

1 Kings 20

Lesson 103

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

AHAB'S LAST CHANCE FOR SALVATION

AHAB'S SELF HELP CAN'T SAVE HIM

AHAB'S POLITICAL COMPROMISE CAN'T SAVE HIM

GOD'S AMAZING MERCY AND GRACE DEMONSTRATED TO AHAB AND HIS FOLLOWERS WHO WILLINGLY DEFIED/DENIED **THE ONE TRUE GOD, JEHOVAH, YAHWEH**

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

In 1 Samuel 8:5; 19-20, Israel demanded a king "just like all the nations." Samuel knew that **the one true God, the Lord, Jehovah, Yahweh** should be obeyed and His Word followed. So Samuel prayed unto the Lord for the people. But God said his people had rejected him as their king, the one who reigns over them, and decided to serve other gods. In Verses 10-18, Samuel warned the people about what would happen and how they would be treated by a "king," but the people wanted to "be like all other nations" and have a king/government to take care of them and fight their battles. And that is what they got!!

-- Comment on creation of socialistic deity - man-made gods - dependency on someone/something other than **the one true god, jehovah, yahweh.**

In 1 Kings we studied in chapters 1-11 the king God chose for Israel, Solomon, who was given wisdom by God and wealth beyond compare. But even with that kind of support, Solomon, who did some good things, including building the temple, in the end could not handle the authority/responsibility/power of the office. The Bible says that "Solomon did evil" in the sight of **the Lord, the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh.**

Beginning in 1 Kings 12, we see the Kingdom of Israel divided and 6 times in the next 7 chapters the Bible says, all the kings except Asa "did evil in the sight of the Lord." That brings us to our passage for tonight's study, 1 Kings 20. We will consider King Ahab, son of Omri, who the Bible says in Chapter 16:30-33,

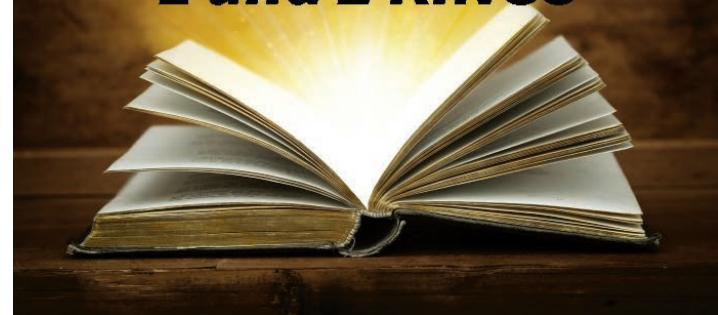
"(30) and Ahab the son of Omri, **did evil in the sight of the Lord above all who were before him.** (31) And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took as his wife, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. (32) And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. (33) And Ahab made an idol/grove/asherah (a wooden symbol of a female deity), and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."

We have learned that Ahab reigned for 22 years.

As we consider Chapter 20, we remember the lessons in 1 Kings Chapters 17 and 18 and the challenges of the prophet Elijah's ministry. Elijah predicted a 3-year drought - Elijah was supernaturally fed by ravens at Cherith - Elijah was fed by God using a widow whose obedience was rewarded by her resource of meal and oil never running out, according to the word of the Lord, **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh**, spoken through Elijah - Elijah raised the widows son from the dead, through the word of **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh** - Elijah told Ahab in 3 years, **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh**, would send rain - Elijah had a "contest" with 450 prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel - In Chapter 18:39, the Bible says that at the conclusion of that contest, "all the people" fell on their faces and acknowledged the Lord. Ahab knew all about Elijah and God's power working in and through Elijah, but there was no indication that Ahab repented or acknowledged the Lord. All the prophets of Baal were slain.

Overview of the Bible

1 and 2 KINGS



The reason I bring these prior lessons to our attention is because someone may ask, "why was God so merciful and gracious to Ahab in Chapter 20. In man's eyes, Ahab did not deserve any consideration. But in doing what he did, **God brought glory to Himself**, and He provided a way for Ahab to be saved and God's people to experience revival, renewal, and salvation. Therefore, it could be said, that Ahab was not really the main recipient of God's merciful actions, though they were directed to him. The people of Israel, God's chosen people, were those who were or could have been blessed by God and His mercy and His grace. Ahab was, by all accounts, a coward, "ruled over" by his wife Jezebel. He blasphemed God, worshipped idols, and did not obey God in anything he did. God, on the other hand, showed His power, love, and mercy by His actions in the life of Elijah and His actions in tonight's study, that He was the powerful, sovereign, omnipotent, **one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh** who was/is in control of all humanity and creation. We will see that Ahab was a coward, spineless, and without any self-discipline, he was prideful, he was stupid, he was rebellious, he was non-obedient to the Lord and his experience with the power of God failed to influence him for the good. He was not someone you would choose for a friend, but God chose to give him one last chance to turn to God and be saved.

TODAY'S LESSON

Let's read our Bible lesson in 1 Kings 20:1-43, and then we will come back and look at those scriptures verse by verse.

Chapter 20:1-4: Ben-hadad, the King of Syria (also identified as the King of Aram), prepares for battle with Ahab and sends demands to Ahab. Ben-hadad wanted to control all the trade routes through Israel. According to theologian Warren Wiersbe, he had lost all trade routes through the north and needed trade routes through Israel and, he needed Israel to provide men and weapons in case of an Assyrian invasion. The 32 kings referred to in Verse 1 were probably minor tribal chiefs or chiefs of cities, like mayors or governors. Ben-hadad's demands are enumerated in Verse 3. In Verse 4, we see that Ahab "surrendered" to those demands.

Verses 5-6: Seeing how easy that was, Ben-hadad escalated his demand in an effort to totally humiliate Ahab. To lose wives and your harem at this time, in this part of the world, would have shown a virtual surrender/capitulation of Ahab's throne to Ben-hadad. All Ahab had, his self-respect, even his kingdom would be gone. Ahab would be humbled and degraded. But Ahab was a coward and had no stomach for a fight.

Verses 7-9: Upon hearing Ben-hadad's "second" demand, Ahab sought counsel of elders and was told not to surrender. To surrender to Ben-hadad's terms would be the first step toward a total loss of sovereignty of Israel. So Ahab took the advice of his elders and told Ben-hadad he would not comply with his demands.

Verses 10-11: Ben-hadad threatened Ahab and told him that he would "level the hill of Samaria to dust," totally annihilate Ahab and his followers. However, Ahab "got some guts" and sent back a message to Ben-hadad that he should "not count his chickens before they are hatched!"

Verse 12: Ben-hadad was drinking/drunk when he prepared for battle against Ahab.

Verse 13: The Bible says, "A prophet," unidentified, came to Ahab, apparently unexpected and uninvited, and predicted victory "that thou (Ahab) shalt know that I am the Lord, **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh**. Victory would show Ahab that **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh, the Lord** was in every respect the sovereign God, and though Ahab and his followers had grievously sinned, God would not utterly "throw them away," but would allow repentance and salvation.

Verses 14-21: Ahab's "army" is described as young mean, not soldiers. The Hebrew word for young men is "Na'ar" which means servants. So obviously, Ahab had no "army" to realistically fight against Ben-hadad. He only had 232 young men and 7,000 people of Israel. In these verses we see Ahab's plan of battle.

-- Comment on 1 Samuel Chapter 17, the story of David and Goliath and Judge's 7:7 Gideon's 300, both of whom fought and won battles against stronger foes --

The Bible says that in Verse 20 that, "(20) and they slew everyone his man, and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them and Ben-hadad, the King of Syria, escaped on a horse with the horsemen. (21) And the King of Israel (Ahab) went out and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter."

Verse 22: Again we see a prophet, likely the same prophet referred to in Verse 13, warn Ahab about a 2nd attack to expect from Ben-hadad. He told him to strengthen himself and look for the 2nd attack around “the return of the year.” The theologians tell us that “the return of the year” was probably the Spring or Summer when there was plenty of grass to feed the horses of the attacking army. Perhaps, in this verse, God was making an overt, determined attempt to win Ahab away from worship of Baal to **the one true God, Jehovah, Yahweh** by speaking directly to him through a prophet. We will see Ahab’s response.

Verses 23-30: In these passages we see that the servants of Ben-hadad encouraged him to fight another fight against Ahab because Ahab’s gods were only “gods of the hill,” but Ben-hadad’s gods were stronger than they and they would do battle on the plain and would defeat Ahab’s army. It was not unusual in this period of time for Ahab who worshipped multiple gods to worship gods of a specific situation or circumstance. The idea of a localized deity was prominent in the ancient world and they believe that particular gods had authority over particular areas. In these verses we see that Ahab wins another battle with Ben-hadad **with the obvious intervention of God**. At this time, the death of 100 soldiers per day was normally expected, but we are told in this passage that Ahab’s army killed 100,000 of the army of Ben-hadad in one day and that a wall fell on 27,000 soldiers in the City of Aphek. That number, 27,000, is possibly a scrivener’s error, but the point is that there were many soldiers (all that were left alive) killed by a wall falling on them in the City of Aphek.

-- Comment on the wall of Jericho -- Holy war with God in control --

Verses 31-34: Ahab disobeys God and did not utterly destroy his enemy and did not kill Ben-hadad. Instead, he made a treaty with him. Some may say, “where does it say in the Bible that Ahab should have killed Ben-hadad?” See Exodus 23:30-33 where God gives instructions to the people of Israel regarding conquest of land. Also, look at Deuteronomy 20:10-15. We know from studies that in many cases, God would tell the children of Israel to go in and totally annihilate all of the inhabitants of the land that they were going to take over because God knew that if those people were not destroyed, their worship of idols and their lifestyle would infiltrate the lifestyle of God’s people and ultimately cause God’s people to sin. It happened every time the people disobeyed God. But in this case, instead of doing what he knew he should do, Ahab thought he would make a trade agreement and an agreement with his enemy using his own judgment instead of the instructions of the Lord. In this passage, reference is made to sackcloth and “ropes upon our heads.” In those days, sackcloth indicated servitude and ropes on their head

indicates a prisoner of war or someone who has given up his rights to another who has the power of life and death over him. We also see in this verse that Ahab calls Ben-hadad “his brother,” a term of endearment or respect.

Verses 35-43: This is a bit of a difficult passage. A prophet, “son of a prophet” planned to approach Ahab to talk to him about his disobedience to God. He had a plan and the plan included asking someone to hit him, “smite me,” but the man refused the direction/request of the prophet. Because he did know obey the voice of the prophet who was speaking for God, the prophet prophesied that a lion would kill him and that’s exactly what happened. Then he found another man and asked him to hit him, “smite me,” and the other man did that. The prophet was wounded and he departed and waited for King Ahab disguising himself as a fighter or a warrior. Then when the king passed by, the servant went out and talked to the King and actually prophesied to him about his disobedience in failing to kill Ben-hadad. And in this passage, Ahab, in response to his conversation with this prophet, passed judgment on himself. The situation here is similar to when the prophet Nathan talked to David about his great sin with Bathsheba and Bathsheba’s husband Uriah. Nathan told King David about a fable about taking a man’s only lamb and David pronounced judgment on a man who would do such a thing. Ahab did something similar here. Ahab could have changed the course of history for Israel if only he had been obedient to God. There’s no way to account for Ahab’s attitude, except sin. I believe it could be that after all that occurred in Chapter 20, God gave him up to reprobate mine as described in Romans 1:28-2:1 which states, “(28) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; (29) Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, (30) Backbiters, haters of God, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents; (31) Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful;

(32) Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." See also Proverbs 14:12 which states,

"(12) There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Because Ahab chose to determine his own way and deny the power of God, Israel suffered because of the sins of their leader. The Bible says that Ahab, the King of Israel, pouted, was displeased and resentful at Holy God.

One of the spiritual principles of our lesson tonight is that God always stands ready to forgive sin and offer salvation even to the vilest of sinners. Another is that as believers, we must trust God and obey Him completely. By extending toleration, compromise, even in the name of mercy, we empower Satan. In our Bible Study today, Ahab had the power to end forever the life and death struggle between Assyria and Israel. However, he did not do so, and with Ben-hadad left alive, the struggle between Assyria and Israel would continue for years and years with disastrous results.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim W. Lee".

Jim W. Lee

References:

- King James Bible
- New King James McArthur Study/Reference Bible
- New American Standard Thompson Chain-Reference Bible
- Warren Wiersbe Commentary
- Peter Pett Commentary
- John Gates Commentary
- The Hebrew/Greek Key Study Bible