Message for uploading

                                             You will know that I am the Lord

1 Kings 20:1-43

Key Verse 20:13,28

“**13**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.’”

“**28** The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Because the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the Lord.’”

I heard the testimony of one man. He was a promising sales man in his company. He was never exposed to gambling. But one day after successfully securing a big contract he happened to gamble with a little money. Then he got a lot of money. After that, little by little he was hooked up to gambling, and became addicted to it. He began to lie so many times to his company, his wife, and people around him to get money for gambling. Eventually his wife left him, and he lost his job and he became homeless. By miracle he quit a gambling. He began to restore his life. He got a job and began to work and even saved some money. It took about 10 years to become normal. After 10 years of sober life, one day he found the time of old gambling was gone, and then on-line gambling appeared. When he gambled he had to go to physical places, but not anymore. He just did not know. Then he began to start on-line gamble again. He knew what the gamble was. He had perfect knowledge about the gamble. He personally experienced the evil nature of the gamble so many times. But his personal knowledge and experience about the gamble did not change him. Why? Why didn’t his knowledge and experience change his behavior? What then is the meaning of knowing the evilness of gambling truly?

The same thing happened to Ahab in today’s passage. In today’s passage, the Lord performed two great miracles which Ahab did not deserve. Then the Lord said through such miraculous victories Ahab would know he is the Lord. Indeed, Ahab experienced the victories personally. After experiencing the miracles, did Ahab know the God of Israel is the Lord? The answer is “no”. Why not? Did God make a mistake? Why didn’t Ahab know he is the Lord when the Lord said he would know it? Why didn’t Ahab change his behavior even after he even personally experienced miracles from the Lord? What then is the meaning of knowing the Lord truly?

This is what we want to think about today.

My message has three parts. Part I. I will give it into your hand today (v.1-21) Part II. I will deliver this vast army into your hands (v.22-34) Part III. You have set free a man I had determined should die (v.35-43)

Part I. I will give it into your hand today (v.1-21)

**Now Ben-Hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army.**

When Ahab kept sinning, he had trouble. Ben-Hadad king of Aram, invaded his country.

**Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it.**

Samaria was the capital city of the kingdom of Ahab and Jezebel. There in the city of Samaria, they worshipped Baals the most. Ben-Hadad came up with 32 kings with their horses and chariots and besieged Samaria and attacked it. The description shows that most of the other parts of the Ahab’s kingdom was occupied because Ben-Hadad could besiege Samaria and attack it. Usually in a way, attacking the capital city is the most critical battle and the war is drawing near. I am sure Ahab and Jezebel pleaded for help from Baals, but there was complete silence from Baals.

Although Ahab ignored the Lord who demonstrated he is the Lord and Baal was just nothing compared to him on Mount Carmel, he could not ignore the invasion of Ben-Hadad when he came up and besieged his city and attacked it.

**2 He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, “This is what Ben-Hadad says: 3 ‘Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine.’”**

**4 The king of Israel answered, “Just as you say, my lord the king. I and all I have are yours.”**

Ahab knew he was not a match to Ben-Hadad at all. So he completely surrendered himself to him.

**5 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. 6 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.’”**

We don’t know why Ben-Hadad sent his messengers again and demanded more. But his demand was pretty harsh. There was a difference between the first demand and the second demand. In the first demand, Ahab would be honored as the one who would collect his silver and gold and the best of his wives and his children and send them. In addition, the plunder of the houses of his officials was not included. But in the second demand it would include all the houses of Ahab’s officials. And instead of Ahab, all the Ben-Hadad’s officials would search the palace and their houses and seize everything valuable and carry it away. Usually this kind of thing happens after the end of the war, and it means a complete surrender.

**7 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.”**

Ahab consulted with the elders of the land because their houses would be plundered too.

**8 The elders and the people all answered, “Don’t listen to him or agree to his demands.”**

They advised him this way because they did not want their houses to be plundered by Ben-Hadad’s soldiers.

**9 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.**

Even in expressing defiance still Ahab kept himself low because he knew he was an underdog.

**10 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.”**

**11 The king of Israel answered, “Tell him: ‘One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off.’”**

This was the maximum Ahab would say against his formidable enemy.

**12 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.**

Ben-Hadad was so confident in the victory that he was drinking with 32 kings in their tents.

**13 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.’”**

Here the word “meanwhile” has a meaning of “suddenly” or “out of blue”.

Suddenly the Lord sent a prophet although Ahab did not ask the Lord’s help. It was one-sided mercy from the Lord. Furthermore, he came with such good news! “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.” To Ahab no news was better than the news!

The Lord would perform such a miracle of defeating the vast army, and he would do it in order to prove to Ahab that he is the Lord. The God of Israel instead of Baals or other gods is the Lord. The Lord means the king of all the kings on earth. The Lord means who has all authority in heaven and on earth.

The Lord already demonstrated to Ahab he is the Lord through prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel. But Ahab did not accept it. He tried to kill Elijah with Jezebel. But the Lord did not abandon him, but he kept helping Ahab.

Why did the Lord help Ahab, the most wicked king of all evil kings of Israel? It is the demonstration of the Lord’s mercy. If the Lord is willing to show his mercy even to the evilest king how much more will he be willing to show his love for all other people who are better than Ahab?

Ahab did not reject the Lord’s help this time because he was in need. He had great trouble, and there was no other option. Then he asked the two specific questions. I believe he asked the questions to verify the Lord’s help. Ahab could not think who would do such a great job of delivering his country from the mighty army of Ben-Hadad.

**14 “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.”**

Usually the underdog does not start the battle. But the Lord wanted him to start the battle.

**15 So Ahab summoned the 232 junior officers under the provincial commanders. Then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all.**

So Ahab summoned the junior officers under the provincial commanders, and it turned out to be 232. When he assembled the rest of the Israel armies, it was only 7,000 in all. The number 7,000 reminds us of the number of people who did not kneel before Baal.

**16 They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk.**

Ben-Hadad and 32 kings were so confident of the victory that they were getting drunk even at noon.

**17 The junior officers under the provincial commanders went out first.**

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

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

Ben-Hadad wanted to take Ahab’s soldiers alive whether they came out for peace or war.

**19 The junior officers under the provincial commanders marched out of the city with the army behind them 20 and each one struck down his opponent.**

The junior officers just did what they could do. Each of the 232 junior officers struck down their opponents, one for each. That was all. Ben-Hadad’s command to take them alive might have given advantage to the junior officers.

**At that, the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit.**

This shows the Lord had performed a miracle. There was no reason for Aramean to flee when only 232 soldiers died, but they did.

**But Ben-Hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. 21 The king of Israel advanced and overpowered the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans.**

Even though Ahab won the victory, Ben-Hadad escaped. So the battle was not finished.

Part II. I will deliver this vast army into your hands (v.22-34)

**22 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.”**

The threat of Aram did not go away. The Lord knew it although Ahab might not know it. So the Lord sent the same prophet again because he gained the trust of Ahab.

He advised him, “Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again.”

Meanwhile Ben-Had also received the advice from his own officials.

**23 Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, “Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they. 24 Do this: Remove all the kings from their commands and replace them with other officers. 25 You must also raise an army like the one you lost—horse for horse and chariot for chariot—so we can fight Israel on the plains. Then surely we will be stronger than they.”**

His advisers believed that they were defeated because the God of Israel was the God of hills rather than the God of plains. That was the reason why they were defeated, and the Israelites were so strong. What they believed was half true. Indeed, the Israelites were strong due to the Lord’s power. But they were wrong to say that the God of Israel was the Lord of hills but not of plains. Their understanding of the Lord was based on their own knowledge about all the gods of other nations and regions. In those days, people believed all nations, rivers, trees, cities, rocks, forests, sun, moon, stars, and all other things had their own gods. Their gods were territorial gods. They were completely ignorant of the Lord.

If we apply what they believed in our lives, whatever limits the Lord’s power belongs to this false idea about the Lord.

Ben-Hadad was completely persuaded by their advice.

So **He agreed with them and acted accordingly.**

**26 The next spring Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.**

See the map. Aphek was in plains.

**27 When the Israelites were also mustered and given provisions, they marched out to meet them. The Israelites camped opposite them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside.**

The description of both armies was of two small flocks of goats and armies covering the countryside. It was because the number of soldiers was so much different. If we assume the same number of soldiers were gathered in Aramean armies because his advisers asked to raise up a horse for horse and chariot for a chariot, the number of their soldiers were at least 127,000 because as we see later, 100,000 died in one day and 27,000 died when the wall of Aphek collapsed. If we assume the number of Israel soldiers were the same at the first battle, it would be 7,232. The ratio is about 17.5.

That is why the description of the two armies is two small flocks of goats versus the Arameans armies covering the country.

At this critical moment, the same man of God appeared and came up and told Ahab,

**28 The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Because the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the Lord.’”**

The Lord would perform another miracle and it was to teach Ahab and his soldiers that he is the Lord.

What did the Lord want Ahab to know about him? It was that he had the almighty power. The Lord wanted Ahab to know he is the true Lord, the true king of all the kings on earth, the Lord almighty over all the heavens and the earth.

The almighty power of the Lord is the first revelation about God in the bible. Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God is the Creator God, the Lord almighty.

The Lord Jesus also proclaimed “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

**29 For seven days they camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day the battle was joined.**

I am sure for seven days both armies watched and thought about the best strategies for their victories.

**The Israelites inflicted a hundred thousand casualties on the Aramean foot soldiers in one day. 30 The rest of them escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room.**

This shows the miracle from the Lord. If we assume the same number of Israel armies, they are about 7,232. But 7,232 soldiers killed 100,000 in one day. It means one soldier of Ahab killed about 14 soldiers on Ben-Hadad armies on average. Furthermore, the Lord added 27,000 more casualties through the collapsing of the wall of the city of Aphek. So Ben-Hadad lost 127,000 soldiers. And he had to hide in an inner room of a house.

**31 His officials said to him, “Look, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful. Let us go to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life.”**

In those days Gentile kings were so cruel in battles. But kings of Israel could have gained the rumor of being merciful because they were influenced by the merciful Lord. Ben-Hadad officials thought about the best way to save their master, and this is the idea they came up with.

Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their ropes meant complete surrender, saying that their lives depended on the decision of Ahab.

**32 Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they went to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-Hadad says: ‘Please let me live.’”**

**The king answered, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.”**

**33 The men took this as a good sign and were quick to pick up his word. “Yes, your brother Ben-Hadad!” they said.**

**“Go and get him,” the king said. When Ben-Hadad came out, Ahab had him come up into his chariot.**

**34 “I will return the cities my father took from your father,” Ben-Hadad offered. “You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.”**

**Ahab said, “On the basis of a treaty I will set you free.” So he made a treaty with him, and let him go.**

Ahab acted as if he achieved victory. The victory came from the Lord. But he acted as if it was his. He just freed Ben-Hadad without asking the Lord through the prophet.

According to the bible, when the victory comes from the Lord, every plunder belongs to the Lord because they were devoted to the Lord as sacrifice. But Ahab did not think about it at all. He followed his own desires, and set free Ben-Hadad.

Part III. You have set free a man I had determined should die (v.35-43)

**35 By the word of the Lord one of the company of the prophets said to his companion, “Strike me with your weapon,” but he refused.**

Today’s passage shows the active work of the prophets differently from what Elijah believed. There was a company of prophets although Elijah thought he was the only prophet of the Lord left.

**36 So the prophet said, “Because you have not obeyed the Lord, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you.” And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him.**

This seems to be unreasonable and harsh. But among those prophets these things were practiced, and I am sure that his companion knew the request came from the Lord.

**37 The prophet found another man and said, “Strike me, please.” So the man struck him and wounded him. 38 Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. 39 As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, “Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, ‘Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1ki+20&version=NIV#fen-NIV-9448b)**] of silver.’ 40 While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared.”**

**“That is your sentence,” the king of Israel said. “You have pronounced it yourself.”**

**41 Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.**

His disguise shows that Ahab was familiar with those prophets of the Lord. Most of all, Ahab was trying not to meet those prophets. Ahab’s action showed he was not changed at all after experiencing two miracles from the Lord. He did not know the Lord.

**42 He said to the king, “This is what the Lord says: ‘You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.’” 43 Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria.**

Ahab never thought about the Lord’s will although the victory came from the Lord. He freely set free Ben-Hadad against God’s will. Then the judgment came upon Ahab. The prophet announced. “Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.” It means Ahab will die when Ben-Hadad’s had to die. And when Ben-Hadad’s people should die, Ahab's people would die.

Even if Ahab did not know that the Lord had determined to kill Ben-Hadad, he would respond differently if he knew the Lord. He would repent and ask the prophet how he should ask the Lord’s mercy. But he became sullen and angry. His anger shows he did not know the Lord.

Now let us think about the reason why Ahab failed to know the Lord. Why did he fail to know the Lord although he experienced undeserved miracles even twice in such critical times of his life?

He failed because he did not fight. He failed because he did not know that the Lord is the Lord of battles, and the Lord is the Lord of fighting. To know the true meaning of the evilness of gambling means to keep resisting against gambling desires. To know the true meaning of the Lord means to keep one’s faith in the Lord’s power and love by fighting against all other powers and desires.

Ephesians 6 says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. They have the power of rulers like kings.

But the Lord is the Lord of battles and fighting. He fights against all evil rulers, authorities, the power of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

If we do not fight against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms we will end up listening to what our sinful desires say instead of what the Lord says.

Last Tuesday evening we had the overseers meeting. Our meeting is from 8pm to 10pm. The number of members are 9, 7 overseers and myself and Maria. Usually, around 8pm there were about 3 or 4 members who appeared in the zoom and soon most of them joined. But that evening mysteriously only 3 people appeared until 8:20pm or later if I am correct. It was the first time that other members were so late. When most people did not appear that night, then someone said to me in my heart, “Hey, tonight they will not show up to the end. Maybe tonight’s meeting is not important to them. So, you can just finish the meeting in one hour quickly instead of two hours.” That voice spoke to me so naturally and I was contemplating the idea for a moment. Then other voice said, “No, you should not do that. Even if only 3 remains to the end you need to keep up your faith and believe the Lord will help you.” Thankfully I chose to listen to what the Lord said instead of my desires said. So, I kept praying and rejecting what my naturally arising voice said. To make the long story short, all members appeared that night and they were so willing to work one hour more after 10pm. Next morning, I realized what happened at the beginning of the overseers' meeting in my heart. There was a spiritual battle and my enemy wanted to deceive me and make me despair and hinder the work of God.

What does it mean to know the Lord? To know the Lord means to know the power of the Lord and the love of the Lord. But most of all, to know the Lord means to know the Lord is the Lord of fighting against the powers of this dark world and the powers of our sinful desires.

Hebrews 12:2 reveals our Lord is the Lord of fighting spiritual battles.

**Hebrews 12:2**

**2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

What did the Lord Jesus do on the cross? Did he follow what his own desires said or what his Father said? When he endured the cross for the joy set before him did it come naturally to him or through fierce spiritual battles? Through fierce spiritual battles. Our Lord is the Lord of battles and fighting.

Therefore, without spiritual fighting our knowledge and experience about the Lord’s power and love will not change us. Unless we keep fighting we will go back to our old slave lives.

Apostle Paul said in 2 **Timothy 4:7  “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**”

In this verse Apostle Paul described his entire life in three sentences. Fighting, finishing, and keeping. FFK. The first thing is “fighting”. Without fighting he would not be able to finish his race and without fighting he would not be able to keep the faith.

The Lord said to his followers, “**“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take their cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)**

Do you think denying ourselves and taking our crosses comes so naturally? Or do you think denying ourselves and taking our cross comes through engaging in spiritual battles? Even the Lord himself fought fiercely to deny himself and take up his cross and follow his Father. Now he asks his people, you and me, to do the same.

Today’s passage teaches us how we can fight effectively in two ways. They are to attack first and keep fighting.

First, attack first. Look at verse 14.

**14 “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.”**

In our spiritual battle we need to attack our enemies first instead of waiting until they attack us. We should not wait until they gather their enough forces and overpower us. It means we should engage in many small battles before they attack us .

One day I asked Mother Barry, “How did you make such a big decision not to marry?” She thought about it a little and told me, “I did not make any big decision. But I have made many small decisions.”

We need to attack first winning victories in many small decisions.

Secondly, another effective way of fighting involves being ready to keep fighting. Look at verse 22.

**22 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.**

It is a sheer fantasy if we think that our enemies will not attack us anymore. There is no such thing. So the prophet advised Ahab, “Strengthen your position and see what must be done.” It means we should be ready to keep fighting as Apostle Paul said, “I have kept the faith.”

One person was in a library in a college. Suddenly a strong desire to watch an adulterous video came into his mind. He wanted to overcome his lustful desires. So he believed Jesus died for his sins. But the desire was so strong that he had to keep believing in his heart with all his strength. He did not know how long it passed. Suddenly he felt a great pain in his heart and the desire disappeared completely. At that time, he personally experienced what happened to Jesus on the cross who died for his sin.

But that does not mean the lustful desires disappeared completely. He had to keep fighting several decades more. Then finally when the Lord times came, the Lord completely rooted out the lustful desire from his heart permanently. After that he was not even tempted by the lust anymore and he was ready to fight against it even if a little hint of it arose in his heart.

In order to win our spiritual battles, we need to keep fighting until the Lord brings victory for us. We need to strengthen our positions and see what must be done.

In sum, today we thought about the reason why Ahab did not know the Lord although the Lord said he will know the Lord. Ahab did not know the power of the Lord and the mercy of the Lord because he did not fight spiritually. He did not know the Lord is the Lord of fighting. When he did not fight spiritually his knowledge of the Lord’s power and mercy did not change him. Jesus our Lord is the Lord of the battles and fighting. Only through engaging ourselves through battles and fighting can we know the power and the love of our Lord and such knowledge will change us.

One word: You will know that I am the Lord.