

WATER ON THE OTHER SIDE AS RED AS BLOOD

2 KINGS 2:23 – 4:44

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~ Our Spiritual Safari comes to an incident in the life of Elisha the prophet in this report that is as misunderstood as any passage in the Word of God can be. A book written at one time was entitled, “*A Thousand Errors in the Bible!*” But there are no errors in the Bible. Even so, this passage was listed as number one in said book; obviously a desperate attempt to disprove the Bible as the Word of God. I’ve always wondered: why waste your time with the Bible if you don’t believe it? Why not just go do something else? Attempting to disprove what you do not believe in the first place is a frightening disorder. The critic and enemy of God actually delight in pointing out the slaying of these “poor” little children at the command of Elisha. They are totally disingenuous and unlearned in their feigned concern as they claim this was a terrible thing for a man of God to do....

II

23 And he went up from thence unto Bethel: 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.

~ Remember, this is immediately after the translation of Elijah as Elisha is returning home. The theological students of the day – the “little children” – doubted what had happened. They insisted Elijah had been killed on the mountainside in a natural disaster – or something like that; and even organized a search team to find the body and contradict the report – and

effectively disprove the Word of the Lord as spoken by Elijah. As we read on, their misinformation is what was contradicted.

Elisha is on his way back from beyond Jordan to Bethel. Bethel means "house of God." Bethel is associated with both Abraham and Jacob; but Bethel was not where God was to appoint the establishment of the temple. Remember, Jeroboam placed one of the two golden calves in Bethel. The city was the major university of the false prophets. It was an imitation of the genuine school of prophets in the southern kingdom of Judah. In that atmosphere, the children in Bethel received their education. There was neither training nor discipline in the homes in Bethel; so, the name became meaningless to the world as being associated with the 'house of God.'

Alright, at this time, word has spread over the entire countryside concerning Elijah – and none can refute him being taken up in a chariot of fire. Even so, it is not only the critic who is insincere when dealing with this account of the "little children" – but many sincere believers are absolutely confused by the record. How could a man of God destroy little children so brutally? If this were the case, it would contradict other portions of Scripture. We know Jesus had a tender love for children as He said, "*suffer the little children to come unto Me....*" And remember, the children of Israel, at Kadesh-barnea, refused to enter the Promised Land by using the excuse that their *little children* would be in danger. Well, God told them they should have listened to Him, and God sent them back into the wilderness – but their children were the ones who went in. We'll do well not to distort Scriptural teaching concerning children.

Alright, when a human mind is born into the world it is, more or less, neutral on virtually every subject – except for one: an innate bias against God. Man is born skeptical of the Bible; and will accept and believe literally anything and everything except the Word of God. If you don't think so, explain to yourself the heated passion for politics or the propensity to blindly believe any man wearing a white coat and pince-nez glasses. Any scientific statement man makes will become public discourse immediately – irrespective of whether it's true or not. That sums up human nature concerning beliefs in a nutshell.

The honest doubter with questions regarding Elisha and the “little children” will have their questions and reservations answered and explained in this report. Elijah was succeeded by Elisha, and I made the statement that Elisha was a greater prophet than Elijah. I recognize that not everyone will agree with my position, because we always think of Elijah as being the greatest of all prophets. Elijah is the one who will return to prophesy to the earth after the rapture and Elijah was mentioned several times by the Lord Jesus Himself. Well, measuring by myriad miracles, Elisha performed *MANY* more than Elijah. Elisha strikes me as a gentle young man in contrast to a radical, rough and rugged old Elijah.

The accepted common opinion about “children” in verse twenty-three is that they were precious little darlings of about six or seven years old. Of course, all of us are moved emotionally by children, particularly our own little brats – I mean darlings. I’ll admit the way this chapter ends moves our minds with pictures of first grade babies playing games. Unfortunately, that’s not it. The word used in this passage for ‘children’ is a terrible translation; it should not be used like this *in any case*. The word means young men. We’ll find the same word in other portions of Scripture, and it doesn’t refer to underage children. For instance, when Rehoboam forsook the council of the old men and accepted the council of the young men in regard to raising taxes:

1 Kings 12: 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him ~

“Young men” in first Kings is the same word translated “little children” in chapter two of second Kings verse twenty-three. I’m quite sure Rehoboam was not consulting six or seven-year-old kids in a nursery school on taxes. This refers to the younger generation of men – not children. These ‘little children’ were students at the college of hypocrisy in Bethel. The same word is used in many places in Scripture, and it is *ALWAYS* translated “young men.” This is the *ONLY* place in the entire Bible it is used this way.

It's also the same word used when Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king of Israel. Jesse's sons were full grown men when they were presented to Samuel. David was the youngest, and he wasn't even there – but Samuel asked, “... are here all thy children?”

Further, these young men, who were saying, “... go up, thou bald head...” meant, “... be translated” as a taunt to Elisha! They were belittling Elisha to do the same thing Elijah did. This amounts to ridiculing the truth of the Word of God. The truth that God will take His people out of this world was not only questioned – they didn't believe it at all. Simon Peter said this same thing will appear in the last days. The following passage is clear-cut testimony God will severely judge those who reject the truth of the second advent of Christ.

2 Peter 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ~

Quite frankly, I have been expecting to see this type of talk around this forum on which I teach – but so far it hasn't happened – yet; thank God. When I see people ridiculing those who believe in the second coming of Christ, I will know the alarm bell has been properly rung. They'll ask something like, “... what's the matter with all you stupid believers who haven't gone up yet – why are you still hanging around?” When we begin to hear talk that says, “... I thought you were going to leave us” – and all that – then you'll know this has been fulfilled. It's coming, too, friends – probably sooner than we expect. This is why we need to be *VERY* careful how we preach the second coming of Christ and take every precaution not to get too far out on a limb – and to not become fanatics on a particular

subject. That type of fanaticism is rampant. I can only thank God those who handle Scripture so irresponsibly and recklessly are not taken seriously by most of the unbelieving world – yet.

The incident of Elisha and the “little children” reveals a picture of extreme judgment God will bring upon those who ridicule His Word and His man – it’s *NOT* pretty. This can come on a preacher who denies the deity of Christ, or the preacher who denies His second coming, too. This is damnation none of us want to see. The Word of God has so much to say about judgment that we do well to get our facts straight regarding it. When we finally understand what we’re talking about, there’s nothing in this account that is out of line with the remainder of Scripture. Even so, I agree it’s extreme that Elisha seems to have prayed for it; he almost sounds like Elijah at this point. In fact, Elisha sounds more like the Lord Jesus Christ Who said, “*woe unto you Capernaum; though you be exalted in Heaven you’re going to be cast down to hell!*” That’s judgment, my beloved. Paul turned to the soldier who smote him on the cheek and said, “*.... God will smite thee....*” We’re not seeing vindictive and revengeful anger from Elisha. He isn’t responsible for what a couple of bears did – *GOD* is. If you want to find fault with God then, may I say? – Take your complaint up with Him. After this incident, *NOBODY* dared ridicule Elisha around Bethel – you may be absolutely sure about that....

III

1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

~ I must confess this chapter and section of Scripture is utterly boring to me. Ahaziah had no sons, so we see Jehoram, his brother, come to the throne. Moab rebels at this time, and Jehoshaphat joins forces with Jehoram to fight Moab and bring them back into submission; at least, I think that was the plan and purpose. Why Jehoshaphat would help Ahab’s son is beyond a mystery. Once again, a true prophet is called for, just as Micaiah had been called for so long ago; and Elisha, who refuses to even speak to them at first, only agrees because of the presence of Jehoshaphat. I love Elisha, friends! Of course, Elisha goes on to tell them God will give

them water and a victory; and that's what happened. Remember, water always represents the Word of God in Scripture, spiritually speaking. That's the summation of the entirety of chapter three. The sins in verse three speak of calf worship – it's the same old story – again....

2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11 But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14 And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

20 And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

23 And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

24 And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

25 And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

IV

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

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

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

14 And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor Sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to Mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off , that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

42 And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

44 So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

~ Our safari ends this report with five miracles of Elisha recorded in chapter four. Remember, Elisha performed more recorded miracles than Elijah. Those performed by Elisha were more extensive and, to a degree, greater; at least in my estimation. The widow who was in danger of having her sons sold into slavery was in dire circumstances. I believe this was a far greater miracle than the cruse of oil at the widow's house in Elijah's day.

The woman to whom Elisha promised a son – and who was given a son – makes a chamber for Elisha; which is a beautiful picture. I know something personally about being accommodated this way – and I thank God for these wonderful saints who have helped me. They housed me and fed me and, friends, you just have no idea what that means in my life! May God bless these people forevermore *and they know who they are!*

Another miracle is Elisha bringing the son back to life. This is a principle of contact with the Lord Jesus – Who *IS* life. We either have Christ, or we don't have Him; it's that simple – and it's just that complicated! I hope you read all of these miracles in chapter four very carefully on your own after praying to the Holy Spirit for wisdom, judgment and discernment. In the next leg of our Spiritual Safari, we're going to see one of my favorite chapters in the Bible as Elisha deals with Naaman ~