

## 1 Kings Chapter 20 Commentary Verses 28-43

In the previous portion of this chapter, Benhadad, king of Syria, made war upon the city of Samaria and was soundly beaten by God, for his defiance of God and defamation of God's name. Even though Ahab, king of Israel, and the Israelites were wallowing in idolatry: they are still the nation of people called by God to bear his name on earth, and therefore God is still upholding them for his name's sake and for his promise to their ancestors. We shall see this continue in the rest of this chapter.

**1Ki 20:28** "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."

We remind you; this time Benhadad is coming against Israel and not against Samaria. 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. Notice, it is because the name of God is being defamed, that God will deliver the Syrians into the hand of Ahab. It is not because Ahab has praised the Lord or prayed to God for deliverance. Neither has Ahab turned to God in repentance. 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 it seems he only has a head knowledge of the Lord, not a heart knowledge.

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

This is not the first time that we have read of a wall falling to deliver an enemy to 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. What about the seven days? Seven has the first meaning of **seven (as the sacred full one.)** Seven has the secondary meaning of **completeness.** This simply tells us that the battle is the Lord's, as God has completely routed the Syrians.

**31 ¶** "And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. 32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother. 33 Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. 34 And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So, he made a covenant with him, and sent him away."

Benhadad's servants tell Benhadad: we have heard that the Israelites are a merciful people. Wherefore, let us put on sackcloth and ropes on our necks, signifying that we are willing to be slaves to Israel, and perhaps Ahab will spare our lives. They did so and came to Ahab, telling him that thy servant Benhadad has requested to live and not be slain.

Ahab claims Benhadad as his brother and asks if he is still alive. Finding that Benhadad was still alive, he sent them to bring Benhadad to him. They do, and Benhadad tells Ahab that he will return to him all that they have taken from Israel in the past, and they will allow Israel to have streets in Damascus, the Syrian capital. Ahab makes a covenant with Benhadad and sends him away.

Why would Ahab do such a thing? Remember that Ahab's wife is a Phoenician, and the Phoenician's are a part of Syria. Thus, Ahab considers Benhadad his brother because of his wife Jezebel. This is a reminder to us today. We cannot serve both God and mammon. This demonstrates to us; Ahab has not turned to God and is still being directed by his inherited sin nature, which advises him to use political tact.

**35 "And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. 36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. 37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. 38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face."**

God immediately acts against Ahab, for his political move of making a league with Benhadad. A certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor, "***in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee.***" Notice this prophet demanded "***in the word of the Lord.***" The man refused and the son of the prophet said, as soon as thou depart from me, a lion shall slay thee, for not obeying the voice of the Lord, and it was so. A warning to us; when we know God is speaking to us; we are to obey the voice of the Lord; or we should expect to suffer the consequences of disobedience to God.

The prophet found another man who did smite him as commanded, and the prophet went and hid, by the way the king would be going. He disguised himself by putting ashes upon his face.

**39 "And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. 40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. 41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. 42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. 43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria."**

As the king passed by the place where prophet was, the prophet cried unto Ahab and gave him a parable as though he had failed to do as was required of him, and because of his failure he is facing death, or must pay a great penalty price. The parable is the actual case of Ahab. Ahab tells the prophet: "***So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.***" The prophet then cleaned his face and Ahab recognized he was one of the prophets of God. The prophet said unto Ahab: God gave you Benhadad to destroy, and to bring all that great army down, and you have sent him away in peace. You, Ahab, have condemned me to death, who am one of your own people, yet you had mercy on Benhadad, a stranger to Israel, whom God has appointed to destruction. Therefore, the sentence you pronounced upon me is now pronounced upon you, and your life shall be taken in the stead of Benhadad.

Ahab goes home very displeased with the sentence he must face, for this political move, which he made to find grace in the eyes of his idolatrous wife Jezebel, has turned into a death sentence. We shall find in the next two chapters how God brings this to pass.

This is certainly a warning to the children of God. When we are given commandment, we are to follow that commandment as God has laid it out. We are not to make political maneuvers, to save face with our own people, and expect to escape chastisement. We are not to make covenants with the world, those who are against God's word of truth, which is exactly what Ahab did.

Just think of all the miraculous things that God has performed before Ahab. God has given Ahab four miracles which should have moved him to fall on his face before God and repent of all his evil.

- God sent Elijah and said it shall not rain except by the word of Elijah, which God fulfilled.
- God sent Elijah and performed the burning of the sacrifice of Elijah, and the killing of the 450 prophets of Baal.

- God sent a prophet to tell Ahab that God would give the Syrians into his hand, and they would not destroy Samaria, and God performed what he said to uphold God's great name before Ahab.
- God sent a prophet to tell Ahab that God would deliver the host of the Syrians into his hand, because the Syrians said he was a God of the hills and not of the plains, which he did. Again, this was to remind Ahab of who God was.

Notice that Ahab's heart was heavy, only with the unhappy sentence pronounced upon him. He was not so grieved in heart that he turned to the Lord in repentance. He doesn't even pray for forgiveness. Wherefore, Ahab has no excuse for not repenting before, and turning to, God, who is the LORD. Comparably, God has sent to all of us enough miracles to let us know that he is the LORD, and we are without excuse, when we fail to put God in first place in our lives.

Benhadad is a picture of the devil and his minions. Ahab is a picture of the inherited sin nature of mankind. Remember, that in this scene; we have the devil fighting against God's chosen people, through their inherited sin nature. However, the fact that Israel wins these battles is not based on them being good people at making war. Instead, it is because the devil was defaming the name of God, and God is simply using Israel to defend his great name. God is displaying to Israel, and to us, a reminder of the great God who delivered them, and us, out of Egypt into the land of promise.

Obviously, Ahab does not get the picture, and Ahab saves Benhadad alive, and makes a covenant with him. This is a picture of one that is not born again, who is living in the inherited sin nature of the flesh, making a covenant with the devil, to live in harmony with the devil. It reminds us of the scripture in **Joh 12:40; 37 ¶ "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."**

It also reminds us that Ahab is quick to judge others in condemnation, but does not have discernment to judge himself, as we are commanded to do in **Mt 7:1-2; 1 ¶ "Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."** We shall see that Ahab's judgment of condemnation on the prophet of God becomes his own judgment. A warning to us to be sure we judge ourselves first, against the standard of God, his holy word. If we are to stand in judgment of others, we need to be in right standing with God. We must be sure we know, and understand, all the facts in a case, before we make a judgment of condemnation.

The prophets, used in this chapter, are a picture of the word of God, the Holy Spirit of God, with which we are enlightened when we are born again. When we are born again; the word of God should dwell in us richly; and thus, we can easily cut down our inherited sin nature with the sword of the Spirit, as is demonstrated by the battles set forth here. Wherefore, let us, the born-again children of God, live life with God as our guiding light. Let us read and study the written word of God, to know more about our God, and what he would have us to do. Let us learn from the mistakes of men recorded in the King James Bible, who did not believe God, nor listen to the voice of the LORD.

Let us praise and glorify the name of our God, the LORD, and our King, Jesus Christ, and the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ in us, always giving thanks to them, for our eternal forgiveness of sins, our eternal life, and the hope of the resurrection of our bodies at the return of Christ. We pray these things in the finished work of Jesus Christ, in his name, and for his sake, Amen!