

Date: May 20, 2024, Conference on the Church for God's Glory
Speaker: Pastor Steven Thomas
Title: *The Troubling Story of Prophets, Boys, and Bears*

Text: 2 Kings 2:23–25 (ESV)

²³ He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” ²⁴ And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys. ²⁵ From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Introduction: Few sermons exist preached from 2 Kings 2:23-25. The episode described in this passage often creates a sense of discomfort among readers. The consequence meted out for taunts and jeers delivered by “small boys” seems so severe as to be unjust. But when we look closely, we find that this troubling story communicates a profound message that has implications for all who speak for God.

I. A troubling story . . .

- A. The setting: A change of leadership occurred in Israel. 2:1-22
 - 1. The work of a great prophet ended.
 - 2. The work of a greater prophet began.
- B. The story: Flagrant disrespect toward Elisha brought a stern response from God.
- C. A closer look: Details reveal that God's response was neither arbitrary nor unjust.
 - 1. The location
 - 2. The meaning of “small boys”
 - 3. The ridicule of the prophet
 - 4. The sneering command
 - 5. The curse
 - 6. The trip to Mount Carmel

II. That communicates a profound message . . .

- A. The message: The Lord is a speaking God who upholds his word and honors those who proclaim it.

- B. The confirmation: The Scriptures throughout confirm this message.
 - 1. They confirm it in the works of God.
 - 2. They confirm it in the promises of God.

III. With implications for all who speak for God.

- A. Preachers are not prophets.
- B. Yet, preachers speak for God.
- C. Let us speak with confidence, knowing that God will . . .
 - 1. Uphold his word . . .
 - 2. Honor his messengers . . .
 - 3. And vindicate them before His enemies.