

CHARIOTS OF IRON

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Judges 1:19 says, “And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because they had chariots of iron.*” Some may read this and wrongly conclude that Judah, even with God’s help, could not overcome these chariots of iron. The Syrians had a wrong concept about God too. After being defeated by the Israelites in the hills of Samaria, they said, “Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they” (1 Kgs 20:23). The next thing that happened was a great defeat of the Syrians by Israel in the valley of Aphek. Jeremiah 32:27 says, “*Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*” No, the iron chariots were *not* too strong for God!

God’s promise to Israel

Judges 1:19 says that *Judah* could not drive these people out of the valley. It does not say that *God* could not do it. In the covenant given to Israel by God through Moses, God had promised certain blessings and curses for Israel based upon whether or not they kept His commandments. God had said, “*And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God*” (Deut 28:1-2). One of the specific blessings God promised was: “*The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways*” (Deut 28:7). In contrast, God also promised, “*But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee*” (Deut 28:15). One of the specific curses was the exact opposite of the aforementioned blessing: “*The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*” (Deut 28:25).

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(continued)

Victory with the Lord

As long as the tribes of Israel trusted in God and obeyed Him, then God was with them and they prevailed over their enemies in every situation (Deut 7:16-24). Throughout the book of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, God kept His promise and defeated the enemies of Israel. But this was *because* Israel had believed in and obeyed God (Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7). As long as they did that, no enemy was big enough or strong enough to resist God for any length of time. Jericho's mighty walls fell without a fight (Josh 6), and Ai was utterly destroyed (Josh 8). God used great hailstones and caused the sun to stand still in order to destroy five Amorite kings (Josh 10), because "the Lord fought for Israel" (Josh 10:14,42). What Israel was capable of with God's help is expressed in Joshua 23:10: "*One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fights for you, as he has promised you.*" God fought for Israel because Israel was obeying Him. God destroyed all the other kings of the land (Josh 11:1-20), including all the giants that lived in the land (Josh 11:21-22; 15:13-17). The same power that God used to make Jericho's walls fall, to make the hailstones rain down and to make the sun and moon stand still, to make all the cities and kings and nations of Canaan be destroyed, including the giants, was certainly able to handle some iron chariots. Proof of that fact is seen when Sisera and his 900 chariots of iron and all his army fell before Barak (Judg 4). Therefore, God was quite able to give Judah the victory over the iron chariots of those inhabitants of the valley. Whenever God is described as being "with" any of the children of Israel in their battles, they always prevailed without exception (see Judg 1:19,22-25). Therefore, any failures on the part of the children of Israel were due to God *not* being with them (see Judg 1:27-2:5). God was always with them when they trusted and obeyed Him. Therefore, any failures on the part of the children of Israel were ultimately due to their lack of faith and obedience (Deut 7:16-24). Therefore, Judah's inability to overcome the iron chariots was because of their own lack of faith in God, and, consequently, God did not bless them. The weakness was within Judah, not God. The same God promises *us* that we can do all things through Christ (Php 4:13). This includes standing against the wiles of the devil in our spiritual war against wickedness (Eph 6:10-18). But without Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Will we be weak like Judah, or by faith will we overcome the world (1 John 5:4)?