

Ben-Hadad

1 Kings 20

by Don Falkos

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Ben-Hadad king of Aram attacked Israel with far superior forces. Ben-Hadad demanded of Ahab, "Give me your silver and gold, and the best of your wives and children." Ahab agreed. But when Ben-Hadad said he would send men to "search your homes and take away everything of value," Ahab refused. Ben-Hadad then threatened annihilation. Ahab replied, "One preparing for battle shouldn't boast like one who is already victorious."

A prophet came to Ahab with a message from the Lord, "I will give you victory today."

Ahab's army attacked, surprising their foe and inflicting heavy losses. Ben-Hadad escaped. His advisors said, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That's why they defeated us. But if we fight them on the plains, we will be the stronger."

The following spring Ben-Hadad was back. The Lord again promised Ahab victory, "and you will know that I am the Lord." The battle lasted a single day. The vast Aramean army was wiped out by Israel's comparatively meager forces. Ben-Hadad pleaded for mercy. Then he and Ahab worked out a treaty that was mutually beneficial.

A prophet disguised himself and waited by the road. When Ahab passed by, the prophet called out, "In the thick of battle I was given a captive to guard and was told, 'If he escapes, you will die in his place.' I got distracted, and the man disappeared."

The king said, "Then you will die in his place."

Ahab recognized the prophet when he removed his disguise and said, "You have set free a man the Lord determined must die. So now you will die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people."