

2. The Confirmations of Elisha's Call (2:14-25)

(i) Crossing of the Jordan, 2:14-18

- When Elisha returned to the banks of the Jordan, he knew that the mantle and the ministry of Elijah had passed to him. Now, he, in faith, called on the same God Who had worked through Elijah to work through him. From the start, Elisha grasped the crux of the matter. It was not Elijah's peculiar methods, but Elijah's faith in God that gave him his power. Elisha knew that the power in prophetic ministry rested in the presence and work of the living God. God never fails to answer when His children call upon Him in faith. As his master & mentor had done before him, Elisha struck the waters and again they were divided, repeating the miracle which had been done earlier. This shows that God was with Elisha as He was with Elijah.
- A group of prophets had looked on from a distance as Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan River. They watched as Elisha returned alone, took Elijah's mantle and struck the waters of the Jordan, and then crossed over on dry ground. They drew the obvious conclusion - Elisha was Elijah's successor. Elisha didn't need to convince them of this with words. God's blessing on Elisha's actions was enough to prove it. They recognized the change of leadership. But the sons of the prophets insisted on sending out a search party of 50 men to search for the aged prophet Elijah. Like these prophets, God can speak and mightily reveal Himself, and yet we often still struggle in the faith of simply taking Him at His Word (cf John 20:24-29).
- The sons of the prophets bugged Elisha so much that he relented. Contrary to the advice of Elisha, and with his reluctant permission, they began to scour the countryside for their former leader. And when they returned futile after a 3-day search, Elisha reminded them that he had initially told them not to go. To these young prophets, the experience marked Elisha as their new leader.

(ii) Healing the Waters of Jericho, 2:19-22

- Jericho was a "pleasant" city but its water was contaminated or bad and the land it was watered by was infertile. This made agriculture impossible and life very difficult (cf 1 Kings 16:34; Josh 6:26). The men of the city recognized the authenticity of Elisha as a prophet of God so they came to Elisha and requested help for their problem. Calling for a new bowl filled with salt, Elisha went to the source of the spring and poured the contents into the water. The spring was miraculously purified. This was a work of the Lord and the waters remained pure up to the day the account was written. By the healing of these waters, God gave life to an entire city through His prophet, Elisha. Elisha was publicly accredited as Elijah's successor. 2 applications:
 - The contamination of the spring had to be dealt with at the source. Similarly, the problem of sin and evil has to be dealt with at the source – the human heart (Jer 17:9; Ezk 36:26).

- Elisha purified the spring of Jericho with salt. Jesus said that we who follow Him are to be salt of the earth (Matt 5:13).

(iii) The Cursing of the Young Men, 2:23-25

- The Nature of the "Little Children." The Hebrew word translated "children" here means "young men" in a very broad sense (young lads, youths), which would suggest youths of up to 20 years old (used of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:7 and of David in 1 Sam 16:11). The "little children" who mocked Elisha were of a responsible age and old enough to know what they were doing. This was not a small group of little boys; it was a gang of young trouble-makers.
- The Nature of the Little Children's Mocking. They lived in Bethel, where there was a golden calf erected by Jeroboam – a stronghold of idolatry and a centre of apostasy. So the attack against Elisha was an attack against God (cf Acts 9:4). Knowing Elisha to be God's newly-appointed prophet, the young men met him with the words, "*Go up, thou bald head!*"
 - They were making fun of Elisha's baldness. In the East, calling a person "bald head" is an expression of abuse, a grave insult.
 - The idea behind the words, "*Go up*" was that Elisha should go up to heaven like Elijah did. It mocked Elisha, his mentor Elijah, and the God they served. They were challenging Elisha's prophetic office. They sought publicly to humiliate and belittle the prophet of the Lord. God would not allow His servant to be ridiculed with impunity (2 Chron 36:15-16).
 - These young men were attacking not just Elisha, the man, but they were also attacking his message. Elisha was God's spokesman with God's message (1 Thess 5:12-13). In the final analysis, they were mocking or rejecting God and what He was attempting to do through Elisha as His spokesman.
- The Nature of the Little Children's Punishment. By pronouncing a curse, Elisha left judgment where it should be - in the hands of God. It was God who brought about the judgment these young men deserved. Elisha simply turned them over to God & to their own devices. God does not indiscriminately pour out His wrath on "innocent little children" (Gen 18:25). The proof that it was not wrong is the fact that God endorsed what Elisha did by sending swift & terrible judgment upon these enemies of His name. For 42 boys to be struck by the bears, the group may have been dangerously out of control.
- God had warned His people that if they refused to obey Him, He would send wild animals against them, and their children (Lev 26:21,22). Elisha was not needlessly harsh, nor was God. God's judgment was poured out on those who rebelled against Him, who disobeyed His Word, and who mocked His servants, the prophets. God cannot be defied with impunity, whether by old or young (Gal 6:7-8). The appalling judgment was God's warning to all who would scorn the prophets of the Lord.