

# Zechariah Horses



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## ZECHARIAH HORSES

The Prophet Zechariah was privileged to receive two visions of horses from the God of heaven, both of which are recorded in the Old Testament. The first vision is as follows:

**“I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.**

**“Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be.**

**“And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.**

**“And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.**

**“Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?**

**“And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.”  
(Zech. 1:8-13)**

Although this vision was given about five hundred years before the Christian era, it is full of symbolic meaning for the Lord’s people today. The prophet’s first statement is that he saw the vision “by night.” Symbolically, “night” refers to the nighttime of the Christian or Gospel Age. Indeed the vision was intended to be of particular benefit to the earnest Christian.

Zechariah saw a man riding upon a red horse amidst many myrtle trees “in the bottom,” that is, in a valley or on a plain between two hills. The myrtle trees represent God’s people, not of a particular age but in any age. This interpretation should not be surprising, for the Lord’s people are likened to trees in many Scriptures (Psa. 1:3; 92:12). From a favorable standpoint, trees represent mature growth. In contradistinction to grass, a tree pictures a more stable and mature Christian. Behind the man on the red horse, Zechariah saw a mixed company of horses, which he described as red, speckled, and white. Before going into detail as to what these horses represent and why they had different colorations, we will observe certain other facts.

Of the horses, it was said, “These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.” In Bible

symbolism, a horse is used to designate a doctrine. A person whose time is inordinately occupied with a particular hobby is said to have a “hobbyhorse.” He spends overmuch time “riding” or pursuing the activity, whatever it may be. And so in the Bible, a “horse” represents a doctrine or a teaching, and the rider of the horse is one who follows such a doctrine or teaching. Just as a horse carried one to a certain destination in olden times, so a doctrine takes or guides a Christian to a destination, spiritually speaking. The colors of the horses pertain to God’s dealings with His people in various ages, and hence the colors represent different callings.

Let us first think of the vision from the perspective that Zechariah uttered the prophecy in his own day. After the Jews had been in captivity in Babylon for seventy long years, Cyrus issued a decree allowing them to return to their homeland, and he even gave authorization to rebuild the Temple. Of course those who went back encountered much hardship and struggle, and there were periods of relative despondency in connection with the lack of progress in the work. To encourage the Jews, God raised up two prophets: Haggai and Zechariah. When Zechariah publicly uttered his prophecies, the contents were “good words and comfortable words,” that is, the prophecies were designed to help the Jewish people.

After the horses had accomplished their mission, they said, “We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” The horses had returned from the hostile atmosphere of the enemies of the Lord in which they had dwelled and were now at rest. Generally speaking, the world has been content with its condition, for the people have not responded to messages of truth in past ages. Indeed only a very few have exercised their mind and heart to follow the Lord. In the vision, the horses had gone on their appointed mission, and with few exceptions, the earth was not stirred up from its apathy to respond to the Lord’s calling.

Then the angel in the vision asked, “O LORD of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah when you have had indignation against the nation for seventy years?” In order to stimulate interest in deep doctrines or in highly figurative prophecies, the Lord sometimes has the characters in a vision make certain statements or ask certain questions. Here, as Zechariah was beholding the vision, the angel brought up a question that was in the heart of both the prophet and the Jewish people. They wanted God to intervene on their behalf, but because He did not intervene in the dramatic way they had anticipated, they wondered if He truly was interested in His people.

In the Book of Revelation, one of the elders in a vision asked, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” (Rev. 7:13). The purpose of raising the questions was to arouse the Apostle John’s curiosity as to the meaning of the symbolism. John replied, “Sir, thou knowest.” In other words, the elder who asked the question in the vision already knew the answer. A similar principle was followed in Zechariah’s vision—the one sitting on the horse had all of the answers, but the question was raised to stimulate our interest.

Being lovers of pleasure and sports more than lovers of God’s Word, the public is indifferent about understanding the symbolisms of prophecy. The proper principle is taught right in Scripture: “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” (Isa. 21:12). And as Jesus said to his disciples, “It is given unto you [the questioning Christian, the one who exercises himself] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11).

Before explaining the application of the horses that is pertinent to the Christian today, we will consider Zechariah’s second vision of horses, which was quite similar to the first in some respects.

**“And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.**

**“In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;**

**“And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.**

**“Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?**

**“And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.”  
(Zech. 6:1-5)**

A proof text for defining “spirits” as doctrines is 1 Timothy 4:1, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing *spirits*, and *doctrines* of devils.” Thus the different-colored horses in Zechariah’s vision represent doctrines of God that develop four approved classes among humanity. Initially the prophet saw two mountains of brass, and from between the two mountains came forth four chariots. What do the two mountains signify? In Scripture, the word “mountain” represents a kingdom. Christ’s Kingdom, soon to be established, is prophetically pictured as being on top of the other mountains or kingdoms: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the *mountain* of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the *mountains*, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isa. 2:2). And so the vision teaches that between two kingdoms, a

development of four classes takes place. With “brass” (or copper) in the Scriptures being a symbol of perfect humanity, the two brass mountains represent the kingdom of Adam and the perfect Kingdom of our Lord at the end of his Second Advent. Between the time of Adam’s creation and the fulfillment of Christ’s Kingdom—that is, during the interim period of seven thousand years—a work of God proceeds.

Pulling the first chariot were red horses. Next came a chariot pulled by black horses, followed by a chariot with white horses, and then a fourth chariot pulled by two kinds of horses: grisled and bay. What doctrines do the different colors signify? We will begin with the red horses.

In the Tabernacle arrangement under Moses, the ashes of a red heifer were used for ceremonial cleansing (Num. 19:1-10). In antitype, the red heifer pictures a faithful class that was called and developed prior to the Gospel Age. This class, some of whom are enumerated in Hebrews chapter 11, is known as the “Ancient Worthies.” Those comprising this class suffered and died for the cause of truth and righteousness prior to the First Advent of Jesus and the start of the Christian call. As sinners who lived *before* Christ, they could not have the full justification that Christians receive in the present age. However, while they were yet sinners (pictured by the color red), God was dealing with them because



they looked forward, by faith, to a heavenly city, a higher calling, that had “foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10,16).

While this prophecy of the red heifer class may be difficult for many to understand, we have to start somewhere in broaching the subject of the horses, and our intention is to awaken interest in the meaning of these deep symbolisms. The first chariot, then, that appeared on the scene was pulled by red horses. In other words, the *first* calling of God was of notable individuals of Old Testament times—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Daniel, etc.—until our Lord came at his First Advent. At that time, a new development or spiritual calling went forth. As it is written, Jesus Christ “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

The second chariot was pulled by black horses. It may seem strange, but in some cases, such as the black horses here, black is a favorable color or sign that is used to depict proper things. The vision shows that all of the horses originally proceeded forth from the Lord; hence they were *in His favor*. The doctrines that were sent forth were designed of Jehovah to call or develop certain classes. The black horses are comparable to Bible symbolism that likens the Church of the Gospel Age to a black woman, whom our Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to woo and to win as

his Bride. With Moses being a picture of Christ in many cases, one illustration of black being favorable and representing the gospel Church is Zipporah, the black Midianite woman whom Moses married in the Wilderness of Sinai (Exod. 2:16,21).

The basic reason why black is favorable in the vision is that it illustrates the humility of a Christian. Christians recognize that they do not inherently possess any righteousness of their own (Rom. 3:10,23). God sometimes calls attention to the rock whence His people are hewn and the pit whence they are dug; that is, to their humble origin, earth (Isa. 51:1). The color black is related to the word “humus.” Earth or humus is a deep brown color—so dark that to the observer, it resembles black. Therefore, black is used favorably to represent the humility of the Christian in his servitude and service here on earth. Jesus left the courts of heaven, the King’s (God’s) palace and the ivory castles, to come down here to select the Church. The Song of Solomon, which is “*the song of songs,*” shows the Church saying to her beloved Christ, “I am black, but comely” (Song 1:1,5). Those comprising the Church recognize that while they are humble and have no works of their own to justify them before the Lord, yet they do have a deep love or affinity for Christ and a compelling desire to serve him. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a *contrite and humble spirit*, to revive the

spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). The second chariot with black horses represents the calling of this class in the present age.

In the third chariot were white horses. At first, the account would seem contradictory, for would not white horses be more favorable than black horses, and thus picture the Church? However, in this vision, the black horses were more favorable. In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John was given a vision of a certain class who were standing before the throne arrayed in white linen. When John inquired as to the identity of the class, he was told, in effect, that this was a secondary class and it was necessary for them to wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb in the great time of tribulation at the end of the age (Rev. 7:9,13-15). The Little Flock, the more honorable class whom God has been choosing for the past two thousand years, consists of 144,000 individuals who are divided into twelve spiritual tribes or groups of twelve thousand, with each group possessing certain characteristics (Luke 12:32; Rev. 7:4-8). After the Little Flock is complete and off the earthly scene, being with the Lord in heaven, then will come the development of the secondary or Great Company class, called “foolish virgins” in Matthew 25:1-3.

Verse 6 is a further confirmation that Zechariah’s vision attached primary importance to the black horses.

**“The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.” (Zech. 6:6)**

The black horses went forth into the north country, and the white horses followed *after* them. In prophecy, the “north” country represents heaven or spiritual things. Satan, who wanted to be like God, aspired to ascend “the sides of the north” (Isa. 14:13,14). Psalm 75:6 tells us that promotion does not come from the east, the west, or the south. The very silence about the fourth direction indicates that promotion comes from the north, that is, from heaven. Located in the north, the Pleiades, which is the gravitational center of the universe, represents the direction of God’s leading.

Of the various colors, then, the white and the black horses go to the north country, but the black horses go first, having the preeminence. Psalm 45:13-15 similarly speaks of the development of two classes: first the Bride (“the king’s daughter”) and then the bridesmaids (“the virgins her companions”), who will follow *afterwards* into heaven (“the king’s palace”).

**“Then cried he [the angel] upon me [Zechariah], and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.” (Zech. 6:8)**

When the black and the white horse classes have been fully developed, the Lord's program of redemption will continue, and He will set up His Kingdom in the sense that the world will appreciate. The fourth chariot was pulled by both grisled and bay horses. In the prophecy of these horses, the red, the black, and the white ones were all of one solid color, as were the bay horses in the fourth chariot. The grisled horses, which were not a fixed pattern, represent a *mixed* condition. As used here, the word "grisled" is obsolete in the English language, but the Hebrew word means "hail," that is, spotted or dappled, suggesting a *pluralistic* human society. Hence the grisled horses represent the restored world of mankind.

The Book of Genesis tells that a river watered the Garden of Eden, and when that river exited the garden, it parted into four "heads" or streams (Gen. 2:10). These four rivers of truth are comparable to the four horses of the Zechariah vision. Both accounts prefigure the development of four classes of redeemed humanity. God intends to redeem the willing and obedient of mankind, for Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). He did not die just to rescue the Ancient Worthies of Old Testament times, nor did he die just for the Christians of the present age. No, he died for *all mankind*. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that [in the end] whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

everlasting life” (John 3:16). Sooner or later, all who have ever lived on this earth will have the *opportunity* of life. Therefore, the “grisled” horses represent the calling in the Kingdom Age, soon to come, of the mixed world of mankind—all nations, dialects, tribes, and tongues.

Thus far we have discussed four specialized classes that are developed from the time of Adam’s fall to the end of the Kingdom Age. During the Kingdom Age, God will deal with the last or fourth class, the world of mankind. However, He will deal with them not as He does with Christians now—not in the sense of an *invitation* based upon faith—but under Jesus’ rod-of-iron rule, when all will have to bow the knee and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” or be cut off in Second Death (Rev. 2:27; 21:8; Phil. 2:10,11). In summary, the order of horse development, resulting in *saved* classes of humanity, is as follows:

1. *Red*—the Ancient Worthy class, developed in ages prior to Christ.
2. *Black*—the Little Flock, the Church, who prove faithful in the present or Gospel Age.
3. *White*—the Great Company class, also of the Gospel Age but not recognized as a class until the Little Flock is complete and in heaven with the Lord.
4. *Grisled*—a mixed condition representing the saved world of mankind in the Kingdom Age.

Notice that the destiny of the grisled horses is the *south* country, the opposite of the north country. As north represents the spiritual, so south represents the *earthly*. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom *on earth*, not in heaven. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *in earth*, as it is [now being done] in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Here, below, is where the Kingdom of God is to be established, and the world of mankind will recognize Messiah when he reigns *with authority* over them. In order to get life, they will have to repent and become sincerely submissive to his teachings. In that day, there will be no need for one to say to his neighbor, "Know the LORD," for all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest (Jer. 31:34). The earth will then be "full of the knowledge [and the glory] of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea[bed]" (Isa. 11:9).

All of these promises will be fulfilled in God's due time. Now, during the present nighttime of sin in the Gospel Age of faith, those who want to follow and please the Lord must do so on an individual and voluntary basis. However, the next age will be an age of commandment and mandatory compliance.

**"And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth."  
(Zech. 6:7)**

The bay or *fiery red* horses, the other horses that were in the fourth chariot until they were loosed, remain to be explained. The Hebrew word for “bay” means “strong” but in an unfavorable sense; that is, the bay horses picture a headstrong, self-willed class who are obstinate and hard-hearted. Hence they represent those of the world of mankind in the next age, Christ’s Kingdom, who do not thoroughly conform their lives to the righteous laws of God and thus fail to get everlasting life.

We return now to Zechariah 1:8, which told of three kinds of horses that are described as red, speckled, and white. The word “speckled” should be “black” or “black-maned,” as even the verb indicates. Only one symbol in the Hebrew word needs to be changed to convey the thought of “black,” and apparently, a distortion crept into subsequent manuscripts. Therefore, the two horse visions harmoniously show the sequence of selection and development of the classes: Ancient Worthies (red), Little Flock (black), and Great Company (white).

In order to develop as Christians, we need to feed on God’s Word, and the visions of Zechariah are a portion of that Word. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). These visions were designed for our comfort and edification. Of course the preceding discussion of the two horse visions does not



explain all of the details. Our purpose here is merely to whet the appetite for a more extensive search for the deep truths in the Bible. Christians are obligated to meditate on these truths, and their hearts should cry to the Lord for help in understanding.

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