

Introduction

We saw last time how that the LORD gave Israel a great victory against some very overwhelming odds so that Ahab might know that He was the LORD.

In fact, we have seen that in His grace and mercy, the LORD has revealed Himself to Ahab six times up to this point:

The first 4 we saw had to do with the Word of the LORD spoken by the Prophet Elijah!

- 1) There was the 3 ½ year drought! *(1 Kings 17:1)*
- 2) There was the great display on Mt. Carmel with the fire of the LORD consuming Elijah's sacrifice! *(18:36-38)*
- 3) There was the ending of the 3 ½ year drought! *(18:41-45)*
- 4) There was the prophet Elijah outrunning Ahab's chariot with the supernatural help of the LORD! *(18:46)*

The last 2 we saw had to do with the Word of the LORD spoken by an unnamed Prophet of the LORD!

- 5) There was Ahab's and Israel's surprising victory over Benhadad and the Syrian army in spite of being outnumbered! *(20:13-21)*
- 6) There was an early "**heads up**" warning given to Ahab by an unnamed prophet of what we are going to see tonight! The LORD warned Ahab way ahead of time that Benhadad and his armies would return in the Spring. *(20:22)*

Now understand that the LORD did not have to give Ahab a **heads up**, because he nor Israel deserved another warning! **But in the LORD's mercy and grace, He gave them a warning anyway!**

But one thing that stands out in all of this is that King Ahab still does not give the LORD the glory for what He has done for him!

That is a sad commentary on the wickedness, ungodliness, and ungratefulness of Ahab! So, tonight, first of all...

I. WE SEE THE STRATEGY OF BENHADAD AND SYRIA! (Vs 23-25)

Last week we saw how Syria had suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of Israel...(Really at the hands of the LORD!)

The pride of the Syrians had been hurt at this defeat. They felt as though they should have won! And fleshly speaking, they should have!

We see the excuses offered here for their defeat. They played the blame game. Instead of acknowledging the LORD of Israel as God, they made excuses for their defeat!

In pagan nations, many of these folks believed in local deities. They made the sad mistake here of seeing Israel's God just a local deity instead of the LORD God Almighty of heaven and earth!

In fact they put the LORD God on the level of the gods of the heathen! We see that the Syrians stated that Israel's gods were gods of the hills, thereby bringing the LORD God down to the level of idols!

This could have been a result of Israel's past with idolatry. Maybe they even saw some of the idols that Israel had worshiped as they were fighting with them!

Samaria was a hilly district so they concluded that Israel's gods gave them an advantage in the hills that they would not have had in the plains.

So, the Syrian's next strategy was a plan to take the battle to the plains so they could defeat Israel with their chariots. They believed their gods were more powerful on the plains and that the gods of Israel would not be able to help them there. They believed Israel's gods had limitations or weaknesses.

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
AHAB VS BENHADAD-PART 4
1 KINGS 20:23-43

The Syrians believed:

1. That if they got together a new army like the one that had been slaughtered by Israel...and
2. If they replaced the previously drunken kings with actual military commanders that knew more about how to fight, that they would "*surely*" be stronger and win the battle next time!

The Syrians made a couple of mistakes in their reasoning!

- 1) **The LORD God of Israel that gave Israel the victory was unlike any the gods of the Syrians or any other heathen countries and unlike any of the idols previously worshiped by Israel!**
- 2) The Syrians also made the big **mistake here of limiting the LORD God of Israel** as only the god of the hills (as they called Him).

When one doesn't see the LORD God for Who He really is—as Almighty GOD ALONE—they make a big mistake!

Limiting God will get you into big trouble. Unfortunately, even many Believers today make the mistake of limiting the LORD God in their lives as well.

Believers limit God through their unbelief much like Israel did in the wilderness as they were led to the Promised Land.

Psalm 78:40-42 – “40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42 They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

Could I tell you that when we don't take God at His Word we are guilty of limiting Him too!

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
AHAB VS BENHADAD-PART 4
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Hebrews 11:6 – “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Sometimes we limit the LORD God by shutting God out of different areas of our life!

It is the attitude of, “*I'll trust God with my soul, but not with _____* (you name the area of life and fill the blank.)”

Whenever we shut God out of any area of our life, we are limiting God!

Proverbs 3:5-6 – “5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Listen, God does not want us to limit Him! When we limit Him, we limit what He can do in us, for us, and through us!
Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

So, WE SEE THE STRATEGY OF BENHADAD AND SYRIA !

II. WE SEE THE SECOND ATTACK BY SYRIA ON ISRAEL!
(Vs 26-30)

A. Israel's Forces Once Again Were Greatly Outnumbered By The Syrians! (Vs 26-27)

1. **Looking on this battle in the flesh, it appeared to be another impossible situation for Israel!**
2. **And except for the LORD God fighting for Israel, it would have been an impossible situation!**
3. **Sometimes in our lives we face situations where the odds are stacked heavily against us! Oh, but don't make the mistake of limiting what God can do!**

**BOOK OF 1 KINGS
AHAB VS BENHADAD-PART 4
1 KINGS 20:23-43**

Ephesians 3:20 – “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”

B. The Syrians Were Slaughtered A Second Time! (Vs 28-30)

1. The LORD God's reputation had been called into question by the Syrians.

They claimed that the LORD God of Israel may have been the God of the hills or mountains in that first battle with Israel, but He was not the God of the valleys or plains.

2. Well, this unnamed man of God came to Ahab and informed him that the LORD said, "...therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thy hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD."

This is the seventh time that the LORD is showing Himself to Ahab!

Sadly, Ahab still doesn't acknowledge God! It is not that he can't see evidence of the LORD, it is that he refuses to glorify Him as God and LORD!

Romans 1:21– “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Both sides got ready for battle. For seven days the two armies were at a standoff with neither attacking the other!

Finally the armies engaged in battle and the LORD's promise was fulfilled just as Ahab had been told!

**BOOK OF 1 KINGS
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In one day, 100,000 of the Syrian foot soldiers were killed in battle! The rest fled to the fortress of Aphek for safety! Well that was their intention anyway! They thought they were safe and secure there, but their security ended up being their demise as the wall fell and 27,000 more of them died. (Act of God?)

Sadly, there are folks today who are like the Syrian army— i.e. They are putting their trust in things that are not secure. There is only safety in the LORD and His counsel!

**IV. WE SEE THE SUGGESTION OF BENHADAD'S SERVANTS!
(Vs 31-32)**

The Syrians stated that they knew of the mercy of the kings of Israel and mercy was what they needed and were hoping for!

What are we known for by the heathen of our day? Are we known for our mercy or for our anger and wrath?

The servants suggested to Benhadad that they put on sackcloth—which symbolized humility, mourning and penitence. And that they put ropes around their heads—which were symbols of surrender. So they tried this way to see if Ahab would spare Benhadad's life.

So, they humbled themselves as they said and Israel's king was merciful to them and Ahab even called Benhadad his **"brother."**

**V. WE SEE AHAB SENT THESE SERVANTS FOR BENHADAD!
(Vs 33)**

Ahab called Benhadad his **brother** and the servants picked up on the word **"brother"** as being a good sign. (Now that would have made me suspicious if I was Benhadad, but it was all he had going for him!)

So, Benhadad was brought to Ahab and Ahab invited him into his chariot. This was an act of friendship and honor to one who at one time was going to take Ahab's wives, children, and his pleasant things!

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
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VI. WE SEE THE SETTLEMENT OF THE TWO KINGS! (Vs 34)

Benhadad agreed to restore to Ahab the Israelite cities that were taken from Omri by Benhadad's father, among which Ramoth Gilead was probably the most important (*1 Kings 22:3*).

Also, Benhadad agreed to allow Ahab the privilege of making for himself what he called "*streets*," in Damascus, just as his father had done with respect to Samaria.

Now it is believed that this is talking about allowing Ahab to set up a bazaar in Damascus, Syria, to sell merchandise which would have been a lucrative business for Ahab as Damascus was an important trade route.

Ahab made this covenant with Benhadad and then sent him away!
But there are some problems here! **Ahab has not sought the LORD about these arrangements!**

- 1) **Israel was not to make covenants with her enemies!**
- 2) **Israel was supposed to do the LORD's will, not their will!**

VII. WE SEE THE LORD'S DISPLEASURE WITH AHAB!

(Vs 35-43)

Again, the LORD sends an unnamed Prophet to Ahab to call him on the carpet for his error here!

1. **We See The Preparation Of The Prophet! (Vs 35-38)**
We see how the LORD takes His Word seriously!
2. **We See The Pouncing Of The Prophet! (Vs 39-42)**
Ahab had made the mistake of releasing one whom the LORD appointed to utter destruction! (This comes back to bite Ahab!)
3. **We See The Pouting Of King Ahab! (Vs 43)**
He was sad and angry! He was pouting!