. You might say: I didn't do anything to the sender. But the letter represented the sender. The messenger represented the sender. Elisha represented God.

How you respond to God's authority matters.

V. THE TWO RESPONSES

Notice the contrast of the first story and the second story. The men of Jericho come to Elisha. They seek help. They receive healing. The children of Bethel come to Elisha. They mock. They receive judgment.

Same prophet. Same God. Different response. Different outcome. Why? Because how you respond to God's authority matters.

One group humbled themselves. One group mocked. One group received mercy. One group received judgment. You get the same choice day in and day out with your life.

CONCLUSION

Most people remember the bears and the children being torn apart. Many children believe they can get by with things such as mocking God. Many do this all the time. This should be a lesson for children who are listening. Don't ever mock God or His people.

The bears are not the main lesson here. The main lesson is the two groups of people and the contrast between the two groups. One came seeking help. One came mocking. One received healing. One received judgment.

The question isn't: What do you think about the bears?

The question is: How do you respond when God speaks?

How do you respond to God's Word? How do you respond to God's authority? How do you respond when God sends a message you don't like? Maybe you don't like God's message today. Maybe you don't like the bears ripping the children apart. Maybe you want to mock God's word. You should be able to see how He works now.

The story is here for a lesson. You can mock God's words in this passage here. You can be ashamed of God's words. You can think that you are better than God. And you act just like those little children. That's the point.

You might be saying, "Look at what those children did!" But you should be asking, "Am I doing the same thing when I read this and hear this?" How do you respond when God does or says something you don't like? Be honest.

There are people who read this passage and immediately become angry at God. They don't question the children. They don't question the mockery. They don't question the rebellion. They question God! They want to put the Almighty and Holy God on trial. They judge THE JUDGE. They condemn the righteous God. In other words, they are doing the exact same thing these children did.

They are placing themselves above God's authority. "God, I know better than you. I would have never done that." That's the point of this story. The issue isn't the bears. The issue is whether you will humble yourself before God or place yourself above Him.

Because the great lesson of 2 Kings 2 is simple: **How you respond to God's authority matters.** The men of Jericho learned that. The children of Bethel learned that. And we need to learn it too.

Let's pray.