

Wednesday, July 27, 2022 • Read 1Kings 20

Questions from the Scripture text: Who gathered whom in v1? Who were with him? What did they have? Where did he go? What two things did he do there? Whom did he send to whom (v2)? What did they say—what three things did he claim? How did Ahab answer (v4, 7)? What did the messengers next demand (v5–6)? What does Ahab tell his people Ben-Hadad is seeking (v7)? How do they answer Ahab (v8)? So how does he answer Ben-Hadad (v9)? Now how does Ben-Hadad respond (v10)? How does Ahab respond to this bluster (v11)? What were the v1 coalition doing when they heard Ahab's response (v12)? What does Ben-Hadad tell them to do? Who suddenly approaches Ahab in v13? What will Yahweh do? Why? For what particular instructions does Ahab ask in v14? How many leaders and people does he have (v15)? What is the v1 coalition doing at what time of day in v16? Whom does Ahab send out first (v17)? Who see them? What does Ben-Hadad say to do (v18)? Who were with each young leader (v19)? What they each do (v20)? What do the Syrians do? And Israel? But where does Ben-Hadad go? What is the outcome (v21)? What news does the prophet now give Ahab (v22)? Who speak in v23? To what do they attribute Israel's win? What strategy do they suggest (v24–25)? What happens in the spring (v26–27)? What does Israel's army look like (v27)? What do the Syrians do? What is Yahweh going to do (v28)? Why? How long until the battle is engaged (v29)? How many do Israel kill? Where do the rest go (v30)? Who kills how many of them? Where does Ben-Hadad go? Now what do his servants tell him (v31)? And what do they suggest? What do they do in v32? How does Ahab answer? What are they encouraged to do by this answer (v33)? To what agreement do they come (v34)? Who says what to whom in v35? By what word? What does the man (not) do? What does the prophet say will happen (v36)? What happens? How does the second try go (v37)? For what did the prophet need his injury (v38)? What story does he tell whom in v39–40? What sentence does the king pronounce? Now what does the prophet do (v41)? And what does Ahab see? For what sin is Ahab finally condemned (v42)? How does Ahab respond (v43)?

What controls the histories of nations and armies? 1Kings 20 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these forty-three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Lord's purpose in the history of nations and armies is to make Himself known to His people.**

Behold the patience of God! Even after the drought (17:1–18:2), the competition on Carmel (18:3–40), and the prophet's run in front of Ahab (18:41–46), Ahab has refused to be directed by the Word of God. Now, the Lord gives him another opportunity to be led by His Word. His providence brings an army so great that Ahab quickly gives up Israel's wealth and future (v3–4, 7), and He has reduced Israel to a total leadership of 232 and total army of 7000 (v15).

This level of adversity is what finally softens Ahab so that when the prophet comes in v13, Ahab's response in v14 is finally to seek from the Lord detailed instructions for what to do. Perhaps you have experienced this as many have: mercy from God so great as to put you through whatever severity is necessary to turn you to His Word as all of the ideas and orders by which you live.

Compared to the Aramean coalition, whose strength literally made them drunk (cf. v12, 16), Ahab and Israel had been sobered by their weakness. Praise the Lord for when He patiently sobers us by weakness.

Behold the purpose of God! The prophet doesn't just come with predictions in v13 and v28. He comes with the Lord's purpose: "and you shall know that I am Yahweh." Perhaps the stupid theology to which God has given over the Arameans (v23) is a reflection of Ahab's own. But Ahab is king over God's covenant people. His state-sponsoring of Baal and Asherah worship (cf. 18:19) contradict the special purpose of the special people whom God gave him to rule: to know Yahweh and make Him known (cf. Deut 4:5–10).

Behold the power of God! He defeats a great horde twice, with a small band in vv19–21 and with two little flocks of soldiers who kill 100,000 Arameans in v29. And just in case we are tempted to credit the small band, the Lord uses precisely zero Israelites to kill 27,000 in v30. When we see His ultimate power, we are reminded that our job is not to be powerful ourselves, but just to do what He commands us and trust that He will work all things for good.

Behold the prescriptions of God! He decides how we glorify Him. The word "merciful" in v31 is that word that, when used of God, speaks of His covenant love. Ahab may have had some indication that this reputation was being factored into the display and negotiations in vv31–33. And perhaps Ahab saw the concessions in v34 as a gift from God to restore His people's fortunes.

But it is God Who decides how we will bring Him honor and glory. Our job is just to obey Him. When God said *all this great multitude* in v28, He meant it. We must never rationalize incomplete obedience by thinking that it would somehow bring honor to God or prosper His people. This is a sadly timely message for the church in the West. And in our individual lives, too, we must trust the Lord to see to His glory and our good, as we make it our business to give complete and consistent obedience.

How serious is the Lord about this? After all that Ahab has done, the action by which he forfeited his life and the survival of the northern kingdom was sparing Ben-Hadad's life (v42). This, then, becomes a great theme for us in God's dealing with the kings of Israel (cf. 1Sam 15:20–29). Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (cf. 1Sam15:23), and Ahab becomes its most recent poster-boy in v43 ("sullen" there translates a word that means "rebellious").

God requires complete obedience, and He Himself provides the King Who gives it (cf. 1Sam 15:28)—Christ! As we trust that Christ has done it in our behalf, and that God is now pressing us into the shape of our Redeemer, let us seek to offer our Lord complete obedience in our redeemed lives.

How has God been patient with you? What difference does it make to you to know that His purposes in all of your circumstances include making you to know Him? What is an area in your life in which you are especially tempted to offer incomplete obedience?

Sample prayer: Lord, we praise Your patience with people like Ahab, where You keep giving them undeserved opportunities to be led by Your Word. Forgive us for how stubbornly we can continue to follow our own inclinations, when You keep calling us to be led by Your Word. Truly, it is arrogant to think that we can bring good outcomes in any other way than obeying You. So, forgive us for when our hearts and minds begin to rationalize incomplete obedience. Thank You that Christ's complete obedience is counted for us through faith in Him. By Your Spirit, keep remaking us into His likeness we pray in His Name, AMEN!!

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH1B "How Blessed the Man"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

First Kings chapter 20 of these are the words of God. Now Ben had had the king of Syria gathered, all his horses together. 32 kings were within with horses and chariots. He went up and besieged Samaria and made war against it. Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahad King of Israel.

And said to him, thus says, Ben Haddad your silver and your gold or mine, your loveliest wives and children are mine. The king of Israel, insert and said, my lord. Okay. Just as you say hi and all that. I have yours Then the messengers came back and said thus speaks been at.

I say Indeed I have sent to you saying you shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time and they shall search your house and the house is of your servants and it shall be that whatever is pleasant and your eyes they will put it in their hands and take it.

So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said notice please and see how this man seeks trouble for. He sent to me, for my wives, my children, my silver, my gold, and I did not die in and all the elders and all the people said to him.

Do not listen or consent. Therefore, he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad, tell my Lord, the king, all that you sent for, to your servant the first time, I will do. But this thing I cannot do the messengers departed and brought backward to him. It's been her. Dad sent to him and said the gods, dues tell to me and moral.

So if enough justice left of Samaria for a handful, for each of the people who follow me. So, the king of Israel answers and said, tell him, let not the one who puts on his armor both like the one who's taking it off, what it happened. When Ben had had heard this message, Is he in the kings were drinking at the command post but he said to his servants get ready when they got ready to attack City.

Suddenly a profit approached at King of Israel saying thus, says Yahweh. Have you seen all this? Great multitude. Behold. I will deliver it into your hand today and you shall know that I am Yahweh. So I had said by whom and he said thus says Yahweh by the unleaders of the provinces, then he said who will set the battle in order and he answered you, then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces and there were 232 and after them, he mustered all the people.

All the children of Israel 7,000. So they went out at noon. Meanwhile, then Hadad and the 32 Kings, helping him were getting drunk at the command post. The young leaders of the provinces went out first than Haddad sent out a patrol. I told him saying man they're coming out of Samaria So he said if they have come out for peace take them alive.

And if they had come out for war, take them alive. In terms of these young leaders of the, provinces went out of the city with the Army which follow them and each one killed his man. So the Syrians fled in Israel, pursued them then Ben had had King of King of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry.

Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and the chariots, and killed the Syrians of the great slaughter. And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him go strengthen yourself. Take note and see what you should do from the spring of the year.

The king of Syria will come up against you. Then the servants of the Kings of King of Syria said, in their gods, are gods of the hills. Therefore they are stronger than we, but if we fight against them in the plane, surely we will be stronger than they. So do this thing.

Dismiss the king's each from this position, put captains in their places usual. Muster an army, like the army that you have lost course for horses. Chariot for chariot, then we will fight against them in the plane. Surely we will be stronger than they, he listened to their voice did.

So, so it was in the spring of the year that been Haddad mustard the Syrians and went to affect to fight against Israel and the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions. And they went against them. Now, the children of Israel and camped before them, like two little flocks of goats while the Syrians filled the countryside, Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel and said, thus says he offer because the Syrians have said, Yahweh is God of the hills what he is not God of the valleys.

Therefore, I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yahweh and then you camped opposite each other for seven days. So it was seventh day, the battle was joined and the children of Israel killed 100,000 foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day, but the rest fled to affect into the city, Then a wall fell on 27,000 of the manure.

Left been had to add fled and went into the city into an inner chamber. Then this servants said to him. Look. Now, we have heard that the kings of the House of Israel are merciful Kings. Please let us put sackcloth around our wastes and ropes around our heads and go out to the King of Israel.

Perhaps he was bury your life. So they wore cyclops around their waists and put ropes around their heads. We came to the king of Israel and said your servant Ben Haddad says, please let me live and he said, is he still alive? He is my brother. Now, the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy, would come from him, right quickly grasp that this word and said your brother and had.

So he said go bring him than Ben Haddad came out to him and he had him come up into the chariot. So Ben had said, Tim the cities which my father took from your father, I will restore and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus. As my father didn't Samaria, Then they have said, I will send you away with this treaty.

So he made a treaty with him, sent him away. Now, a certain man of the sons of the Prophets, said to his neighbor by the word of Yahwe. Strike me please. And the man refused to strike him and he said to him because you have not obeyed the voice of your way.

Surely. As soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you. And as soon as you left him, a lion found him kilting. And he found another man and said strike me, please. So the man struck him inflicting a wound from the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road and disguised himself with abandoned over his eyes.

Now, as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, your servant went out into the midst of the battle and they're a man came over and brought a man to me and said, guard, this man, hit by any means. He is missing your life shall be for his life or else you shall pay a talent of silver while your servant was busy here.

There. He was gone looking to Israel said to him, social your judgment B or yourself of decided. It in the case him to take the bandage away from his eyes, in the king of Israel, recognized him as one of the prophets. And then he said to him, thus says Yahweh because you have let slit out of your hand, a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, Therefore your life shall go for his life and your people for his people.

So the king of Israel went to his house solid and displeased and came to some area So far the reading of God's inspired and an aren't word.

When the chapter opens Samaria or not? Samaria Syria. Samaria is the capital city of the northern kingdom where Ahab and Jezebel rule in Syria, is to the east and has Damascus as their capital. And Ben Haddad is ruling there and he's got 32 kings on underneath him. The the Syrians actually, it's better to call them at this point.

The Aramimians, but they had a very large coalition Kingdom By comparison. Ahab had. 232 total government officials. So, you know, grad, at least gave the Northern Kingdom. I guess the blessing of small government, but their total number of fighting men had been reduced to 7,000, put the chair back and sit on the edge and put your feet on the floor, okay?

And so Ben Haddad Masters, all of the kings. And he comes, and he makes a demand event of Ahab. That Ahab should not have accepted, they have sort of defended, the wives and the children. Let him have this over in the cold, maybe, But the wives and the children are the most vulnerable, but the Lord had brought Ahab into such a small extern at such a straightened extremity.

Such a low low estate that he felt obligated to do what Ben had said and then had that makes the further demand and Ahab. Realizes he says, this man is trying to pick trouble. He realizes, but Ben had once is a war, it doesn't want to vessel estate. He wants to destroy Samaria.

He wants to take over the northern kingdom and add it to the aromian land. But suddenly verse 13, a prophet approaches Ahab. King of Israel saying thus, says Yahweh. Have you seen all this multitude? Behold. I will deliver it into your end today and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

So, we're tempted by the data in the first 12. Verses of the chapter to say God was really punishing, the northern kingdom. But suddenly we find out that God raised up the multitude, destroy it and Ahab who hasn't wanted to do anything? That the Lord says? God says he's gonna make a drought.

It's not going to rain except by the Word of his prophet and all they have. Would have to do, There's renowned bail and fled with Elijah to speak in his behalf and they have didn't yield and then they had the the contest on Mount Carmel. And God humiliates the the prophets of Bill and Ashra and slaughters them.

Well, Elijah slaughtered them with the people and, and still may have doesn't turn from listening to bail to listening to the Lord by his prophet. And then God brings the storm and supernaturally makes Ahab able to run in a storm in front of the chariot of the king all the way back to Samaria to the capital city.

Obviously showing King Ahab that he could have God's word, be what leads him and what direction? It's still, he didn't listen. But now when he's got 232 government officials and 7,000 total soldiers Ahab suddenly says to the Prophet of the Lord. Okay.

By whom will the Lord do this. And the Prophet says thus says yah but by the young leaders of the provinces they have, once more to tell more instruction will set the battle in order me any answers. Use. So, the patience of God after those three huge things that God had done, yeah, to get him to listen to and follow the prophet, the Lord still gives him another opportunity and Ahab actually listens to the voice of the prophet.

So that's the, the first thing is the purpose, the patience of God, Sometimes in our lives, We are caught up in our life and some trouble comes and the Lord gives us an opportunity to get our attention. And we might repent a little bit here, a little bit there but our life is still you know, kind of just going according to whatever we want and we're living as if we are our own purpose.

And we don't listen, we don't learn often that happens but the Lord is patient. And Every once in a while, he brings something into your life, that brings everything to a grinding halt. It's not just an unpleasant thing that that makes you reconsider a little bit. It's something that is going to be curtains for you.

The way it was for ahead, he brought him. He brought him that low for that reason.

So so sometimes in your life, the reason the Lord brings you into a much harder suffering or trial. Then you have had in a long time, is because you need your life reset, didn't have his word, be the only thing that you hope in you lose all other. Hope you lose all other help He strips you of all of it, It makes you cry out to him.

When the rest upon him alone and that's him being patient. It's not him. Punishing, is it? It wasn't punishing it, he's punishing it here by the end of the chapter, but he's not punishing ahead. Here. The second place, the purpose of God. Verse 13 and verse 28 to the Prophet.

Says, you shall know that I am Yahweh. They have already knew who Yahweh was. It had several lessons, but the purpose of God was to set himself before him to present himself to him to declare himself to him. Now, that's the Lord's purpose in everything that he does. So, whether or not we need the great repentance that they have needed.

His purpose is always to make himself known to his people and to display himself. Notice that when he was gonna destroy the Arabians, he gave them over to bad theology. Oh they're God is just God of the hills. Not God of the valleys. And this passage, of course has been abused by a recent popular.

Quote, unquote, Christian song. The kind that we skip in our playlist. It says God is God of the hills and the valleys. He's God of the good times in your life and he's God and the bad times. Now, it's true. That God is our God. And every prophet and and all the time.

But that's really a misuse of of this. Passage the Armenians. However, were given over to blaspheming to display the justice of God when he wiped them out. So the Lord makes himself known not only to his people but also to those who blaspheme him, There are many in this life, he gives over to hardness, they're just kind of live and easy life and get harder and harder and harder.

But they will know they will appear before him. It will cry out for the mountains and the hills to fall. Upon them, and they will behold the brightness of His glory in the last day. In that moment, when begins the lashing out of that brightness and glory upon them forever and ever.

So there's the patience of God where they have. There's the purpose of God for making himself known. There's a power of God, obviously, the to little flocks of goats, you know, kill a hundred thousand Syrians or Arabians. Same. Same people. But, you know, the hundred thousand to two little flocks of goats ratio, is small compared to the 27,000 to 0, because that's how many soldiers God used to kill the 27,000 of the city.

He doesn't even need soldiers from Israel. Does he? And then you see, the stupidity have been Haddad who After a wall falls and kills 27,000 of his men. Goes

into an inner chamber. So, surrounds himself with four of those things. And a ceiling that God just used to just destroy 27,000 of his men.

So you see the great power of our God. We are never ever in trouble because he sometimes somehow found it difficult to coordinate things, that would be more easy for us, and he is always immediately powerful to destroy all of his and our enemies. And the question in the scripture.

How long there's answered by until the number of our brothers as completed? He's patiently gathering in his elect and the upholds, all things by the word of his power. But in the last place, The necessity of obeying, the prescriptions of God, If a prophet says, by the word of Yahweh strike me, you had better striking that we don't have profits like that today.

We don't have these special 11th Revelation, but you see how insistent God is upon obedience to every detail of every one of his commands. And of course the big example of that is a have himself who pulls a soul. Remember Saul and the Amalekites and King. Agag, he spares king, egg egg.

Well, perhaps that's even the incident that the Arabian advisors are remembering. When they say, it's been said of the Israelite gains there. Merciful. Can't you got to watch out for their profits? You know, Samuel hacktay get to pieces Elijah. Heck the prophets a bill, the pieces. The profits ain't so nice, but they're kings.

They can be merciful, they can be bought. And of course, I have could be bought. You liked the whole marketplace in Damascus idea and he didn't care that God had been blasphemed and he didn't care. That God had said, all this multitude shall be destroyed verse 28. They have probably thought.

Oh, the Lord is prospering His people. He's given us back everything that we lost and the extended our economic reach, even into the heart of the Arabian. Capital all blessed. Be the name. Remember Saul as well. When Samuel confronted him spoke very devout sounding words and and Samuel's answered, that was rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

God wants obedience? Not your sacrifices and it's interesting because that's the same word that's translated sullen here. Actually don't remember, it's the same exact Hebrew word, but the word that's translated. Solid means rebellious Ahab. Went back to his palace rebellious. He wasn't repentant. God wants our obedience. The honor of his name was much more important to the economic fortunes of the northern kingdom.

And so you see the necessity of obeying and strict detail with great completeness, all of God's prescriptions. So see how patient he is with us that he keeps giving us opportunity to turn to him and to have our lives governed by his word. You see his purposes to make himself known, you see his power?

And you see the necessity of stricter obedience to his prescriptions. Let's pray Our Father in heaven. We thank you for giving us to worship you to have your word to have your prescriptions for your patients with us. That day by day as you bear and forebear even with our remaining sin, you keep hearing our prayers and bringing this near and Christ setting your word before a stirring, our hearts up by your spirit.

Truly. Oh God, you are patient and persistent with us and your work of grace and we bless your name for it. We praise you O. God for your purpose and displaying yourself. We're so easily distracted by other things and too easily impressed by earthly power or other power in the creation when you owe God are almighty.

And so, we thank you for setting yourself before us. We bless your name for your great power in which you rule and overrule all things that even the devil himself cannot do anything unto us that you do not already intend for good. And that the moment the usefulness of any enemy or any trouble is over.

You are able to wipe it out completely and immediately. And so we ask the Lord that you would give us your spirit to soften our hearts to give us tender consciences that we would be immediately and completely obedient to you in all things. Thank you for your word, please.

Apply it to our hearts and in our lives. By your spirit and glorify yourself. We ask in Jesus name, Amen.