

ELISHA AND THE BEARS

God supposedly wrote and inspired the Bible. If so then at times he didn't give a very edifying picture of himself!

The Elisha and the bears story appears in 2 Kings 2. There the prophet Elisha is going up to Bethel and on the way small boys call him baldhead. He curses them in the name of the Lord and then two she-bears appear and tear forty-two of the children to pieces.

The New American Bible translation says it was small boys.

John Wenham in his book, *The Enigma of Evil* (page 143) is an example of a top fundamentalist Christian scholar who uses deceit and craftiness to cover up the evil of the story and who is obviously respected just for that reason by his fundamentalist fellows.

First of all, he does not tell us where in the Bible the story is to keep us from looking it up.

Second, he says the Revised Version of the Bible is right to translate as young lads rather than small boys for it fits the context of the story better but most Bibles still translate it as young children. The truth is if you read the story you see no indication that it is bigger children. Wenham's game is to make us think that it was louts who deserved to be attacked by bears rather than naughty children who didn't.

He then argues that the reason Elisha seems to be harsh is because the children were insulting his prophetic tonsure which means they were insulting God. There is no evidence that Elisha had the tonsure. And the children would not be able to be sure Elisha was a true prophet so their mocking would not necessarily imply mockery of God. Others say the nickname baldhead was elevated to a particularly big insult in those days. There is no evidence for that either and in fairness it is the spirit an insult is made in that counts not the actual words. Elisha was just an evil vindictive man.

Next Wenham states that there were too many children for it not to have been organised just to insult him. It was organised for something else because the parents would have known what their children were up to and joined in themselves. But it was all children. The fact that two she-bears are said to have attacked them and ripped forty-two of them up indicates that God miraculously prevented the children from getting away. It indicates that they were very small children when the bears could get through so many of them without them escaping. Wenham says that most of the children must have gotten away so more could have been unharmed than were hurt. But why not hold that forty-two were ripped up alive and died and the rest got away with bites and limbs ripped off? Remember, the curse was invoked on all the children. Astoundingly, Wenham says that it is not said that any of the children were killed. Now when the Bible says that the children were torn to pieces what else are we supposed to make of that? If it could mean they were killed then it means that. Scripture would not say anything that might make people think God killed if he didn't.

Wenham tells absurd lie after absurd lie. What he says is speculation and no good. The story is clear enough and his distortion should fool no one. The writer wrote a very strange way if Wenham is right!

The Bible plainly allows child-abuse. Wenham would respond that cries for God to hurt enemies in the Bible was about stopping their evil and not for the pleasure of seeing them hurt (see chapter 10 of his book). Wenham is trying to delude us into thinking that it wasn't personal - it was just pleading with God for God to stop people who were opposed to God. So wanting people hurt is better than wanting them to be converted? It will be answered that God has a right to stop evil people even if it means harming them. But to ask an all-powerful God to hurt your enemies could never be right. What you would do is ask for them to be stopped by conversion or by some way that does not hurt them and leave it up to God to decide if hurting them is the only way to stop them. But understandably we feel that an all-powerful God can never have the right or need to hurt anybody. It is vindictive. Period.

And if the Elisha story was in the Book of Mormon Wenham would be saying it proved that the Book was not the word of God. He would not be bringing out his rationalisations then. Christianity has always depended on sectarianism and lies to get its message accepted.

The interpretation of some that the lads were going to kill Elisha or something is pure fantasy. The text does not even hint at that. Christians would not twist a secular text or account like that. Is one reason they feel compelled to lie down to a fear that many people would just obey scripture without question and copy the example? If so then lying does not help. If you can speculate that Elisha was in danger you can speculate that he was not and wanted the kids murdered because they insulted him. God supposedly controls nature so why couldn't he get the bears to scare them off instead of killing them?

All attempts to prove that the Bible is the word of God fail because the Bible contradicts itself and advocates evil even child abuse of a Jack the Ripper scale. Lies are told by believers to cover it all up which makes them as bad as or worse than the perpetrators. Jesus praised Elisha and would have accepted that evil miracle as holy and praiseworthy.

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This is one of McKinsey's online magazines. The magazine is excellent for it gives the fundies the chance to respond and carefully exposes their twisted reasoning.

This particular issue says that Herod was not a king though the New Testament says he was for the Roman tetrarchs were the rulers. It says Matthew's story that Herod massacred the boys of Bethlehem to get rid of the baby Jesus is false for Josephus liked to bring up the terrible things that Herod did and never mentioned this one. It also says that the story of Jesus being nailed between two thieves is fiction because theft was not a capital crime. It argues that when Luke said about Augustus decreeing that the whole world must engage in a census it was a lie for Augustus never had the results which he would have done. Genesis 11:26 says that when Teran was 70 he sired Abram and Nahor and Haran. The trouble is it says Abram was 75 when his father died and yet his father died at 205. The Christians argue that Genesis 11:26 does not say Abram's dad was 70 when he was born though the passage cannot mean anything else. They fudge the problem by saying that just because Abram was mentioned first that does not mean he was born first. It does in the way the verse is written for

why say Terah became a father at 70 and list the sons if you don't mean one of them was born that year and it would naturally have to be the first one mentioned Abram. Pity he didn't point out that when the fundies cannot agree among themselves how to reconcile Bible contradictions that it shows that their solutions are just contrived and fraudulent.