

General Church Education



# Ahab and the Syrians

1 Kings 20:1-30

## Lesson 12

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 6: The Lord Is the Prophet and  
Preserver

For ages 11-12 years

## Ahab and the Syrians

1 Kings 20:1-30

### Teacher Background

Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, sent Ahab, the king of Israel, a message asking for his gold and silver, wives and children, to which Ahab agreed. But when Ben-Hadad asked to take anything that pleased him, Ahab refused. So, Ben-Hadad waged war, believing he would crush Israel. Israel won a battle in the hills, but Syria attacked again in the spring, this time in the plains. As Ben-Hadad hid, Israel defeated the Syrian army again. Then against the Lord's command, Ahab spared Ben-Hadad's life and made a treaty with him so he could recover cities which had been lost. But a prophet met him and told him he would lose his life for doing so.

While the story may be overwhelming, it is important to see that evil brings violence. And while it may appear as if the Lord was trying to force Ahab to do what He wanted, even his success against the Syrians did not make Ahab obey. Similarly, as the Lord showed, it is important for adults to carry out consequences when someone disobeys so they can learn and experience the joy in behavior that leads to living according to the commandments.

### Focus Points

- Ben-Hadad, king of Syria challenged Ahab; Ahab refused his unreasonable demands.
- Israel fought Syria and won the battle in the hills and the battle in the plains.
- Ahab let Ben-Hadad go free; the Lord warned him that he would die for doing so.

### Readings from the Writings

“[T]he Israelites and Jews were driven by punishments to observe the statutes and precepts in outward form; and from this they believed that Jehovah was angry and punished, when yet it was themselves who by idolatries brought such things upon them, and separated themselves from heaven; whence came punishments; as is also said in Isaiah: ‘It is your iniquities that have separated between you and your God; and your sins do hide His faces from you’ (Isaiah 59:2).” *Arcana Coelestia* 6997.3

“The chief reason why an evil person from internals betakes himself to, or passes into externals, is fear. When ... he sees the punishments and torments of his companions, fear closes his internals, and when these are closed, he comes into externals, and remains in them, so long as he mentally regards the punishment. Still his internal is not amended by punishments, but remains just as before, as soon therefore as the fear of punishment passes away, he returns into his own evils, which are in him interiorly, and which belong to his spirit, and consequently to his life.” *Apocalypse Explained* 1133

## Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

### Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“[Y]ou shall know that I am the Lord.” (1 Kings 20:28)

### Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Questions

Read questions about Ahab’s actions and answer each question with a sentence.

Ahab and Ben-Hadad Story Line

Complete a story line using short statements and then answer questions on the following page.

### Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Play: Ahab Defeats the Syrians

Act out the story of Ahab defeating the Syrians. The play has two scenes that illustrate Ahab’s first battle in the hills and his second battle in the plains. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-ahab-defeats-the-syrians-1-kings-20.pdf>

Know that I Am the Lord

Knowing about the Lord and thinking about Him are important for bringing Him close to us. Think about what you know about the Lord. Learn new ideas about the Lord by speaking to others or reading the Word. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-know-that-i-am-the-lord-1-kings-20.pdf>

A Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

As you learn about the kings of Israel and Judah, complete a chart. As you fill in the spaces, think about whether the king is good or evil. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-a-chart-of-the-kings-of-israel-and-judah-1-kings-2-kings.pdf>

# Ahab and the Syrians

## 1 Kings 20:1-30

### Vocabulary

**consent**—give permission for something to happen

**annihilate**—completely destroy

### Ben-Hadad Challenges Ahab

Imagine if someone sent a message saying they wanted some of your most precious possessions or would harm you. Would you be tempted to let them have them? Suppose they said they wanted to come to your house and take anything they pleased. What might you say then?

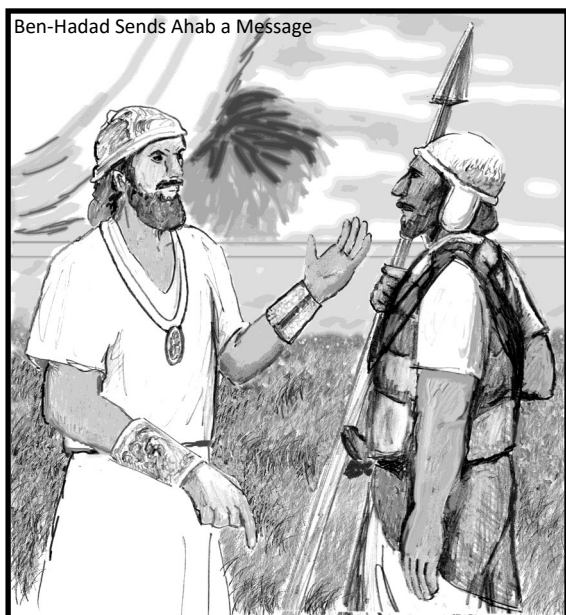
Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, sent Ahab a message saying that Ahab's gold and silver were his, but, more importantly, that Ahab's wives and children were also his. Ahab answered,

“My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.” (1 Kings 20:4)

Ahab may have agreed because Syria was powerful. But he was more worried about his life and safety than keeping his family or his possessions. However, when Ben-Hadad asked to take anything that pleased him, the elders told Ahab not to agree.

### Ahab Denies Ben-Hadad's Demands

Ahab told Ben-Hadad's messengers that the king could have the first things he asked for, but could not take whatever he pleased. Ben-Hadad was angry. He threatened Ahab, saying that there would be nothing left of Samaria when he was finished. Ahab courageously replied,



“Tell him, ‘Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.’” (1 Kings 20:11)

King Ben-Hadad was threatening to annihilate the Israelites, but Ahab said that the outcome would be unknown until the battle ended, angering Ben-Hadad. He ordered his soldiers to attack Samaria.

### Israel Wins in the Hills

At the time of Ben-Hadad's challenge, Syria was a powerful nation. Israel had been strong, but separating from Judah had weakened it. There were fewer men to fight and they were no longer in Jerusalem, an established capital. Most importantly, Israel had turned from the Lord. There had been

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no good kings in Israel since Solomon. But something occurred which gave them the chance for success.

The Lord gave Israel success in battle if the leaders looked to Him. A prophet appeared to Ahab, telling him that the Lord said He would deliver Syria into Ahab's hands so that the people would know that He was the Lord and gave instructions about how the battle was to be won.

In the meantime, Ben-Hadad and the kings helping him were getting drunk. Ben-Hadad believed his army would crush Israel. He must have felt unbeatable with the help of the other kings and their armies. But he had forgotten the Lord's power in previous battles.

Imagine the young men leading Israel's soldiers against the enormous Syrian army encamped below Samaria. Did Ahab tell them that the Lord would give a victory? Might they have felt surprise, excitement, or a sense of the Lord's presence? Did they see Ben-Hadad fleeing on his horse? What did they think when Ahab had them slaughter as many of the retreating Syrian soldiers as they could? Ahab must have been elated with their success, and then let down when the prophet told him that Ben-Hadad would attack again in the spring.

### Israel Wins in the Plains

Ben-Hadad was probably amazed and even angry about Israel's victory. His servants told him that their God must be a god of the hills, so he should prepare to fight in the plains. They also told him to make the captains—the trained warriors who knew the tactics of war—the leaders. Ben-Hadad took their advice and amassed a huge army.

As the prophet predicted, Ben-Hadad prepared to attack again in the spring. He led his army into the plains where they camped opposite the smaller army of Israel. Again, the prophet brought Ahab a message from the Lord,

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Because the Syrians have said, “The Lord is God of the hills, but 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 the Lord.’” (1 Kings 20:28)

The battle began seven days later. Israel's army killed over one hundred thousand Syrian foot soldiers, causing others to flee to the city of Aphek. There, a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand Syrian soldiers. Ben-Hadad hid until his servants advised him to go to Ahab and beg for mercy.



The Lord had told Ahab to completely defeat the Syrians. How should Ahab have answered Ben-Hadad? Remember that the Lord said He would deliver the Syrians into Ahab's hand so he would know that the Lord was the God of Israel—the God to be obeyed and worshipped.



### **Ahab Is Warned**

However, Ahab spared Ben-Hadad’s life and made a treaty with him. In return, Ben-Hadad agreed to give back the cities his father had conquered and would allow Israel to trade in the capital of Syria. This would allow Israel to regain its wealth and stature among other nations.

However, a prophet in disguise met Ahab in the road. He pretended to be a soldier who had fought for Israel and had let an enemy he was guarding get away. Ahab was upset and told the prophet that he would be punished for such an act. However, when the prophet removed his disguise Ahab recognized him and knew that he was in trouble.

The prophet gave Ahab a message. He let Ben-Hadad go free when he should have brought him to “utter destruction” (1 Kings 20:42). The prophet would not lose his life, Ahab would.

### **The Lord—God of the Hills and God of the Plains**

As the stories in the Word progress, it might seem as if people were stupid. How often must they suffer terrible consequences before they would learn that the Lord meant what He said, that He knew what each person was doing and even thinking? The Lord was and is all powerful, all-knowing and present everywhere—omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He was and is the God of the hills and God of the plains—God of the entire universe.

It would be wonderful if each of us could say that we always remember the Lord’s wishes for us, that we pay attention to His commandments and are aware of His presence. However, like the people in the Word, it takes most of us a long time to learn this, so it is good that the Lord gives us a lifetime! Through the prophet, the Lord told Ahab that he would be successful in the battles against the Syrians so that he would know that the One giving him the message was the Lord. The Lord continually gives us chances to know that He is the Lord, not for His sake, but for ours. For when we do recognize Him and choose to follow Him, we can be truly happy and content—the Lord’s wish for everyone who has ever existed and will exist on this earth and throughout His creation.

## Activity Overview

### Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“[Y]ou shall know that I am the Lord.” (1 Kings 20:28)

### Projects and Activities (answers at back of lesson)

Choose one or two.

#### Questions

Answer the questions with a sentence.

#### Ahab and Ben-Hadad Story Line

Complete a story line using short statements and then answer questions on the following page.

## Questions—Ahab and the Syrians

1 Kings 20:1-30

Elijah was told to anoint Hazael in Syria and Jehu in Israel as the future king. Meanwhile both countries had very evil kings who hated each other—Ben-Hadad in Syria and Ahab in Israel. Answer each question with a short sentence.

1. What was Ahab willing to do when Ben-Hadad invaded Israel?
2. Why did Ahab not go through with his offer?
3. What did the prophet tell Ahab about his upcoming war with Syria? What would this prove?
4. After Israel's victory what did the prophet tell Ahab?
5. How did the Syrians explain that they were defeated by the much weaker Israelites?
6. Why did the Syrians decide to fight in the plains of Israel next?
7. When the Syrians lost a second time, what did they fear?
8. What did they ask of Ahab?
9. What were the conditions of the treaty between Israel and Syria?
10. Ahab's choice to let Ben-Hadad go and make a treaty with the Syrians went against what the Lord had commanded. Write a short paragraph about what the prophet did to let Ahab know the consequences of such actions. (1 Kings 39-43)



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## Ahab and Ben-Hadad Story Line

1 Kings 20:1-30

Fill in the story line with short statements and then answer the questions below.

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| <p><b>Main Characters –</b></p> <p><b>Locations (setting) –</b></p> <p><b>Problem –</b></p> <p><b>First Event (I Kings 20:1) –</b> Ben-Hadad besieges Samaria</p> <p><b>Second Event (I Kings 20:2-4) —</b></p> <p><b>Third Event (I Kings 20:5-6) —</b></p> <p><b>Fourth Event (I Kings 20:7-9) —</b></p> <p><b>Fifth Event (I Kings 20:10-12) —</b></p> <p><b>Sixth Event (I Kings 20:13-15) —</b></p> <p><b>Seventh Event (I Kings 16-21) —</b></p> <p><b>Eighth event (I Kings 22-26) —</b></p> <p><b>Ninth event (I Kings 27-28) —</b></p> <p><b>Tenth event (I Kings 20:29-30) —</b></p> <p><b>Eleventh Event (I Kings 20:30-34) —</b></p> <p><b>Solution to problem—</b></p> <p><b>What do you think is going to happen next?</b></p> |
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1. The tables were turned—Ahab now has control over Ben-Hadad—why?
2. What did Ahab do that was not allowed in battle?
3. Make up a title for this story.

# Answers

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### Questions

1. Ahab was willing to give Ben-Hadad everything he wanted. 2. The elders objected. 3. To strengthen himself. 4. That the Syrians would attack in the plains. 5. That the God of Israel was a God of the hills. 6. Because they thought they could win in the plains. 7. They feared that Ahab would not spare their lives. 8. They asked Ahab for mercy. 9. The conditions were that Ben-Hadad would restore lands that his father had taken from Ahab's father.

### Ahab and Ben-Hadad

2nd: Ben-Hadad asked for Ahab's silver, gold, wives and children. 3rd: Ben-Hadad would take whatever he wanted. 4th: The elders refused to agree to Ben-Hadad's request. 5th: Ben-Hadad threatened Israel. 6th: A prophet appeared saying the Lord would deliver Ben-Hadad to Israel. 7th: Ahab killed the Assyrians. 8th: The prophet told Ahab to prepare for a spring attack in the plains. 9th: Israel prepared for battle. 10th: Israel won the battle. 11th: Assyria agreed to restore cities it had taken and to let Israel trade.