

AS WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING THROUGH KINGS HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY SO MANY WARS? WHAT IS THE LORD DOING ? LET'S LOOK BACK FOR A MOMENT AND SEE WHAT GOD HAD TOLD ISRAEL WHEN HE GAVE THEM THE LAND..... JOSHUA 24:20-27

20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.” 21 The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” 22 Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” 23 “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” 24 The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice.” 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. 26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. 27 Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.” HAD THE PEOPLE BEEN FAITHFUL TO THE LORD? LOOK AT 1 KINGS 12 27-33

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.” 29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. 31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi. 32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had

made. <sup>33</sup> Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE LORD FELT WHEN HE SAW WHAT DIVIDED ISRAEL WAS DOING? NOW LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS IN 1 KINGS 20.

**20** Now Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army, and there *were* thirty-two kings with him, and horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria and fought against it.

ISRAEL WAS JUST COMING OUT OF THREE YEARS OF FAMINE WHEN THE KING OF SYRIA DECIDED TO ATTACK AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR PLIGHT. ANOTHER FACTOR IN BEN-HADAD'S ATTACK WAS THE GROWING STRENGTH OF ASSYRIA IN THE NORTH. BEN-HADAD WANTED TO CONTROL THE TRADE ROUTES THROUGH ISRAEL BECAUSE HE HAD LOST THE NORTHERN ROUTES TO ASSYRIA. WE AREN'T TOLD HOW LONG THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA LASTED, BUT SYRIA ULTIMATELY BROUGHT AHAB TO THE PLACE OF SUBMISSION.

<sup>2</sup> Then he sent messengers to the city to Ahab king of Israel and said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad,

<sup>3</sup> 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your most beautiful wives and children are also mine.'" FIRST BEN-HADAD DEMANDED AHAB'S WEALTH AND FAMILY AND AHAB AGREED. BEN-HADAD PLANNED TO HOLD THE FAMILY HOSTAGE JUST TO MAKE SURE AHAB DIDN'T BACK OUT OF HIS AGREEMENT. DO WE SEE AHAB CALLING FOR ELIJAH OR ANOTHER PROPHET AND SEEKING THE HELP OF THE LORD, HE QUICKLY GAVE IN TO THE DEMANDS.

<sup>4</sup> The king of Israel replied, "It is according to your word, my lord, O king; I am yours, and all that I have."

<sup>5</sup> Then the messengers returned and said, "Thus says Ben-hadad, 'Surely, I sent to you saying, "You shall give me your silver and your gold and your wives and your children,"

<sup>6</sup> but about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants;

and whatever is desirable in your eyes, they will take in their hand and carry away.” BUT NOW HE WANTS MORE BUT AHAB AND HIS ADVISORS REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT. THIS WAS A DEMAND FOR COMPLETE SURRENDER OF EVERYTHING OF VALUE, OF ANY PERSON OF WORTH, OF WHATEVER WAS PLEASANT IN AHAB’S EYES, TO BE HANDED OVER TO THE FOREIGN MONARCH.

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, “Please observe and see how this man is looking for trouble; for he sent to me for my wives and my children and my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him.” DO WE SEE ANYWHERE THAT THE KING AND ELDERS SOUGHT THE LORD?

8 All the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.” WHAT DOES “HUMAN WISDOM” TELL THEM?

9 So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, “Tell my lord the king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant at the first I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’” And the messengers departed and brought him word again. AHAB WAS WILLING TO GIVE TRIBUTE TO BEN-HADAD, BUT HE REFUSED TO ALLOW THE SYRIAN KING TO PLUNDER THE PALACE.

10 Ben-hadad sent to him and said, “May the gods do so to me and more also, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me.” BEN-HADAD BOASTED THAT HIS ARMY WOULD LEVEL THE HILL OF SAMARIA TO DUST.

11 Then the king of Israel replied, “Tell *him*, ‘Let not him who girds on *his armor* boast like him who takes *it off*.’” AHAB REPLIED THAT BEN-HADAD SHOULD NOT BOAST OF THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE BEFORE IT BEGAN.

12 When *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he was drinking with the kings in the temporary shelters, he said to his servants, “Station *yourselves*.” So they stationed *themselves* against the city. WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT BEN-HADAD’S DECISION?

13 Now behold, a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Have you seen all this great

multitude? Behold, I will deliver them into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the Lord.” WHAT DID THE LORD WANT THE KING TO SEE? WHAT IS THE PROMISE OF THE LORD? WHY IS THE LORD DOING THIS?

14 Ahab said, “By whom?” So he said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘By the young men of the rulers of the provinces.’” Then he said, “Who shall begin the battle?” And he answered, “You.” AHAB RECEIVED THE PROMISE AND ASKED FOR MORE INSTRUCTIONS. IS THIS WHEN WE TURN TO THE LORD WHEN WE HAVE NO OTHER HOPE?

15 Then he mustered the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and there were 232; and after them he mustered all the people, *even* all the sons of Israel, 7,000. WAS THIS A LARGE ARMY? DID THEY NEED A LARGE ARMY? WHY? WHO WAS LEADING THIS BATTLE?

16 They went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the temporary shelters with the thirty-two kings who helped him. WHY DID THEY GO OUT AT NOON? KNOWING THAT BEN-HADAD AND HIS OFFICERS WERE EATING AND DRINKING AND IN NO CONDITION TO FIGHT A BATTLE.

17 The young men of the rulers of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out and they told him, saying, “Men have come out from Samaria.” EVEN WHEN BEN-HADAD'S MEN REPORTED THAT A COMPANY OF MEN WERE APPROACHING THE SYRIAN CAMP, THE SYRIAN KING WAS NOT AFRAID.

18 Then he said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive.” HOW DOES THE KING REPLY TO THE NEWS?

19 So these went out from the city, the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and the army which followed them.

20 They killed each his man; and the Arameans fled and Israel pursued them, and Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen.

21 The king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Arameans with a great slaughter. VS 19-21 THE GLORIOUS VICTORY, WON SO EASILY AND WITH SUCH A SMALL FORCE WAS GRANTED SO AHAB AND THE PEOPLE WOULD KNOW THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN.

22 Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself and observe and see what you have to do; for at the turn of the year the king of Aram will come up against you." SPRING WAS THE USUAL TIME FOR BATTLES AND MILITARY EXPEDITIONS BECAUSE AT THAT TIME GRASS WAS READILY AVAILABLE FOR THE HORSES TO EAT. DO YOU THINK THIS WAS SOMETHING THE KING WANTED TO HEAR?

23 Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, "Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we; but rather let us fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we will be stronger than they. THE ADVISORS OF BEN-HADAD BELIEVED THAT ISRAEL HAD WON THE PREVIOUS BATTLE BECAUSE IT OCCURRED IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN, THE AREA THEY BELIEVED WAS RULED BY ISRAEL'S GODS. SO WHAT DO THEY SUGGEST?

THE PLAN-

24 Do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place, WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WANTED TO REPLACE KINGS WITH CAPTAINS?

25 and muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they." And he listened to their voice and did so.

26 At the turn of the year, Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

27 The sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went to meet them; and the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country.

HOW IS THIS BATTLE DESCRIBED? DOES THIS SOUND LIKE A FAIR FIGHT? BUT...

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE TO THE KING OF ISRAEL? WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER OF GOD?

**28** Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Because the Arameans have said, “The Lord is a god of *the* mountains, but He is not a god of *the* valleys,” therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.’”

**29** So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed *of* the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. DO YOU THINK THIS SHOWED THE ARAMEANS THAT ISRAEL'S GOD WAS MORE THAN THE GOD OF THE MOUNTAINS? ONE HUNDRED CASUALTIES A DAY IN ANCIENT WARFARE WAS CONSIDERED HEAVY, BUT GOD GAVE HIS PEOPLE 1,000 TIMES THAT NUMBER THAT DAY.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALL OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY VICTORIES WERE WON BY OBEYING THE LORD. OF NO OTHER NATION CAN SUCH A STATEMENT BE MADE.

**30** But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on 27,000 men who were left. And Ben-hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. CAN WE RUN AWAY FROM GOD? "INNER CHAMBER - "A ROOM IN A ROOM, A SAFE, WELL-HIDDEN PLACE

**31** His servants said to him, “Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings, please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will save your life.” ARCHAEOLOGY HAS CONFIRMED THAT OTHER ANCIENT EASTERN KINGS WERE MORE BRUTAL IN WAR THAN ISRAEL'S KINGS WERE. SACKCLOTH AND ROPES EXPRESSED REMORSE AND SERVITUDE.

**32** So they girded sackcloth on their loins and *put* ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-hadad says, ‘Please let me live.’” And he said, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.” SACKCLOTH AND ROPES EXPRESSED REMORSE AND SERVITUDE. "ROPES ON THEIR HEAD" MAY MEAN ROPES AROUND THEIR NECKS. THIS WAS A SIGN OF CAPTIVITY OR. SUBJECTION. BEN HADAD WAS NOT AHAB'S BLOOD BROTHER, BUT AHAB WAS WILLING TO REGARD BEN-HADAD AS A BROTHER, RATHER THAN A SERVANT, IF BEN-HADAD WOULD AGREE TO MAKE A TREATY AND CONCESSIONS

TO HIM. REMEMBER THAT AHAB'S PLAN WAS CONTRARY TO GOD'S LAW. WHICH CALLED FOR THE DEATHS OF ISRAEL'S ENEMIES (DEUT. 20:10-15)

**33** Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word said, "Your brother Ben-hadad." Then he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot. AHAB WELCOMED BEN-HADAD INTO HIS CHARIOT. THIS WAS AN HONOR

**34** *Ben-hadad* said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." *Ahab* said, "And I will let you go with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him and let him go. THE COVENANT THAT THE TWO MEN MADE INVOLVED THE RETURN OF THE ISRAELITE CITIES THAT ARAM HAD PREVIOUSLY TAKEN AND TRADE PRIVILEGES FOR ISRAEL WITH DAMASCUS. AHAB FIGURED THAT IT WOULD BETTER FOR HIM AND ISRAEL TO MAKE A TREATY THAN TO OBEY GOD'S LAW-EXODUS 23:32.

PERHAPS THE REASON AHAB WAS SO EAGER TO MAKE A TREATY WAS THAT THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE WAS EXPANDING TOWARD ISRAEL FROM THE NORTHEAST AND AN ALLIANCE WITH ARAM WOULD HELP SECURE ISRAEL'S SAFETY.

**35** Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another by the word of the Lord, "Please strike me." But the man refused to strike him. SONS OF THE PROPHETS WAS AN ASSOCIATION OF PROPHETS THAT MET AND POSSIBLY LIVED TOGETHER FOR STUDY, ENCOURAGEMENT AND SERVICE. THE PROPHET NEEDED TO BE WOUNDED AS IF IN BATTLE TO CARRY OUT THE DRAMA. THE REFUSAL TO DO WHAT THE PROPHET ASKED WAS WRONG AS IT WAS A WITHHOLDING OF NECESSARY AID TO A PROPHET OF GOD IN THE DISCHARGE OF HIS DUTY. IT WAS SEVERELY PUNISHED AS A WARNING TO OTHERS.

**36** Then he said to him, "Because you have not listened to the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you." And as soon as he had departed from him a lion found him and killed him. WHAT WAS THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT HELPING THE PROPHET? PERHAPS GOD USED A LION BECAUSE IT IS A FITTING SYMBOL OF GOD HIMSELF.

**37** Then he found another man and said, "Please strike me." And the man struck him, wounding him.

38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes.

39 As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' THIS WAS ABOUT 75 POUNDS OF SILVER, MORE THAN A COMMON SOLDIER COULD AFFORD. FOR THIS DEBT HE WOULD LOSE HIS LIFE

40 While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided *it*." THIS "JUDICIAL PARABLE" WAS DESIGNED TO TRAP AHAB INTO ANNOUNCING HIS OWN PUNISHMENT.

41 Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets.

42 He said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have let go out of *your* hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" BY DECLARING THE BATTLES TO BE HOLY WARS, THE LORD HAD PUT BEN-HADAD AND THE SYRIANS UNDER THE BAN, A REFERENCE TO SOMETHING BELONGING TO THE LORD AND DESTINED TO BE DESTROYED. BY FREEING BEN-HADAD, AHAB HAD DISOBEYED THE LAW AND WOULD SUFFER THE BAN IN BEN HADAD PLACE.

43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria. AHAB WAS RESENTFUL AND ANGRY BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S REACTION TO HIS ACTIONS. TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.....