

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday May 11, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

BETHEL • BAD BOYS • BEARS – PART 2

2 Kings 2:23-25

We began our study on the life of Elisha a few weeks ago, one of the great prophets of God. Elisha's life and ministry is a powerful follow up to his predecessor and mentor Elijah. Here are some of the important background facts that may help to firmly establish in our minds who Elisha was and where he came from.

5 Important Background Facts About Elisha to Remember:

1. The name Elisha means “God is Salvation” and gives us an idea of the purpose of His ministry (v.19) -
2. Elisha was the son of a farmer named Shaphat, and was himself a farmer when God called him (v.19) -
3. Elisha was from the town of Abel-Meholah in Israel which means “Meadow of Dancing” which may reflect something of Elisha's personality (*which was one of compassion, mercy and joy*) (v.19) – That is where Elijah found Elisha plowing the fields. Verse 16 tell us the was from Abel-Meholah, “...*And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” Remember that where as Elijah had been more firey and stern as a prophet, Elisha was characterized as being somewhat kinder, more joyful, full of compassion and mercy, which we shall see in our study of his life.
4. Elisha's call to ministry was from God not man, and was issued through the Prophet Elijah (v.19) – An important note here is that Elijah didn't call Elisha, God did. Elijah, throughout his ministry was simply the messenger of God, and no less here was Elijah the messenger to Elisha of God's call on his life. Look up at verse 16 in 1 Kings 19, “*Also you (Elijah) shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” God calls! If you are not called of God, but rather called by man your ministry will fail.
5. When God called Elisha he surrendered his life fully to God's call, no turning back (v.20-21) – Listen to it again in our passage in verses 20-21, “*20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please 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?” 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*” Some have questioned Elisha's reluctance to follow as indicated in verse 20 by his desire to turn back and kiss his mother and father. But that is a misread of this passage. Notice more importantly in verse 21 that Elisha indicated his full surrender to God's call on his life with not turning back by the fact that he slaughtered his work animals and burned his plows in order to dedicate his life to God in worship and adoration... and surrender. He burned up his previous work equipment to surrender himself to God. He had nothing to go back to. Elisha was a fully surrendered prophet of God. He was all in... and that is what it takes to build an persevering faith.

One more important fact about Elisha's life that might be of interest to you and that set's him apart from other prophets in the Old Testament... Elisha was incredibly blessed by God. He did more miracles in the Old Testament than anyone except Moses.

Elisha's 17 miracles:

1. Parted the waters of the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:14)
2. Purification of the water at Jericho (2 Kings 2:18-22)
3. Protection of the prophet by two female bears (2 Kings 2:23-25)
4. Water miraculously supplied to the army of Israel (2 Kings 3:16-25)
5. Providing the widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1-7)
6. The barren Shunammite woman conceives a child (2 Kings 4:8-17)
7. Resurrection of the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37)
8. Purified the poison soup (2 Kings 4:38-41)
9. Multiplication of loaves of bread (2 Kings 4:42-44)
10. Healing of Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19)
11. Elisha's servant, Gehazi cursed with leprosy (2 Kings 5:25-27)
12. Miracle of the floating axe-head (2 Kings 6:1-7)
13. A servant sees a massive angelic army and chariots (2 Kings 6:15-17)
14. The Syrian army is struck blind (2 Kings 6:18)
15. The Syrian army's sight is restored (2 Kings 6:19-23)
16. The trampling death of the king's officer (*on whose hand the King leaned who disbelieved God's promise*) (2 Kings 7:1-2, 17-20) **disbelieved God promise*
17. A dead man comes to life (2 Kings 13:20-21) **when his dead body touches the bones of Elisha*

These first three miracles of Elisha validate and confirm Elisha's call as God's prophet to His people

Let me point out a couple of important things you may want to take note of concerning Elisha's miracles. These stand out and really provide some important highlights to Elisha's ministry... especially given the more violent and harsh nature of the miracle we will be focusing on in this study.

3 Important Take-Aways to Make Note of in Elisha's Miracles:

- (1) The first three miracles validate and confirm Elisha's call from God - Notice there are three events that validated Elisha's call from God as His prophet to God's people, Israel... the first three miracles *[1] the parting of the Jordan River, [2] the purifying of the water at Jericho, and [3] the mauling of the mocking insurgents (riotous youths, violent protestors, mutineers) by bears (the first three miracles)*
- (2) Almost all of Elisha's miracles were miracles of grace - In reading the story of Elisha it must ever be remembered that his mission was to present the grace of God to a guilty nation who had turned from God, but God was full of grace toward them. For this reason his miracles are almost without exception "miracles of grace," in order to demonstrate God's grace to His people. But that leads to the third key to Elisha's miracles that we should make note of...
- (3) There are three miracles that are an exceptions to the miracles of grace, and are rather miracles of judgment - Again, Elisha's miracles are almost without exception "miracles of grace" as we said previously, yet there were three exceptions. The three exceptions to this were *[1] the mocking youths who are cursed and killed by the bears (the unhinging miracle we will be focusing on in this study, [2] Gehazi (Elisha's servant) being stricken/cursed with leprosy, and [3] the death of the king's officer on who the king leaned, cursed because he disbelieved and mocked God and His promise.* In every case the judgment is the direct outcome of slighting God's grace.

We are going to be looking at the first of these exception miracles, one we are calling a miracle of judgment (rather than grace). Although as just acknowledged these judgment miracles are a direct out come of slighting God's grace. Let's look at our passage and this troubling miracles... note that this is a short

miracle but it is also one of Elisha's first three miracles and is a validation and confirmation of God's work and mission and call on Elisha's life as God prophet and a reminder of the important of the redemption work God was about in the lives of His people, Israel, who had rebelled against His and walked away from Him **(READ: 2 Kings 2:23-25)**

"²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, 'Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!' ²⁴ So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. ²⁵ Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria." -2 Kings 2:23-25 (NKJV)



What is your initial reaction to this story and why? What do you think is the reaction of the world and perhaps those who would ridicule the Bible (God's Word) and all things religious?

"Whatever your religious beliefs might be, you've probably heard of a few of the stories that are told in the Bible; Noah's Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, David and Goliath, maybe. But there are over 100 others that are unknown to pretty much everyone, believer and nonbeliever alike. All of these stories have one thing in common: they are about God's killings in the Bible. Take for example God sending two bears to

rip apart 42 boys for making fun of Elisha's bald head? All of these killings, and more, are found in the Bible, and the God of the Bible is proud of each one. These stories fill the pages of the Bible, yet they are seldom read in any church and are completely ignored by most Bible believers." He goes on to say, "Who has killed more in the Bible, Satan or God? The answer; Satan is cited for killing 10 and God is cited for killing 2,476,633." -Steve Wells, "Drunk With Blood: God's Killings in the Bible"

"I was recently having a discussion with an atheist who had grown up in a Christian family and had gone to church for the first twenty years of her life. But she became an atheist in her 20s. When I asked her why she became an atheist, she said, "'I started reading the Bible.' And she cited God killing 42 youth by bears for simply calling some old man names." — Jeremy Myers, "Redeeming God"

Jeremy Meyers goes on to day, and I think this is quite interesting, "We Christians often tell people that if they would only read the Bible, they would come to see that God is real and that He loves them. We hear testimony after testimony about how drug addicts and hookers were considering suicide but somehow got a Bible and started reading it and ended up giving their life to Christ. I am not in any way denying such accounts or stories. But I think it is also time to admit that while many people decided to follow Jesus as a result of reading the Bible, there are many others who turned away from God after reading the Bible. Part of this, I am convinced, is because we Christians have said that the entire Bible is the Word of God, but then we sort of ignore, gloss over, conveniently forget, or are simply dishonest about some of the more troubling portions of Scripture... I call these troubling texts 'Atheist Maker Verses.'"

And here is a disappointing quote from A.A. Milne, the author of Winnie the Pooh. A.A. Milne said, "The Old Testament is responsible for more atheism, agnosticism, disbelief — call it what you will — than any book ever written; it has emptied more churches than all the counterattractions of cinema, motor bicycle and golf course."

Truthfully, this third event that validated the new call of Elisha as found in verses 23-25 is troubling for many... maybe even for some of you. At first we may be put off by this story that sounds so unworthy of such a great prophet. It can sound petty, vindictive, revenge-like. Perhaps the prophet should be just overlooked the jeering of these 42 "kids," but the issue here was more than mere slighting or offending of a new prophet... it went much deeper than that and plays a greater part in what God was up to in an Israel that had turned their back on Him and rejected Him. Before we get into the heart of this troubling story let's consider together some questions and thought...

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1) How important is the holiness of God?** - How serious should we take it? How serious does God take His holiness?
- 2) Do we really understand and take God's sovereignty seriously?** -What does the Sovereignty of God mean? What do you think about the statement, "As Sovereign God He can do what He wants, who are we to question it."
- 3) Does God protect, sustain, empower, and provide for His ministers, those He calls?** – Why and How far does this extend?
- 4) What do you think about the statement that says Gods Word will not return void?** - How far does this go? What might God be willing to do in order to insure that His word/truth goes out, is not hindered/stopped, or in any way impeded?
- 5) How important is to be sure we never stand in the way of others get to God and how seriously does God take those who prevent people from coming to Him?** - God loves people, and desires that nothing and no one stands in the way of Gods truth and message getting to those who are oppressed, downcast and in need of the truth. Nothing offends God and angers Him like those who stand in the way of men and women getting to Jesus/God (think Jesus cleansing the temple)

I've titled this study, "Bethel, Bad boy, and Bears," the three key pieces to this story in Elisha's life and early ministry. Let's look at these individually.

The event described in these verses may seem repulsive to many and totally out of character with the personality of Elisha, a man who was more peaceful and personal than Elijah. We must remember, however, that the Word of God, which is alive and active, is also the mighty channel the Spirit of God uses to bring men out of darkness to faith in Jesus Christ and to change them by making them like His Son. As a light that shines in the darkness of this world it exposes man's sin, but man loves the darkness because it hides his evil deeds. He hates the light for that very reason; it exposes his evil deeds. **John 3:19-21** says it, *"¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* These may be deeds of ignorance, of apathy, or of out-and-out rebellion or a combination, but regardless, it often results in hatred of the light that is manifest in one form or another.

The gospel, which is contained in the Word of God, is the power of God unto salvation. Satan, of course, who holds people in bondage to death, neither wants people saved nor experiencing the power of a Christ-changed life by the power of the Spirit. For this reason, as the adversary, Satan never gets more busy than when the Word of God begins to be proclaimed and taught. He hates the Word and people of the Word, especially those engaged in its proclamation. They become the target for his attacks in whatever form he can muster.

Therefore, Bible teaching ministries, pastors, teacher, and other believers involved in the ministry of the Word can expect opposition. It simply goes with the territory. This is clearly evident in this short passage before us. In fact, this is one of the key lessons of these few verses. This was true with Moses, Elijah, and with all the prophets. We can expect attack from the world which lies under the control of Satan. But isn't it sad when attack comes from the people of God themselves? Unfortunately, Satan is able to use God's own people to hinder the Word, as he did with the children of Israel on many occasions.

Our Lord cried out in **Matthew 23:37**, *"³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her..."* Not all Israel was true spiritual Israel, but the fact still remains true. Satan is often able to establish a beachhead among the saints.

BETHEL (2 Kings 2:23a)

"²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel..."

"Then" or "thereupon." Following the ministry in Jericho (which portrayed a kind of firstfruits of the land) Elisha, as a man of God under the direction of God and with the Word of God moves on into the land to minister to the people. They were a people living in idolatry and badly in need of the Word.

"Bethel" means "house of God" or "place of God." This name spoke of worship and fellowship with God. There was also a school of the prophets in Bethel, but in spite of this the city was now idolatrous and anything but a center of worship.

Hosea, who ministered after Elisha, called this city *Bethaven* "house of wickedness" a name of shame (cf. **Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5**). It was so called by Hosea because of the idolatrous worship Jeroboam had established in order to effect a complete separation between Israel and Judah. Out of his greed for power and his fear that if Israel went back to Jerusalem to worship, he established two new places of worship in

the north with golden calves as the symbol of worship: one at Bethel and the other at Dan. This was of course in complete disobedience to the directives of the Old Testament Scripture.

- “*Beth*” means “house and “*el*” means God.
- *Aven* is the Hebrew *awen* which means “trouble, sorrow, idolatry, wickedness and emptiness.”
- The word *awen* seems to have two primary facets to its meaning:
 - (1) it portrays an iniquity which causes sorrow, calamity and failure (Prov. 22:8).
 - (2) But it also portrays an emptiness which moves on to idolatry as a human means of filling the emptiness.
- The point is when men are empty of God and His Word, they will fill their lives with vain things whether material or philosophic (scholarly, ethical, rational, theoretical).
- This leads to idolatry, which leads to iniquity, which leads to calamity.

This is key: Bethel needed the Word to show them their sin and to bring them back to the Lord. This was their only hope and Satan was active to stop it. Elisha was undoubtedly able to minister to the needs of certain ones there (the remnant), but the city as a whole never really turned to the Lord and His Word. Satan was well entrenched there. This is another fact we sometimes have to face. And when this is the case we may need to simply move on as Elisha did and as Paul and others did.

“²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road. . .” calls our attention to the time of the attack. It occurred simply in the normal process of his travels to the city.

We never know (though the Lord does) when Satan or others under his control or influence, are going to attack. Just about the time we might think pressures are easing up, and things are getting better... the attack increases. This is why we must always, in spite of how things appear follow the imperative instruction from Scripture for our lives as believers.

Instruction from Scripture in Light of the Unavoidable Attaches of the Enemy and the World:

- (1) **We must be alert and take heed lest we fall** (1 Corinthians 10:12) – *“¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*
- (2) **We must support others and consider ourselves lest we be tempted** (Galatians 6:1) – *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”*
- (3) **We must be careful how we are walking** (Ephesians 5:15-16) – *“¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*
- (4) **We must be fully aware that we live in an evil world and Satan is on the prowl** (1 Peter 5:8) – *“⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”*

BAD BOYS

The second significant part of this story are the “bad boys of Bethel” that Elisha encountered. Now let’s go back to **verse 23** again, *“²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!”* We are calling these “bad boy” here, but who were they really! It’s interesting and may help us get our heads around this incident.

NKJV calls them “youth” and the KJV has “little children” which really misses the meaning here. These were not children, but young adult men. The word poorly translated here as “youth” or “little children” is a

very poor rendering of the Hebrew word “**naar**” used here. The Hebrews word “naar” is an interesting word and can have a variety of meaning. Our interest here may be in really understanding what happened here.

- *“Naar” is used of both Samuel in the temple (when he was a small boy ministering before Lord under Eli)*
- *It is also used of David when he faced Goliath.*
- *In both cases it may refer to physical stature or size (not age)*
- *It is also used to refer to “moral stature” to mean “worthless,” no good. In other words they had poor moral stature and were rebellions, worthless, wicked or an evil bent.*
- *Dr. John MacArthur says, “These were not children, but infidels and idolatrous young men in their twenties to late twenties.”*
- *The term “naar” was used of servants, of soldiers and of Isaac when he was almost 30 years of age.*
- *All of this to say that it is difficult at best to determine who (age wise) these men were, although we know there were 42 of them according to verse 42, that is quite a gang and that they were not “little children” as the KJV poorly translates it (note that they the KJV could arguably be speaking to their immaturity and small moral stature in saying they were acting like little children)*

NOTE: The debate of course arise because interpreters (as well as others) are worried about God punishing “little or young children” and want to make it seem more acceptable... a word of caution here, beware of trying to defend God’s actions, for it must have been God who sent the bears out of the woods (Elisha had not independent power apart from God) and as far as we know and believe God is God, and is Sovereign and can do as He pleases. You may say, “Well, I don’t like this kind of God!” Well, I don’t know that that matter either, but do remember that God is a righteous and just judge and here he was defending what was right and good, and was defending those who needed to hear of His goodness, grace and salvation, against those who were trying to get rid of it.

Most likely these were a marauding gang bent on violence that were likely students 25-30 years of age, of the “false prophet” of Baal, who were here incited/sent by the prophet of Baal to be antagonists to Elisha’s prophetic ministry and authority, and were against the God of Israel, Jehovah God. *Remember God had already destroyed 450 prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel under the prophet Elijah, and he wasn’t about to let them get another stronghold establishment of the build up of these false prophets.

Again, they were sent by the false prophets or idolatrous priests of Bethel to stop Elisha from entering the city. In Elisha Satan had an enemy and he was acting to protect his territory. Remember, however, Elisha was going to Bethel not to curse, but to bless.

Again verse 23 says, **“²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!”**

- **“Mocked”** is the Hebrew **“galas”**
- It denotes a scornful belittling of something or someone, but it issues from an attitude which counts as valueless that which is really of great value.
- Leaders have always had to deal with disrespect.
- It is seen throughout the Old Testament and it is found in the New Testament as well.
- But the greatest disrespect here is in relation to God.
- These young men, undoubtedly under Satan’s influence, were attacking not just Elisha, the man, but they were also attacking his message.
- But the issue was, regardless of the personality of the man, his physical appearance, or even his shortcomings, Elisha was God’s man with God’s message.
- As a result, in the final analysis they were mocking or rejecting God and what He was attempting to do through Elisha as God’s spokesman.

- Elisha was simply an instrument of God
- The work referred to by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, *“¹² And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.”* This is God’s work... the work of building men in the Word and in Christ through these men.
- And there is a certain sense in which this applies to all believers.

4 Passages that Remind Believers They will be Mocked:

- (1) **Mocking may even be a sign of blessing on your life (Matthew 5:11-12) -** *“¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile (insult, scorn, disparage, berate, mock) and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*
- (2) **When we are mocked we don’t have to defend ourselves, God will (Matthew 10:16-20) -** *“¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”*
- (3) **The mocking of our lives as believers should not surprise us (1 Peter 4:12-14) -** *“¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached (insulted, reviled, mocked) for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”*
- (4) **The last days will be characterized by those who mock believers (Jude 17-18) -** *“¹⁷ But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸ how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.”*

The attack of these young men in our story is twofold:

- (1) **They attacked God’s miraculous translation of Elijah -** *“Go up”... “go up.”* That is, ascend up as you claim Elijah did. The translation of Elijah was a miracle of God and portrayed the biblical truth and hope of the translation of the saints. Though Old Testament saints did not understand this, it was still a type of this truth. Elisha was a prophet of God and by doing this these young men were denying the work of God, denying the Word of God and God’s actions in history.
- (2) **They attacked the character and calling of God’s Prophet, Elisha -** The second aspect of the attack is seen in the words, *“you baldhead.”* Some people have actually intimated from this that Elisha was bald-headed. Whether Elisha was actually bald, or whether he had a different hairstyle, i.e., cropped short on top, they were ridiculing the prophet and telling him to get lost like Elijah. The term “baldhead” was derisive (mocking, scathing, irreverent, and scornful) term. “Baldness” was associated with leprosy and made a man or woman unclean and unfit for worship and God’s presence. To call a prophet of God, “old baldie” or “baldhead” was to say he was illegitimate as prophet, was a false prophet, was not good and useless to God, to scathingly declare that no one should listen to him. They were trying to silence the voice of God. And God will not stand for that!

Krummacher writes, “Baldness was regarded by the lower orders as a kind of disgrace; for as it was one of the usual consequences of leprosy, so it was accounted a sign of personal and mental degradation. Hence, in using this opprobrious epithet, the young profligates had a most malicious intention. Their expressions

are not to be viewed as a mere burst of youthful wantonness; but as poisoned arrows, pointed and directed by refined and satanic malignity. It is as if they had said, “Thou effeminate leper! Thou would-be prophet! We fear thee not! Go up! Go up!” as if they mean, “Imitate thy master!” . . . It seems to have been a scoffing allusion to the ascent of Elijah; partly sceptical, and partly in derision of Elisha...”

These attacks are typical of the schemes and methods by which Satan seeks to nullify the ministry of God’s saints and the work of God. He attacks the message (the Word) and the messenger or both. He seeks to discourage or discredit the teacher or he attacks those hearing the message. Regarding the messenger, Satan may seek to call attention to petty issues, circumstances, misunderstandings, or focus on personalities, or physical appearance. It can be almost anything, but whatever, it is a means to a beachhead from whence he seeks to launch one attack after another to get people’s eyes off the Lord and their ears closed to His Word. We must be careful that we do not cooperate with Satan and throw fuel on his fires.

The important thing here is Elisha’s reaction to this and God’s action in response. This is designed to emphasize to us the seriousness of the issues here.

BEARS

Now here is the troubling part of the story (to some, not to me)... look at it again in our passage (vv. 23-25), “²³ Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead! ²⁴ So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. ²⁵ Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.” -2 Kings 2:23-25 (NKJV) This seems harsh, but God and His leaders have, on occasion, acted harshly in order to impress upon man the seriousness of life and the Word of God. Ananias and Saphira are an illustration of this in the New Testament.

I want you to notice two things here...

2 Things to Notice Here About Elisha:

- (1) **Notice what Elisha did not do** - Before looking at what Elisha did, let’s consider for a moment what he did not do!
 1. *He did not turn and run*
 2. *He did not argue with them or run after them (Matt 7:6)*
 3. *He did not compromise his message*
 4. *He was not acting or reacting out of self-love or anxiety or self-defense from the standpoint of his ego or pride*
 5. *He did not complain to the Lord or want to throw in the towel*
 6. *He simply ignored their words, actions, and attitudes. God’s response proves this.*

What does this teach us? When trouble strikes, we should never resort to the solutions of the world, i.e., to human viewpoint escape or defense tactics (cf. Ps. 143:11-12; 147:10-11)

- (2) **Notice what Elisha did do** - Elisha took up his armor, “*He cursed them in the name of the Lord.*” This is not cursing for cursing or reviling for reviling (1 Pet. 2:23). He was trusting in the Lord and leaving it in God’s hands. The key here is in the word “curse.”

Some important notes about the Hebrew word translated here as “curse”:

- It does not mean to swear with vile words.
- This is the Hebrew word “*galal*” meaning “be swift, slight, trifling, or of little account.”

- The primary meaning is “to be light or slight.”
- Both verb and noun forms seem to represent a formula which expresses a removal or lowering from the place of blessing.
- Cursing stands in contrast to the word blessing or favor (cf. [Gen. 27:11, 12](#)).
- The emphasis is on the absence, reversal, or removal of a blessed state or rightful position which brings God’s protection, provision and blessing.
- The principle is very simple... without God’s blessed salvation and protection we all stand cursed.
- The moment God removed His wall of protection from Job, Satan attacked him and wrecked havoc in Job’s life.

Jesus taught this principle in [Matthew 10:11-15](#), *“¹¹ Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. ¹² And when you go into a household, greet it. ¹³ If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”* ***How might this apply to our passage and God’s judgment on this marauding gang of violent young men?***

So Elisha, as a prophet, saw their hardened and rebellious condition, unresponsive to correction. In the name of the Lord (i.e. by His authority) Elisha simply turned them over to the Lord and to their own devices, which had the effect of removing them from even the common protection of God.

He probably said something like, **“may God deal with you according to what you deserve,”** or **“may you be cursed for your sins of rebellion.”** This was Elisha’s Mt. Carmel event (like Elijah who called down fire and killed the prophet of Baal).

★ This would demonstrate to the city and to people all around a vital truth... without the Lord there is no protection and that blasphemy of God’s servants and His Word in order to hinder God’s message is serious business.

Note that Elisha did not call out the bears, God did. Two female bears (not three bears--papa bear, mamma bear, and baby bear) came out and tore up forty-two young men.

You would think this would strike the fear of God into the hearts of the entire area for years to come. But no--the heart of man is such that they either ignore it, reject it, or soon forget it.

CONCLUSION

Let me give you three concluding truths/principles:

3 Concluding Truths/Principles:

1. **God does not take it lightly when we ignore His Word or hinder its propagation in the world among His people** - This is serious business (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17 with 10; 11:30).
2. **As believers, we should expect opposition** - The more we move out for the Lord, the more attacks we may have to face from our adversary through his various schemes (cf. 1 Pet 4:10-12). As Paul stated it in [2 Timothy 3:12](#), *“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (NIV).
3. **We need more Elishas, those who will stand fast and act in biblical ways leaving the results to the Lord** - This is precisely what Paul did in connection with the strong criticism often leveled at him by

some of the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1f). As with Elisha and Paul, we need to move forward in our ministries while always trusting God to make a way and remove the obstacles.