

SALT & BEARS. 2 KN. 2:19-25. 07/23/23. #04.

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<sup>19</sup>Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water *is* bad, and the ground barren." <sup>20</sup>And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought *it* to him. <sup>21</sup>Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'" <sup>22</sup>So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. <sup>23</sup>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!" <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.  
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1. Elisha takes office

- a. Elisha has taken over the prophetic mantle of Elijah
 - a1. Elisha's ministry is similar = call Israel to repentance & warn of judgment
 - a2. Elisha has a double portion of Elijah's spirit
- b. The prophets of Jericho believe that Elisha can cure the water that supplies Jericho
 - a1. They inform El. that Jericho is a pleasant city next to the Jordan, but the well is tainted & the land barren
 - a2. This is their way of appealing to El. to do something to help Jericho
- c. Elisha informs them to bring him a clean bowl with salt in it (not the usual substance to clean water)
 - a1. God had used a tree to purify water in the desert (God, & not the tree, cleansed it)
 - a2. After the salt was dumped into the well, the water was purified & remained so
- d. The grace of God blessed the city
 - a1. Notice that Elijah gave God the credit
 - b1. Moses had taken partial credit for bringing water out of a rock

- b2. Like Moses's staff, the salt was only a symbol to be used of God as a prop for the miracle (the brass serpent, showbread, ark, censor...)

- a2. The miracle verified Elisha's status as having inherited the mantle of Elijah

- a3. God's blessing cured both the drinking water & the barrenness of the land

- b1. No more death would come from it

- b2. The land would become fruitful

2. Boys, baldness, & bears

- a. Elisha then went on to Bethel, retracing the steps he made with Elijah

- b. A group of mischievous disrespectful youths mock the prophet

- a1. The mock his baldness

- a2. "Go up, baldy" is a reference to Elijah being taken up

- b1. The youths disbelieved the report

- b2. They derisively challenged Elisha to ascend into heaven in a whirlwind like Elijah so they could see it

- c. Very controversial passage: Elisha pronounces a curse upon the youth in the name of God

- a1. 2 Syrian she-bears came out of the woods & mauled 42 youth

- a2. This seems like a personal vendetta

- d. Several aspects of this episode are important:

- a1. The youth were mocking a prophet of God

- a2. The youth were mocking a miracle of God

- a3. The youth were *mauled*, but not *killed*

- a4. The youth were undoubtedly products of idolatrous homes, where God was mocked

- b1. God had to demonstrate His power & judgment to those who mocked Him

- b2. God often showed his power to His enemies (Pharaoh, Goliath, Elymas...)

- e. Those who mock God will eventually pay a price (He gives time to repent, but does not wait long)