

The Lord Jesus Christ: Conquering Hero

The Old Testament attests to a number of battles and wars between the Lord's covenant people and foreign nations. One scholar has written, "The Bible is a book of human and divine battles. In regard to both it is impossible to overstate the degree to which the world of the [Old Testament] was (like other ancient societies) a warrior culture. Warfare was a way of life in the sense that it occurred more or less continuously."¹⁵ "Human battles" refers to those battles where armies fought one another without God's help; "divine battles," however, are those that were fought with God's divine intervention.

This chart sets forth examples of battles between Israel and the armies of foreign nations in which the Lord's intervention won the battle for Israel. That Lord, of course, was none other than the premortal Jesus Christ.

As column 3 demonstrates, the Lord used a variety of means to conquer Israel's enemies. He employed the natural elements, such as the waters of the sea, great hailstones from heaven, thunder, and earthquakes. Or He smote the enemy with blindness, caused them to hear noises, or destroyed them with plagues. By whatever means, the God of Israel demonstrated time and again that He was more powerful than the great armies of Egypt, Moab, Edom, Ammon, Assyria, Syria, and others. During their day in history, each of these armies was a mighty world power with trained warriors who were equipped

with modern (for the period) war vehicles and weaponry. The fact that Israel's relatively small army defeated such great armies is evidence that God Himself served as Israel's chief captain and "man of war" (Ex. 15:3; cf. Isa. 42:13; 45:1–6). As Joshua 23:10 states, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you." And David warned Goliath, "For the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:47).

The children of Israel's success in battle, of course, depended on their obedience to God's commandments. When they demonstrated obedience, they generally prevailed, but when they were disobedient, they usually suffered defeat. An example of such a defeat is recorded in Numbers 14:40–45, where Moses told a group of Israelites that they would not prosper in battle because of their transgressions. Moses warned, "Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalakites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you." This group of Israelites, however, did not heed Moses's words and went to battle anyway, and "then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill . . . smote them, and discomfited them" (Num. 14:42–43, 45).

Champion	Defeated	God's Intervention
Israelites	Egyptian army	"And the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (Ex. 14:27-28; see vv. 13-31).
Israelites	Amalekite army	"When Moses held up his hand[s] . . . Israel prevailed" (Ex. 17:11; see vv. 8-14).
Israelites	Armies of the five kings of the Amorites	"The Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" (Josh. 10:11; see vv. 5-14).
Israelites	Canaanite army	"The Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host. . . . So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel" (Judg. 4:15, 23; see vv. 1-24).
Israelites	Philistine army	"The Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel" (1 Sam. 7:10; see vv. 3-13).
Kingdom of Israel	Philistine army	"And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling" (1 Sam. 14:15; see vv. 1-15).
Northern Kingdom of Israel	Syrian army	"The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha" (2 Kgs. 6:17-18; see vv. 8-23).

Champion	Defeated	God's Intervention
Northern Kingdom of Israel	Syrian army	"For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life" (2 Kgs. 7:6-7; see 6:24-7:16).
Southern Kingdom of Judah	Assyrian army	"The angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand" (2 Kgs. 19:35; see vv. 14-36).
Southern Kingdom of Judah	Armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir	"And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir . . . and they were smitten" (2 Chr. 20:22; see vv. 1-26).