

Kings Series #9 - "Busy Here & There" 1 Kings 20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *At War*

1. You & I, as followers of Jesus, are locked in an intense, no-holds-barred, winner-take-all wrestling contest
2. This contest isn't at all like the staged bouts you see in the World Wrestling Federation
 - a. no Hulk Hogans or Andre the Giants
 - b. no Gorgeous Georges or
3. Not a show; no flash or spectacle
4. It is a down and dirty brawl
5. It goes on every day & night; in our homes, backyards. Garages, cars, jobs, school, and even at the mall
6. Our adversary is unseen - but very real
7. Our adversary is the devil and the demons
8. Eph 6:10-17

{10} Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

{11} Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

{12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

{13} Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

{14} Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

{15} and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

{16} above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

{17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

B. *Strategy*

1. In an Olympic wrestling contest, two opponents spend the first few seconds circling each other, sizing each other up
2. But then, when one deems the time is right, he will shoot or move on the other in an attempt to take him down
3. At different times during the match, there will be periods of relative calm, followed by a flurry of moves and counters
4. It's all part of the strategy of both wrestlers to study their opponent and find their weaknesses, then take advantage of them by attacking
5. To those watching, it may seem that there are times during the match when nothing is happening
6. But the guys on the mat know that from the moment the whistles blows till

- the bout ends, they are under constant pressure
7. It's study & attack—counter—study & attack again

C. Fierce

1. Right now, the Body of Christ, the church, seems to be experiencing a time of attack
2. The attack is widespread
 - a. our fellowship
 - b. many others
 - c. reports we are getting from all over is that people are being pummeled and tied in knots
3. Specially hard hit are families
 - a. marriages
 - b. children
4. Churches are getting hammered as well
 - a. many pastors are being assailed on several fronts
 - 1) credibility being questioned
 - 2) reputation wrongly stained by gossip
 - 3) disillusionment & burnout
 - b. our fellowship
 - 1) staff doing fine
 - 2) but we've been attacked this week in a very obvious manner
 - 3) someone stole the electrical wiring Tuesday
 - 4) left us without power for three days

D. What Do We Do?

1. So, what do we do?
2. How do we counter the devil's attack?
3. What reply do we make?
4. That is what we will see in our study today from 1 Kings 20 . . .

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it.

1. Ch. 20 tells us about 2 victories Israel had over their enemies the Syrians
2. While we will cover this chapter in much greater detail Wed.—I want to focus on a few verses this morning and note the parallel to our lives
3. We begin here . . .
4. Syria was the perpetual enemy of Israel
5. Ben Hadad, the Syrian king, saw the weakened state of Israel because of the 3 year drought and famine she had just endured, and saw it as an opportune time to strike
6. In the same manner, our adversary, the devil, will often attack us when we

- are weak—especially when we are spiritually weak
- a. if there has been a drought of prayer
 - b. or a famine of the word of God
 - c. then we become spiritually weak
 - d. and we make a prime target
7. Ben Hadad was allied with 32 kings
 - a. these were petty kings, minor rulers of cities and tribes outside Syria's borders
 - b. Ben Hadad had entered into an alliance with these kings and together they formed a confederation
 - c. then they attacked & besieged Israel
 8. In like manner as Ben Hadad, Satan has amassed an entire federation of allies who join him in assailing God's people
 - a. as Paul says in Eph. 6, we wrestle against hosts of spiritual wickedness
 - b. also in this alliance of evil are the world & the flesh
 9. As we read on through v. 21, though Ben Hadad boasted & threatened, though his army seemed so vast & powerful, God gave King Ahab and the armies of Israel victory over the Syrians and their allies
 10. Christian - never fear or despair when you are being attacked
 - a. yes, Satan is a formidable foe
 - b. yes, the army assembled against us is vast
 - c. but greater is He who is in you than all of them
 - d. Jesus has already defeated the devil and broken his power
 - e. Col 2:15 tells us that by the cross, Jesus has forever disarmed our foe
 - f. the only power he has today is the power we give him by believing his lies
 - g. joke about guy with no rifle, "bangity, bangity"
 11. Rom 8:37 "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

B. V. 22

And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you."

1. This prophet is unnamed; we know not who he was
2. While his identity is unimportant, his message is not
3. He forewarned Ahab that Ben Hadad would attack *yet again*
4. Christian—don't think that just because God had given you victory over an attack by the hosts of hell that the war is over
5. Far from it
6. Like the king of Syria, the king of sin has merely retreated to recoup and recover his losses
7. Be assured he will strike again
8. And as the prophet told Ahab, the best thing you can do is to be aware & prepared
9. The prophet told Ahab to strengthen himself against the attack
10. We can do the same
11. Knowing we will again be assailed, we can prepare by strengthening

- ourselves in the Spirit
 - a. study & prayer
 - b. fellowship & obedience
- 12. Well, once again the Syrians attacked, just as the man of God foretold
- 13. And once again, God gave Israel a tremendous victory
- 14. Ben Hadad was reduced to just a handful of troops
- 15. He fled into the city of Aphek and tried to hide

C. Vs. 31-34

{31} Then his 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 waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life."

{32} So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.' " And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother."

{33} Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, "Your brother Ben-Hadad." So he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

1. It was the end for Hadad - so his advisors quickly encouraged him to ask for peace
 - a. they told him to throw himself to the mercy of the king of Israel
 - b. and why not?
 - c. he had nothing to lose
2. They took off their battle garments and removed their emblems of rank
3. They tore sacks & put them over their heads
4. They took ropes and tied them around their necks to appear as slaves taken as plunder in war
5. Then they approached Ahab & surrendered
6. Ahab was surprised Hadad was still alive
 - a. kings usually either died in battle
 - b. or committed suicide rather than suffer the humiliation of being captured and tortured to death
7. The Syrian ruse worked and Ahab welcomed Hadad to join him in his battle chariot
8. This was a sign of acceptance and promotion

{34} So Ben-Hadad said to him, "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 did in Samaria." Then Ahab said, "I will send you away with this treaty." So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.

9. This looks like a grand and glorious resolution to a long and bitter struggle between Israel and Syria
10. It looks like there will finally be peace between these two nations
 - a. Hadad offers to return territory Syria had taken long before
 - b. he even offered to let Ahab do business in the Syrian capital of Damascus
11. They made a treaty, and Ahab sent Hadad away in peace

12. On the surface, it looks great
 - a. peace has finally come
 - b. and who can argue with peace?
 - c. even more than a mere end to hostilities, there is an offer of friendship by Hadad to Ahab
13. Is Hadad a man to be trusted? Is he sincere in his offer?
14. Not on you life!
15. Hadad never intended to make peace with Israel
 - a. he was only trying to save his neck
 - b. his whole plan was to use a season of peace and apparent friendship as a way to rebuild so he could once again attack
16. Oh how well this pictures the tactics of hell
 - a. our foe attacks & attacks again
 - b. but when he realizes that an obvious frontal attack is only serving to advance the work of God in our lives,
 - c. then he shifts to another strategy and tries to use our desire for peace to his advantage
17. He makes himself look weak & beggarly
18. He may even offer to leave us alone, if only we'll leave him alone
19. Why, he may even offer to get out of the way and let our spiritual growth go forward unhindered by his interference
20. But his whole goal is to lull us into a place of false peace and false security
21. Hadad never intended to become an ally of Israel
22. He only pretend to to save his neck
23. He did not return the cities and territory he promised
24. And when Ahab went to take them, Hadad opposed him
 - a. he gave his generals orders that they were look for Ahab
 - b. and once they found him, they were to concentrate all their fire on him till they had killed him
25. Ahab died in that battle—and Ben Hadad was responsible for his death!
26. Here is ch. 20, when God delivered Hadad into Ahab's hand, he should have carried the battle through to its conclusion and executed the Syrian king

D. Vs. 39-43

1. God sent a prophet to confront Ahab with his error in not putting Hadad to death

{39} 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 there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.'

{40} "While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Then the king of Israel said to him, "So *shall* your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."

2. This prophet knew Ahab wouldn't receive a simple rebuke
3. So he disguised himself and waited by the road till Ahab passed by
4. Then he called out to the king with an urgent cry to be heard
5. He told the story of how during the recent battle with Syria, one of the

- commanding officers ordered him to guard a prisoner
- a. but the man left his post and went off to do his own thing
 - b. when he did, the prisoner escaped
 - c. and now he either had to pay a fortune in fines or be put to death
4. The prophet appealed to Ahab to escape the punishment for deserting his post
5. But Ahab rightly told him his duty was his duty and could not be dismissed!

{41} And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

{42} Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip 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.'"

{43} So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

6. Ahab was nailed by his own judgment!
7. God had appointed Ahab to put an end to the trouble with Syria by finishing the battle
8. Hadad should have been put to death
9. Because Ahab neglected his duty, Ben Hadad would once again attack Israel and prove a source of serious trouble
10. In fact, Ahab would die in battle with Hadad

E. For Us

1. The parallel to our lives is this . . .
2. The adversary will attack & attack
3. When we counter & the enemy is overcome, we must not fight just till the hostilities cease
4. We must press on, press forward, until we slay the enemy
 - a. we must press on till he quits the field
 - b. we must not allow our longing for peace to ever lead us into thinking there will ever be peace between our faith & the devil
5. Oh, there will be times when he will sue for peace
 - a. when his attack is turned to his defeat
 - b. and he will seemingly offer peace
 - c. we may even apparently disappear from our lives and leave us alone
6. Don't believe it! He'll be back
7. His hope is that a long respite from the battle will lull us into forgetfulness
8. And then like Japan at Pearl Harbor, when we have fallen asleep, he will attack

F. An Army, Not A Castle

1. God does not want His Church to be a castle—a bastion that merely repels the attacks of hell
2. The Church is a mobile army
3. And our goal is to attack and take back territory lost to the devil through sin
4. Remember what Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell

- will not stand against it."
5. The devil has been on the attack long enough
 6. It's time for us to rise up . . .
 - a. in the power of the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus Christ
 - b. to put on the armor of God
 - c. and to move forward & take back ground lost tot he devil
 - d. in our homes, jobs, and schools, AND IN OUR OWN LIVES!!!!!!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Busy Here & There*

1. There is a telling line in v. 40 that we need to consider
2. The prophet told Ahab, "While I was busy here and there, the prisoner escaped."
3. The point, of course, was that his leaving his post in the middle of battle was a gross dereliction of duty
4. It was war; and during war, soldiers aren't free to do whatever they want
5. They are under orders
6. They are not free to be busy here & there
7. They have a duty to perform
8. And their performing that duty is essential to not only their own welfare, but also all their fellow soldiers, the larger battle, and the whole scope of the war
9. For want of a nail, the shoe was lost' for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the message was lost; for want of the message, the battle was lost, for want of a battle the war was lost; for want of a war, the nation was lost. A nation was lost - and all for the want of a horseshoe nail

B. *We Are At War!*

1. We are at war!
2. And as the followers of Christ, we are all enlisted as soldiers of God
3. We have a duty to perform—we are under orders
4. We are not free to be busy here & there like civilians
5. 2 Tim 2:3-4

{3} You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

{4} No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

6. We need to move from a peace-time to a war-time mentality
7. We need to keep our armor on and our weapons clean
8. And we need to meet together to counter this current offensive Satan has leveled at the church
9. And then press on to take back some territory
10. Joins us on Tuesday evening!