

1 Kings Chapter 20 Commentary Verses 01-30

1Ki 20:1 ¶ "And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. 2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Benhadad, 3 Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. 4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have."

We left the last chapter with Elijah anointing Elisha to take his place. In this chapter we have the entrance of Benhadad the king of Syria. He comes with thirty-two kings and a host of armament to besiege Samaria, where king Ahab lives and reigns over the ten northern tribes of Israel. He sends terms of surrender to king Ahab, which Ahab accepts in this desperate situation.

The lesson for us: we are not to be willing to sacrifice all that we have, and all that we are by the grace of God, to save our own person alive, and thereby submit to be servant to another. Israel was God's chosen people, who had deserted their God, and God is going to remind them that He is their Saviour.

Just consider: are you willing to surrender to another all that you own, including your wife and children, to keep yourself alive? This is totally contrary to the teaching of Christ, which is in ***Joh 15:13; 12 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."*** If we are children of God, and have turned to idolatry, we have forgotten our first love, and we have surrendered our all to Satan.

5 "And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; 6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away. 7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not. 8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent."

The messengers return, to Benhadad, Ahab's answer, and Benhadad sends them back again, with additional stipulations, which simply put mean, I accept your money, your wives, and your children: but I have changed the surrender agreement. I will send my men, and they will take anything they want from Israel.

Ahab gathers the council of elders and tells them what is going on. They council together and tell Ahab to not give Benhadad anything, but rather stand up and fight.

This is a reminder to the child of God: if you surrender to the devil just a little, he will use that as a wedge to widen the crack and take what he so desires.

9 "Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Benhadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. 10 And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. 11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off. 12 ¶ And it came to pass, when Benhadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city."

Ahab sends the messengers back and says to Benhadad that I will honor the first surrender terms you sent but not the last. Benhadad sends word back that he is coming to utterly destroy Samaria. Ahab sends Benhadad word back, stating that let him that takes off his armor when the battle is over say what he has done. In our vernacular of today, do not count your chickens before the eggs hatch. Benhadad orders his people into position to begin the attack upon Samaria.

Benhadad's boast of the innumerable host of his army, and the power of what his gods can do. We believe that this is why God sends a prophet to Ahab in the next verse. Benhadad has bragged on his gods, and this is an affront to the God of Israel, and the greatness of his name, of which Benhadad is well aware.

This is a warning to the children of God to not let the devil tempt you, by the multitude of his minions and his words, to forget that we are bought with a price, and the name of our God is not to be defamed, rather it is to be exalted above all other gods.

13 "And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou. 15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. 16 And they went out at noon. But Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him."

God sends a prophet to Ahab declaring that God will deliver this great multitude into the hand of Ahab, so that you may know that I am The LORD. A reminder to us to never forget our God. Ahab asked the prophet, how the battle is to be set forth? The prophet instructs Ahab as to what to do. They come out to fight at noon, but Benhadad is in the pavilions drinking himself into a drunken stupor, along with the thirty-two kings. All the leadership of Syria is drunk.

It is interesting to note: the number of warriors in Samaria were the same as the number of those who had not bowed to Baal, seen in **1Ki 19:18 "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."** This is simply to remind Israel, and especially us, that the deliverance is from the Lord, not from their idols. Though we are sure it is not the same seven thousand men, but just a prophetic picture of the strength of God to deliver by few.

We would like to make a point here that when we know we are in a warfare, we do not drink ourselves into a stupor, so we are unable to make good decisions. Also, every child of God is always at war with the satanic evil forces of this world, and we all need clear minds filled with the word of God as a ready sword of defense against the dark arts of this world, as we are told in **2Co 10:1-6; 1 ¶ "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: 2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."**

"Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD." This will be a one-day war. Why just one day? Because Israel went forth under the direction of God, and armed with the word of God, who cannot lie, that the battle was theirs. We have the same promise from God, in our own lives, as we battle each day to remain faithful to God. We overcome our enemies by the power of God, by obeying the word of God. Every day of our lives is another day of battle against the devil, and our inherited sin nature.

17 "And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Benhadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. 18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. 19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. 20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. 21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter."

Benhadad sends out spies, and they tell him that the men of Samaria have come out to fight. Benhadad in his drunken state tells his men whether they come to make peace or war, take them alive. The Syrians head out to take the Samaritans prisoner, and the Syrians fall before Israel as though they are nothing. The Syrians flee before Israel and Israel pursues them. Benhadad escapes on a horse with some horsemen, while Israel slays the Syrians with a very great slaughter.

Again, Israel is reminded of the power of God, to no effect, as they continue their idolatry and do not turn to God in repentance. Did you notice that there is no mention of any of Israel being slain in the battle? That is a reminder to us of the surety of our salvation in Jesus Christ and his finished work of redemption.

22 ¶ "And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee. 23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore, they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely, we shall be stronger than they. 24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms: 25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. 26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. 27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country."

God sends a prophet to Ahab and tells him, to be preparing, for Benhadad will return at the first of the next year. This reminds us that we are to be aware of the threat of the devil all the time, for we shall not be rid of his attacks upon us until we die mortally.

The servants of Benhadad tell him that the gods of Israel are the gods of the hills, and you should lure the Samaritans into the plains where you can overcome them. So, Benhadad puts together an army, like the one he had the first time, and goes up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

Benhadad should have known that there was no way to overcome the God of Israel, because of how they became subjects to Israel in the reign of King David. They knew of the mighty deliverances that came to Israel, and King David, from history.

"And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them:" We point out again, not one Israelite was missing. The Israelites come out to engage them, and the numbers are so vastly different in the size of the armies, that the comparison is made of Israel as two little flocks of kids, against an army that filled the country.

We are reminded of another time when Israel was under siege, seen in **1Sa 14:6 "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few."** A reminder to us that God is in complete control and doeth whatsoever He will in heaven and on the earth, as seen in **Da 4:35; 34 ¶ "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"** We are also reminded of the New Testament scripture in **Ro 9:20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"**

28 "And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. 30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber."

God sends a prophet to Ahab saying: since the Syrians have said I am a God of the hills and not of the valleys, therefore, I will deliver this great multitude into thy hands, and you shall know that I am the LORD. We point out that it is one thing to know of the Lord and another thing to "know the Lord," Ahab is an idolater, but he only has earthly knowledge of the Lord.

Seven days later the battle begins, and the Israelites slay the Syrians with a great slaughter. The Syrians flee to Aphek and God causes a wall to fall upon twenty-seven thousand Syrians. Benhadad flees to an inner chamber in the city of Aphek.

This is not the first time that we have read of a wall falling before Israel. Remember the fall of Jericho? Remember the scripture in **Heb 11:30** "***By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.***" Not only are the walls falling down but there is the same number of seven days before each battle began. Just another reminder to Israel, the Syrians, and us, of the power of God.