

## ***“And who will start the battle?”***

1 Kings 20: 1-22

*“<sup>1</sup>Now Ben-Hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it. <sup>2</sup> He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, “This is what Ben-Hadad says: <sup>3</sup> ‘Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine.’” <sup>4</sup> The king of Israel answered, “Just as you say, my lord the king. I and all I have are yours.” <sup>5</sup> The messengers came again and said, “This is what Ben-Hadad says: ‘I sent to demand your silver and gold, your wives and your children. <sup>6</sup> But about this time tomorrow I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything you value and carry it away.’”*

*<sup>7</sup> The king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said to them, “See how this man is looking for trouble! When he sent for my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, I did not refuse him.” <sup>8</sup> The elders and the people all answered, “Don’t listen to him or agree to his demands.” <sup>9</sup> So he replied to Ben-Hadad’s messengers, “Tell my lord the king, ‘Your servant will do all you demanded the first time, but this demand I cannot meet.’” They left and took the answer back to Ben-Hadad. <sup>10</sup> Then Ben-Hadad sent another message to Ahab: “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if enough dust remains in Samaria to give each of my men a handful.”*

*<sup>11</sup> The king of Israel answered, “Tell him: ‘One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off.’” <sup>12</sup> Ben-Hadad heard this message while he and the kings were drinking in their tents, and he ordered his men: “Prepare to attack.” So, they prepared to attack the city.*

*<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile a prophet came to Ahab king of Israel and announced, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the Lord.’” <sup>14</sup> “But who will do this?” asked Ahab. The prophet replied, “This is what the Lord says: ‘The junior officers under the provincial commanders will do it.’” “And who will start the battle?” he asked. The prophet answered, “You will.”*

*<sup>15</sup> So Ahab summoned the 232 junior officers under the provincial commanders. Then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all. <sup>16</sup> They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. <sup>17</sup> The junior officers under the provincial commanders went out first.*

*Now Ben-Hadad had dispatched scouts, who reported, “Men are advancing from Samaria.”*

*<sup>18</sup> He said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive.”*

*<sup>19</sup> The junior officers under the provincial commanders marched out of the city with the army behind them <sup>20</sup> and each one struck down his opponent. At that, the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit. But Ben-Hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. <sup>21</sup> The king of Israel advanced and overpowered the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans. <sup>22</sup> Afterward, the prophet came to the king of Israel and said, “Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again.”*

Getting started, no matter the task, is one of the most difficult things to accomplish in any project or program.

***Where do we start?***

***With what do we start?***

***What is the cost of what we are about to do?***

***Where will the resources come from?***

As this year begins, getting ready and then doing what is needs to be done, can take some effort. There are a lot of questions, many of which, go unanswered and that causes us to move very slowly, and worry a lot.

**Illustration:**

*For example - Looking at my garage...*

*It was filled with all kinds of other men's treasures. It needed to be cleaned up and organized. Where do I start? That's a great question. Why do we as humans hesitate so much to do the very things we know, should be done? In part, I believe it is because the task may appear to be overwhelming. Daunting. A lot larger than we hoped for.*

In God's ministry, we find ourselves looking at things in a similar way. The task of reaching a lost world, is an **"overwhelming,"** if not **"daunting,"** task. Especially right now, when everything is so blatant and out of control in our world. There is so much to do, so many people to reach, so many obstacles to overcome, where do we start? Thus, we find ourselves pondering and wondering, **"Where do we begin?"** Sometimes finding the answers to these questions can cause us to slow down or even stop.

The chapter we just read in I Kings, deals with the battle between Ben-Hadad the King of Syria, along with his allied kings, and, Ahab King of Israel. It appears that Ahab was overwhelmed by the opposing numbers, yet we know, in the end Ahab is victorious.

Amidst this, Jezebel's rage has begun to decline, and the prophets are not running for their lives, as much. There was a certain air of peace which Elijah now senses. So, Elijah begins building new houses of worship, schools, and colleges for prophets to learn. Realizing that there are many more who are seeking for and following God. Israel was enjoying a time of prosperity, at least, for a while. Many more temples were being built, allowing for more of a religious influence to come about. It was a chance to build the kingdom of God in peace. However, It a short time, Ben-Hadad, King of Syria, was going to attack once again, they all knew it. Little did Ben-Hadad know that he would lose to Ahab, as Elijah had foreseen. Finally, when it was clear that Israel and King Ahab had dominance over Syria and king Ben-Hadad, a peace treaty was signed, and peace once again comes to Israel.

***Part of what brought about PEACE, was Israel's dominance in the art of winning wars, with the Lord's leading.*** During all of this, the Lord gave instruction to His people through His prophet. ***Doesn't the history of Israel seem just like the ups and downs we experience in our world today.***

Like the ups and downs we see within the church. As the church is being molded, challenged, and encouraged to stand for the Lord. Standing by His morals, values and truth, while the rest of the world around us is walking away from Him?

Let's take a closer look at a portion of this story!

### ***First - Demands for all we have!***

*"Your silver and your gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine."* (v.3)

Ahab stood before Ben-Hadad, as Ben-Hadad demanded Israel's wealth and possessions. Demanding things the world believes will bring value and purpose to life. ***"Your silver and your gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine."*** (v.3) If you look at King Ahab, I believe he was stunned by what he heard. He didn't know what to do, he was so overwhelmed by what King Ben-Hadad said, I would bet he stood there wondering, ***"Lord, what do I do?"*** It reminds me of our world today, which is trying to steal the very best we have in our lives.

**Jesus reminds us in John 10:10,**

***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*** We should not be surprised by what happens in this world, for it is dominated by ***"the thief."*** What does the Thief do? He comes to ***"to steal, kill and destroy,"*** according to Jesus.

When we allow our lives to become entangled with this world, to the point of not knowing how, or where, to separate them, a feeling of loss, death and/or destruction will come upon us. The world demands much more, than it will ever give us. Not only demands, it takes, much more, than it will ever return to us. Yet, so many people hold on tighter to this world, then they do the Lord. Jesus also reminds us,

***"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."*** Matthew 6: 19-20

As this New Year begins, one of my prayers is that the Lord helps us focus on the things of God, things of Heaven, those things which eternal value, bringing everlasting life to us. Father, don't let the demands of this world, overcome us, destroy us, or bring about spiritual death in our lives. We are called to store our treasure in heaven. A treasure which lasts for an eternity.

### **Illustration:**

*There is a gentleman who went through a massive emotional breakdown. After his recovery, he went for a walk with a friend. "Luis," he said, "don't ever allow anyone to make you bitter." He then spoke about his breakdown which proved very embarrassing. "My problems began when I got so worked up about the contractor who didn't build my basement and driveway right. I hated what he'd done to my home. And since he lived next door, I saw him almost daily. Each time I saw him, my anger and bitterness grew more and more intense until I*

***finally cracked.*** "The world had a hold of his life far too much. It took his peace and joy away and tried to destroy him completely.

No wonder God's Word is so emphatic when He tells us: "***Get rid of all bitterness***" (Ephesians 4:31). Why? Because if a "***bitter root grows up***" within us, it will "***cause trouble and defile many***" (Hebrews 12:15). The world demands and takes. God gives and offers us peace and joy, if we will receive it, embrace it and hold on to it. ***It's our choice!***

## ***Second - Don't listen or agree***

***"The elders and the people all answered and said, 'don't listen to him or agree to his demands.'"*** (v.8) As we begin another year of servanthood unto our Lord, we need to stop, and take note of who, and what, we are listening to?

I would dare to say, that some of us have been listening to secular, worldly advice - while we say we are walking after God. ***That simply doesn't work.*** It is easy to get caught up in following the crowd, physically, emotionally and mentality. After all, if so many other live this way, it must be o.k., right? It must be the right way? No, it is not...

King Ahab was overwhelmed by the demands of Ben Hadad, who was about to attack. In fear, and I am almost certain, in subjection to the king, he was ready to give him whatever he asked for. After all, isn't that easier? Let's just give in, to the demands of our wayward child, our worldly boss, the demanding neighbor, or friend, then we will have peace. ***Right?*** Or will we?

Perhaps we need to take the advice of the elders of Israel: "***don't listen to him, or, agree to his demands!***" However, making a stand, when we feel that we do not have a leg to stand on, is not easy. That is why knowing, accepting and following Jesus, completely, is so necessary. It's so much more than knowing about who He is. It is about accepting Him as Lord and submitting to His leading, completely.

I am convinced that the main reason so many people struggle in resisting the world, is that they don't have the kind of relationship with Christ we truly need. We can't stand firm without a solid foundation. Jesus is that foundation. Jesus taught,

***"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."*** Matthew 12: 43-45  
A solid foundation with the right furniture in the house...

When a person comes to Christ, his house is "***swept clean and put in order,***" at that moment our house is "***unoccupied.***" Why, because we may not have committed completely to following the Lord. When it comes to having bible knowledge, that is one thing. Making our stand for the Lord, that is another. I have heard some say to themselves that it is too hard, too much work. ***The issues:*** The Lord has done His work, our house is clean, ready and waiting, yet, we have not filled it with the things of God. The house is empty and clean waiting to be filled.

Unfortunately, evil sees that our house is empty as well. Evil will take the empty house back as quickly as it can, while the Lord waits for us to accept His gift of Grace and commit.

We are called to step out, in faith, toward the Lord and His teaching. To grasp it, hold it tightly, to live by it. If we do not, we are susceptible to anyone, anything, or everything out there, filling the void within us. Without acceptance and surrender to Jesus, we do not have the **Firm Foundation** we need. Stand on the foundation, Jesus Christ!

In King Ahab's situation, the prophet comes along side and spoke the Word of God. The prophet spoke of victory for Ahab, if he will do as the Lord commands. **Don't listen to the enemy.** The Lord said, **"Follow Me, and when you do, you will know I am the Lord."**

### **Third - You will**

The King of Israel asks the Prophet a simple question, once he was told that the Lord has already given Israel victory: **"Who will start this battle?"** I find this interesting. The Lord's reply to King Ahab, **"You will!"** I can hear Ahab saying, **"Oh, Lord, ahhh, I really don't want to start anything. I am not that kind of person."**

Children of the Lord, **There is a new battle front developing on the horizon.** Strawn all alone it, are men, women, youth, children, families, single people, from all different backgrounds and places in life. There are older people, younger people, middle aged people, who are seeking for the exact same things we are seeking, peace and strength. Each of them waiting for the next person to take the first step. Ahab was reluctant to move. Why? He wanted to know who it was God was calling to lead them? Who will start the battle, Lord? The Lord, said to Ahab, **"You will." (look at someone and point to them- say "You will.")**

In my mind, I can see the prophet looking straight into Ahab's eyes saying, **"You." "You will lead these people to victory."** You will be the one God wants to stand in front, and start the task. You are His child, for this moment in life, for this moment in time. YOU could that be one he is talking to? What are we waiting for?

That battle for souls is raging all around us. We dare not just stand here wondering **"Who will start it?" "Who will be the first to be sacrificed?"** One person looking at the next, saying to him or her, **"I don't mind being a part of the army, I just don't want to lead!"** Can you imagine winning any battle, in any war, without that one person, or persons, who stood up and said, **"Follow me," "Charge," "All for one, and one for all!"**

There wouldn't have been a victory on either side, if no one stood up to lead. Like it nor, want it or not, God simply told Ahab, **"You are my choice to lead these people!"** So, what was King Ahab's response? **"So, Ahab summoned the young officers of the provincial commanders, 232 men, then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all."** (v.15) They went to fight the battle, as the Lord directed them to fight.

As this new year begins to unfold, we have the same situations today. Maybe even worse in many ways. People waiting, looking to see if someone else is going to do something. Wondering, who will lead us? Who will start the battle? I believe the Lord is looking at us saying, **"You."** **"You will" lead my people to victory.** In our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, in our work places, wherever we live and go, **YOU will be my leader!**

People – He knows, and so do we, that the battle we are about to embark upon is overwhelming. Yet, God is looking for men, women, youth, and children to start the battle right where we live and walk. This battle is not just to sweep clean the house, it is also to fill it, with the right things, once it is cleaned. To take some one by the hand, love them, encourage them, support them, believe in them, and be there for them, walk with them, as we show them the way. **"Disciple Them." Breathe into their lives what we have found in Christ!**

So, what do we learn from this story of Israel's victory over her enemies?

**1)No victory is possible unless the officers, commanders and soldier are willing to following the King...** Our king is Jesus Christ. Are we really willing to follow?

**2)Someone has to start the battle, be the first to step up.** Who will start the battle this year? God is looking into our hearts, He is calling us and saying, **"You will!"** Are we ready to follow Him? He has already given us victory, if we are obedient to follow Him as He leads.

I came across something I thought was powerful: a poem...

***"The road to success is not straight.***

***There is a curve called failure.***

***A loop called confusion.***

***Speed bumps called friends.***

***Red lights called enemies.***

***Caution lights called family.***

***You will have flats, called jobs, but***

***If you have a spare, called determination.***

***An engine called, perseverance.***

***Insurance called, faith.***

***A driver called Jesus.***

***You will make it to a place called success! Victory!***

**•The Demand is for all we have**

**•Don't listen or agree with the world**

**•Who will start it, "We will!"**

***There's a whole new world waiting for God's people. Let's get going!***