



than cite this event as an example of a contradiction in the moral teachings of the Bible.

We have not attempted to comment upon all matters mentioned in the TIME magazine cover story but have made some observations upon only a few of its statements and have commented in particular upon the II Kings 2 incident. If some critics would first consider all facts involved, they would

vine providence ordered these occurrences (ibid.). It could very well be too, that a severe example was needed when a new generation was growing up in contempt of God.

not be as hasty in drawing false conclusions which cast doubt upon the credibility of the Bible. Perhaps in future articles we can deal with some other specific biblical accounts which have been questioned and attacked by critics. But in spite of the heaviest attacks which can be brought to bear by the guns of its enemies, the Bible has indeed survived the siege, and we believe that it will continue to survive. The Bible is true.

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Anyway, a consideration of a few facts reveals that the incident in 2 Kings did not merely involve some small children teasing an old baldheaded man. Critics will have to do better

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Faithful Sayings

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Bald-Headed Elisha, and the Two Bears: “How True Is the Bible?”

By Hoyt H. Houchen

On the front cover of the December 30, 1974 issue of TIME magazine appears the above question. The cover story is found on pages 34-41 in this issue under the heading, “The Bible: The Believers Gain.” The article deals with the Bible and its inerrancy. The author mentions several Bible accounts which have come under the scrutiny of scholars, such as: the nativity (the angels, the star, and even the wise men), the Gospels, the Old Testament, “the six days” of creation, whether Adam and Eve are to be regarded as real people or as “prototypes” of humanity, whether the flood in Noah’s time was universal, and whether Jonah was actually swallowed by a “great fish.”

Some interesting swings and reactions with regard to the Bible, both upon the part of Catholics and Protestants, are noted in the article. It is pointed out, for example, that there is a swing from the right upon the part of Catholics; Hans Kung, of Germany, having joined those rejecting the virgin birth of Christ. The TIME cover story notes, on the other hand, that Protestants are bent toward the more traditional view. It reveals that a notable conflict has taken place between conservatives and moderates in the Lutheran Church and that the Missouri Synod, one of the nation’s largest denominations (2.8 million U.S. members, 300,000 more outside the U.S.), may well be

facing an outright schism within its ranks, probably after the biennial convention next July.

The TIME article has within its pages some flavor of conservatism, and some testimony is given to the credibility of the Bible which we appreciate. The author calls attention to the following:

In 100 licensed sites in Israel, archaeological digging continues to turn up new evidences that the Bible is often surprisingly accurate in historical particulars, more so than earlier generations of scholars ever suspected. By establishing physical settings of scriptural accounts and certain details of corroboration (finding horned

altars like those mentioned in 1 Kings 1:50, for example) recent archaeology has enhanced the credibility of the Bible.

Of course, to those of us who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, such findings which prove the Bible to be accurate come as no surprise. Then toward the close of the essay, the TIME author writes that the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began their attack. He notes an example: "Scholar Bruce Metzger observes that the Book of Acts was once accused of historical errors for details that have since been proved by archaeologists and historians to be correct." He also states that the Bible, translated into 1,526 languages, is being bought by, or sent to, more people than ever before. The statement is made: "Its truth essential, if the Bible falls, faith topples." To this we agree. But so much for these matters.

The Incident in 2 King 2:23-24

In the space that remains, we wish to devote our attention to this specific comment in the TIME article:

There are gnawing common sense misgivings about Scripture: the awareness that a literal meaning of the creation accounts seem to contradict science or, more importantly, that the Bible contains disturbing contradictions in its own moral teachings. Readers have been scandalized by a horrible incident in 2 Kings that tells how the prophet Elisha was taunted for his baldness by a group of youngsters. The prophet cursed the boys "in the name of the Lord," whereupon two bears came out of the woods and tore them apart.

We believe that we can prove that there is no contradiction between the account of creation in Genesis and the facts of science. But we shall not be concerned with this point presently.

A closer look at the incident which is recorded in 2 Kings 2:23-24 is not as "scandalizing" as it may appear to be by the critics of the Bible. Let us consider some facts.

1. Elisha was on his way to Bethel which was the seat of the idolatrous calf worship. It was here that Jeroboam, in revolt to Judah, set up one of his calves of gold (1 Kings 12:28), and placed the priests of the high places which he had made (1 Kings 12:32).

2. "Little children" (KJV) is not the best translation. "Young lads" is the American Standard translation, and a better rendering. The Hebrew word *naarim* signifies "grown youth," as well as "little children." Joseph, for example, was called *naar* (Gen. 41:12). Adam Clarke makes the following interesting comments: "*naar* signifies not only a child, but a young man, a servant, or even a soldier, or one fit to go out to battle; and is so translated in our common English version." Commenting upon this Hebrew word, translated "young man" in 1 Kings 20:14, he adds: "That these were soldiers, probably militia, or a selection from the militia, which served as a bodyguard to Ahab, the event sufficiently declares; and the persons that mocked Elisha were perfectly accountable for their conduct" (*Commentary*, 2. 486). At least, they were young men, if not adults. They were from idolatrous Bethel and they were deriding or jeering the prophet. They were not simply little children teasing an old man.

3. It has been suggested by commentators that the expression "Go up" was derision with respect to the preceding ascension of the prophet Elijah (see Patrick, Pool, Clarke), and was a demand upon Elisha to follow the example of his predecessor. Adam Clarke, commenting upon

the expression "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head" suggests: "Does not this imply the grossest insult? Ascend, thou empty skull, to heaven, as it is pretended thy master did!" (*Commentary*, 2.486). The disrespect was not only toward old age, but also toward the prophetic order.

4. The curse placed upon the boys was no doubt done by the direction of God. The Bible gives numerous examples of divine judgments of God upon evil (Isa. 13:9-13 etc.). When the boys taunted Elisha with the words: "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head" they were insulting God. The offense was against God and He provided the punishment. It was judicial punishment by God upon evil (see Rom. 1:18).

5. Also, the question is raised by Adam Clarke as to the possibility that these young men had been employed in the wood, destroying the whelps of these same she-bears, who pursued them and tore them to pieces. He conjectures that the bears could have traced the footsteps of the murderers of their young, God having by His di-