

1 Kings 20

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 02 September 2016 15:52

In every chapter we can see parallels to the situation today. Can YOU see these links? If not, think a little harder and watch sin being pushed at every opportunity by people who are being slowly propagandised to accept wicked behaviour. Those of us who suffer at the hands of wicked groups know only too well how evil these people are. And some of those groups are 'Christian'! It is of paramount importance for all believers to gain knowledge of what is going on today, and to defend their minds and hearts against adopting the ways of the day.

Verses 1-4

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.

Here, we see two wicked kings facing each other, with one of them issuing a bully-demand. Thirty two sub-kings joined the king of Syria, with their combined armies. Together, they went to war against Samaria. Benhadad sent a message to the king of Israel, Ahab – everything you have now belongs to me, including your wives and children! Ahab simply replied that he could take whatever he wanted. Is this not similar to the condition of Syria today?

Verses 5&6

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1.

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;

2.

Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow 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.

Not content with taking the national treasures and the family, Benhadad sent another message to Ahab, this time saying that his soldiers would come the next day to also search his palace and his servants' houses. Ahab would choose the best items and hand them over. Like today, Christians are expected to lay down and allow wicked people to trample all over them.

Verses 7-9

1.

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.

2.

And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent.

3.

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.

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It seems that Ahab thought this latest demand was too much. Really, the *first* demand was too much, but Ahab was wicked anyway, and like all wicked men he was unable to have rational thoughts. Nor did he repent to the Lord and seek help. Ahab took counsel from his courtiers, who advised him not to give in. They knew that when we give in to even a small demand by wicked men, they will just keep on coming, always getting worse. Ahab told the messengers of Benhadad that he would give in to his first demand, but not to his second.

Many Christians give in to threats and the foul demands of the wicked. And of those who give in, some do so because they have an odd affiliation with the wicked and their lives. Over the years I have warned that the worst thing to do is to become friendly with wicked men. Much as we think we can withstand what is wrong, it always rubs off on our souls, poisoning how we think and act. This is how homosexuals have been given friendship and leeway by sinning Christians. It is how Christians have given in to our children being taught how to be perverts, in schools.

Such Christians have thus joined the ranks of the unbelievers, to their own detriment and the detriment of their own families, friends and the churches. They may as well just say they are unbelievers themselves, for this is how they are acting. Having fought against the homosexual cause for over forty years I can testify that they have become worse and worse, and they 'win' not by argument but by force. Yet, younger believers are somehow bewitched by their false propaganda, and join their side at least in part. It is not how God sees these awful people, whose practices He calls 'an abomination' I have lost much in those years for opposing this evil diseased lifestyle, and I will end my life still in debt because of these foul people. Yet, I can do no other, for God commanded me, and, frankly, I fear God too much to compromise.

Verses 10&11

1.

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.

2.

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.

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Benhadad's reply was instant: he said he had many thousands of followers. Ahab warned Benhadad not to start a war against him, for it would do him no good. Of course, both were sinful men, so they were at that time merely 'sabre-rattling'. Naturally, a king could not back down without a face-saving ploy.

Verses 12-16

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

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.

The reply was given to Benhadad when he was carousing with his courtiers, and was drunk. He immediately retorted to his generals: "Set yourselves in array"! Or, 'Get into place for the battle' at Samaria.

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Interestingly, though Ahab was wicked, God gave him a divine promise. Through a prophet, God asked Ahab if he had seen the vast army outside his city. Though vast, God would win the battle, proving that He was the Lord of Israel. Ahab asked how the battle would be won and God told him, 'Through your princes' armies'. Ahab asked who would give the order, and God said 'You will'.

Ahab counted 232 princes ready for the battle, with 7000 Israelite soldiers. At mid-day they went out to meet with Benhadad's army. But, Benhadad was too drunk to take notice. So were his 32 sub-kings. Today, many Christians are too ignorant by way of laxity to do battle against Satan's henchmen, and they are easily overpowered... or, to be more precise, they are only too willing to give up/join them.

Verses 17-21

1.

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.

2.

And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

3.

So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

4.

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.

5.

And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

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Ahab's men began to go out to find Benhadad's men, and Benhadad was given the news. He told his generals to take the Israelite princes alive, even if they had come to discuss peace terms. However, Ahab's princes and their army overcame Benhadad's army, killing every soldier on the plain. The rest of Benhadad's army fled, with the Israelites in hot pursuit. Benhadad himself escaped with his horse soldiers, but Ahab and his men followed and killed the Syrians, leaving few alive to escape.

Perhaps you might have noted in other battles, that God never told Israel to stop when they had won – He told them to destroy as many of the enemy as they could. In the Christian life there should be no compromise with evil men, for the Lord does not compromise. We must push the enemy beyond its limits until they are no more.

Verses 22-25

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:

4.

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.

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The prophet again talked with Ahab: he was to have courage and learn: 'The next year Benhadad will return with his new army'. This was based on the false prophets and courtiers of Benhadad telling him that the Israelite 'gods' (who were still being worshipped) were only effective in the hills. Therefore, Benhadad should attack them on the plains! They further advised to remove the 32 kings as leaders of the army and to replace them with captains, and to build an army equal in number to the one that was lost. Benhadad listened and did what they advised. Though his sins were great, God remembered Ahab for the sake of David and his forefathers. But, Benhadad was a craven wicked man, so he had no true God to support him.

Verses 26&27

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of

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the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

6.

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.

7.

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.

When Benhadad had built up his new army, he returned to Israel to fight the Israelites again, at a place called Aphek, the was place probably near Jezreel. Both the Syrians and the Israelites were at peak numbers. It seems that the Israelites were smaller in number, and were divided into two groups, where as the Syrians appeared to fill the land. A “man of God” (the same prophet?) again came to Ahab, and told him what Benhadad’s advisers told him – that Syria would win because the Israelite gods were only powerful in the hills. Because they thus tried to limit the one true God’s power and presence, the Lord would defeat the Syrians again, proving that only He was the Lord. God thereby promised victory to Ahab and yet warned him that the defeat would show him conclusively that his own false gods were useless, and only He was the true God.

The two armies pitched their war tents opposite each other on the plain for seven days. On the seventh day they began their battle. The result was that the foot-soldiers of Syria lost 100,000 men in just one day. The remaining soldiers fled to Aphek, which was a walled fortress. There, God continued the slaughter – one of the massive walls fell and crushed another 27,000 Syrian soldiers. Benhadad fled again, this time to an inner room in the city of Aphek to hide in fear.

Benhadad’s men advised that they had heard the kings of Israel were merciful, so they advised that they should all assume the position of subjugated men, in sackcloth and ashes, with cords tied around their heads, and to ask Ahab for mercy. This was not in God’s plan – He wanted every Syrian to die. The small band thus dressed in sackcloth and ashes and tied cords around their heads, and approached Ahab, asking him to let Benhadad live. Then came Ahab’s mistake

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– he said that Benhadad was his brother; was he still alive? The error came about because Ahab's decision was founded on emotion, not on God's command. This is common today amongst untaught Christians who think that their decisions are better than those of their God. So, by their error sin gets worse and thrives... and they wonder why it is that God does not save them from their enemy!

Verses 33&34

1.

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.

2.

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 men confirmed he was alive and Ahab told them to bring him. He came out of hiding and Ahab invited him to stand with him in his war chariot. Instead of putting him to death, Ahab discussed his future. Benhadad promised to return to Israel the cities his father had taken from them, and he would let him rebuild Damascus. Sadly, Ahab agreed to the terms and sent Benhadad away with his promise to let him live.

Many Christians compromise in this world, thinking that their compromise and frail ideas are better than those of God. And so the wicked world crashes about our ears. Even so, these faulty believers still think they do the will of God!

Verses 35-39

1.

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.

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2.

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.

3.

Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him.

4.

So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

5.

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.

As all this was going on one of the school of the prophets told his neighbour to kill him. He had this from God Himself. But, his neighbour refused to do so. The prophet told the neighbour that because he had not obeyed the Lord, he would be killed by a lion. And so it happened. There are always consequences when we disobey God. Oddly, one of those consequences could also be to gain power or finances... when God hands a person over to his false ideas and does not share His presence in the person's life.

The prophet approached another man and made the same demand. This time the man obliged, but only wounded the prophet. The prophet went his way, badly wounded, and waited for the king to ride past. The prophet must have been known to Ahab, for he covered his face with ashes so as not to be recognised. When Ahab passed by, the prophet called out to him, saying that he had taken part in the battle and one man brought another man to him, saying "Keep this man" (or, 'Guard him as a prisoner'). The one who told him to guard the prisoner said that if the prisoner was not there when he returned, the prophet would be held liable and would die...

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unless he was paid a talent of silver as a penalty. (He was speaking prophetically).

Verses 40-43

1.

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.

2.

And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets.

3.

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.

4.

And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

In this way the prophet was telling Ahab that his decision to let Benhadad go free was a bad one. The prophet, of course, was giving the king a story. The king however replied: 'Well, if you walked off and let the prisoner escape, it is your own fault and you deserve the punishment'. As the king spoke, the prophet removed the ashes from his face so the king could see who he was. Ahab recognised him to be one of the school of the prophets. The prophet then told him of his grave error – God wanted Benhadad dead, but Ahab let him live, against God's express command. The penalty was severe: Ahab and his men would forfeit their own lives in return for the life of Benhadad.

When God tells us what should be, we must obey to the letter or suffer the consequences. If He commands that a foul person must die, then he must. We have no say in the matter. In many areas of life God commands the death or the casting-out of this or that foul enemy, and Christians let them live and continue. And so God removes His presence and condemns the

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erroneous Christian, who must pay the penalty. Today, if this penalty does not involve our death, it can very well result in God giving us freedom to do what we like. While this makes the sinner feel he is right, it actually means his life is no longer under God's protection or beneficial presence. His apparent increase in wealth or power or status is then not a reward but a curse. Be warned.

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