

What's Wrong with Chariots?

SR: Ex. 14:21-28

I. Intro - The Nature of Chariots

We are familiar with chariots from the dramatic depiction of chariot races in movies like Ben-Hur, and the rather unusual update of the chariot in Star Wars I: But in reality, the chariot was in use thousands of years before Roman times.

A. Patriarchal Period

According to archaeologists, the earliest chariots were built nearly 3500 years before Christ (EBD 231) ??

Chariots of the Assyrians, Canaanites and Hittites had 3 riders: a driver, a man who carried the shield as defense, and the bowman or spearman. (M&C 307)

Chariots were symbols of power and prestige (EBD 231)

B. Captivity and Judges

Chariots were expensive to build and maintain, but very effective in battle (M&C 307)

Chariots became very important to the Egyptian military during the period of captivity through the judges (M&C 307)

Egyptians used 2 men in their chariots (M&C 310)

Several Egyptian chariots still exist today, including six recovered from the tomb of King Tutankhamen (EBD 231)

C. United Kingdom

The Philistines used 30,000 chariots against Saul Refer: (1 Sam. 13:5)

The Israelites had no chariots in Saul's day (M&C 314)

David was the first Israelite king to use chariots Refer: (1 Chr. 18:3-4)

Solomon's reign involved wholesale adoption of chariot technology (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26; 2 Chr. 9:25) Over 4000 chariots stationed in chariot cities and at Jerusalem

Solomon bought chariots from Egypt and sold them to the Hittites and Syrians (1 Kings 10:28-29) Breaking the ordinance of God in Deut. 17

Egyptian and Assyrian records confirm the size of Solomon's forces (M&C 314)

Samuel had predicted that a king would use chariots, draft their sons to man them, and tax the people to support them (1 Sam. 8:10-18)

Solomon did draft the Israelites to man his war machine, including chariots (1 Kings 9:22)

D. Divided Kingdom

The chariot was the major weapon of the Assyrians during the Divided Kingdom period (M&C 314)

The Assyrian chariot is often depicted in artwork of the day. (M&C 315)

The Assyrians initially had two man, then three man, and finally four man chariots (M&C 315)

A Judean battle chariot is shown in one Assyrian record of the capture of Lachish by Sennacherib (704-681 BC). It is similar to the chariot of Assyria (M&C 315)

The records of Shalmanezar of Assyria (859-824BC) report that King Ahab fielded 2000 chariots and 10000 infantry against him in the battle of Qarqar (M&C 315) in 853 BC (EDB 231)

But just 40 years later, in the time of Jehoahaz (814-798 BC), the northern kingdom only had 10 chariots, 50 horsemen, and 10000 infantry. (2 Kings 13:7)

II. What is wrong with Chariots?

It would seem that the use of chariots was an important part of a successful military in bible times. But in looking at the Bible record, it would appear that God had a great deal of ill will toward chariots. We could well ask, "What is wrong with chariots?" Let's spend the next few minutes examining this attitude of God toward the preeminent military technology of the day, and try to understand what was wrong with chariots in God's eyes.

A. God delights in destroying chariots

1. Refer to Ex 15:4 – God destroys the Egyptian chariots in the Red Sea
2. Chariots defeated in Deborah's day (Judges 4:13-15)
3. Nahum 2:13 – God will destroy the chariots of Nineveh
4. Hag. 2:21-22 – God will overthrow the chariots of the Gentiles

B. It's not just the enemies of Israel whose chariots were destroyed. Even when the Israelites themselves had chariots, they were destroyed.

1. Josh 11:4-9 – Horses and chariots of northern Canaan defeated and destroyed. It seems clear that God's intention is for the Israelites to not use the leading military technology of their day!
2. Even David, the first Israelite king to use used them in a very limited capacity (1 Chr. 18:3-4)

C. When Israel used chariots, they didn't do well

1. Chariots used as the trappings of power by those attempting to usurp the throne Refer to (2 Sam 15:1 – Absalom; 1 Kings 1:5 – Adonijah)
2. King Ahab rode in a chariot himself and died in it Refer to (1 Kings 22:34-36)
3. In Jehu's day, both the kings of Israel and Judah rode in chariots (Refer to 2 Kings 9:21-28) and died in them
4. Josiah died in his chariot (refer to 2 Chr 35:23-24)

D. Chariots represented Israel's lack of faith in God

1. Refer to Dt 20:1-4 – Do not be afraid of the chariots and horses

a) Refer to Josh 17:16-18 – Ephraim and Manasseh told to drive out the Canaanites in spite of their iron chariots.

b) Refer to Judges 1:19 – Iron chariots prevented Judah from taking the lowlands

2. Refer to Deut 17:14-20 – God to Israel’s kings: Do not multiply horses

a) Is. 2:6-9 – Like their idolatry, the use of horses and chariots was part of Israel’s attempts to be like the evil nations around them.

b) The Israelites were condemned for their reliance on weapons of war, rather than God (Is. 31:1-3)

*(1) Vs 3 - “The Egyptians are men, and not God;
And their horses are flesh and not spirit”*

(2) What would it be like to see chariots that were pulled by spirit horses, and whose riders were more than men? We’ll find out in a few moments.

c) **The Bottom Line: When the Israelites got chariots, they forgot God**

III. Trust in God

A. God's people always have a choice between trusting in divine power, or in human power:

- 1. God's people are unstoppable when they trust in God - 1 Samuel 13:5 Philistines have 30,000 chariots, Israel is practically unarmed (v 19-22) And yet Jonathan has a great victory (14:13-15, 22-23)**
- 2. God's people are defenseless when they trust in man – 2 Chronicle 14:9-12; 16:7-9 – Prophet tells Asa, trust in God, not in armies and chariots**

B. God's power is infinitely greater than man's

- 1. God has more chariots - Ps. 68:17**
- 2. God has better chariots - 2 Kings 6:8-23 God's chariots of fire surround the chariots of the King of Syria**

C. God's people today are often held back by fear (Dt 20:1-4,8)

- 1. What weapon is against us that can overcome God?**
 - a) Sometimes we act like we believe that the commands and promises of God do not apply to us today. Would the outcome of the conquest of Canaan have been different if God's people were going up against tanks, unmanned aerial vehicles, and smart bombs? NO**
 - b) Is. 54:16-17**
- 2. Has God withdrawn protection from His people?**
 - a) Absolutely not! Is 41:8-13**
 - b) The only place we can be where God will not protect us is outside of His will (Is 59:1-2)**

**3. The New Testament is full of admonitions from God:
“Do not be afraid!” For us, as for the Israelites, the
choice is to fearlessly trust in God, or trust in men, and be
afraid. (Acts 18:9-10)**

IV. Conclusion

Ps 20:6-8 – We trust in God, not in chariots and horses
To be a child of God (Gal. 3:26-29)