

RESPECT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

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Lessons: II Kings 2:19-25, Apocalypse Revealed 573

“And as he was going up by the way, there came forth boys out of the city and, mocked him, and. said unto him, ‘Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head’”(II Kings 2:23).

Do you remember the story earlier in the Word about another experience which the prophet Elisha had; how the Shunamite woman made for him a little room on the wall of her house that was just for the prophet, and. how she put in it a bed, and a tables a stool and a candle? Do you remember that the story taught us a lesson of bow we should take care of the Word of the Lord? For the prophet Elisha represented the Word, of the lord. We should take the very best care of it, and see to it that it has a special place of its own, and that nothing is ever put down on top of it.

This morning we read another story about the prophet Elisha. It was a very sad story because the boys that came out and ran after Elisha mocked him, and called him names—they said to him: “Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.” They were very severely punished for this. Two she bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the children.

This story is part of the Word of God, and. It contains two important lessons for us, which we should learn if we want to become fine strong New Churchmen when we grow up.

The first thing that it teaches us is respect for old people, and the second thing that it teaches us is never to treat the Word of God in an unholy manner.

First I want to speak about respect for older people. Far too often children are thoughtless in regard to older people like the boys in the story who said to Elisha: “Go up thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.”

They probably did not think of the harm that they were doing. It was not until they were punished by the she bears, that it became clear to them that what they were doing was wrong.

Now you children find yourselves in a world where there are many older people; there are your teachers and your parents, and, the parents of your friends. Now these older people are the people who make your world possible for you.

They earn the money for the food you eat, they buy the clothes that you wear, and they provide the homes in which you live. Then, from the kindergarten up, they gradually teach you the things that you ought to know—the things that will help you to become fine men and fine women. For all of these things that they are doing for you they deserve your obedience and your respect.

You know a child has the power to make an older person feel very sad or very happy. When you go along the road and pass an older person, do you speak to them pleasantly with a smile? If you do, you have the power of bringing sunshine into their hearts, but too often children pass by older people as if they did not exist. They pay no attention to them. When some older person come into your house do you welcome them? If you do, you make them very happy; you make them feel at home, but if you do not, you can make them feel very, very sad.

Then, sometimes children made nasty remarks about older people which they can hear and it hurts their feelings very much. When you do that you remove from yourselves some of the good spirits that are with you, and you attract to yourselves evil spirits who were represented by the bears in the story of Elisha, and when these evil spirits are with you they make you feel unhappy, and they make you want to do bad and naughty things.

It is so important that you should learn to love and respect your parents that the Lord made it one of the Ten Commandments, for He said “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord, thy God giveth thee.”

To honor thy father and thy mother means first of all not to disobey them; not to talk back to them, but to mind them cheerfully and promptly. Have you ever noticed that there is only one commandment of all ten of the commandments that tells us of a reward if we obey it? That is the commandment that tells us that we should honor our father and our mother. If we do what the commandment says, the Lord will make our days long upon the land which He has given us. Let us see how this is true even in this world.

Mother has said to us “Don’t play with fire.” Now if we obey our mothers we will never get burned, but if we do not obey we may get burned to death.

Our parents have told us to be careful when we cross the Pike: to always look both ways before we go. If we obey them, then we will never get hit by an automobile.

Our parents tell us to put coats on before we go out in the cold. If we obey them, we will not catch cold. But if we disobey them, then we may get pneumonia and die.

There are hundreds of things that our parents tell us that will protect us from harm, and if we obey them, then actually our days will be long in the land which the Lord our God gives us

So the first thing that I want to point out to you from the story of the children, Elisha and the bears is that if they had been respectful children, no punishment would ever have befallen them.

That brings me to the second thing that I want to talk to you about, and that is the spiritual meaning of this story. Elisha the prophet of the Lord, represents the Word. His name means “God is my salvation” and, that is just what the Word is to us; to us it is the salvation of the Lord.

If, then, we think of Elisha as meaning the Word, what does it mean to call it a “bald head”?

There are many wonderful and interesting things said about hair in the Word. You all remember Samson, the strong man. You remember that he had never had his hair cut, and as long as his hair was not cut, he could tear down the gate of a city and carry them on his shoulder, he could slay lions with his bare hands, and he could accomplish many other feats of strength. But when Delilah betrayed him and shaved off his hair, he was powerless. It was not until his hair had grown again that he was able to take hold of the two posts of the heathen temple and destroy it together with his tormenters. There were lots of men that we read about in the Word who let their hair grow—they were called Nazarites. Gideon was one, and the last of them was John the Baptist. This was because of what the hair represented. The hair represents the letter of the Word: The Divine story written in language accommodated to men. It represents all the stories of the letter of the Word, which you have heard from infancy—the stories of the Garden of Eden, Noah and the Ark, Abraham and his descendants, David and Goliath, and all the stories about the Lord while he was here on earth. All of these are represented by the hair of these holy men. Now to say to Elisha “Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head” was to remove from the Word the power of its letter. It is as though you should say there is no Word accommodated to men—no letter of the Word where they can read about the Lord God, no letter of the Word to form a basis for the internal sense.

When men destroy this, then they open themselves to the attack of the blasphemous spirits who were represented by the two bears.

In the story about Elisha and the Shunamite woman we saw what happens to people who love the Word and respect it; for after she had built a little room for Elisha on the wall of the house, then she was given by the Lord the most precious gift of all—a little son. But when the Word, is treated with disrespect, when fun is made of it, and when ridicule is heaped upon the stories of its

letter then something dies. What really dies is innocence: innocence which is the perfect trust in Him, and which is the means for leading men into the kingdom of heaven.

Let us be encouraged by the story of the Shunamite woman, and let us be warned by the fate of the forty-two children, so that we always try to guard the Word and to keep it as our most precious possession.