

VISION OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN

On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows (Zechariah 1:7).

This vision begins several months after the opening prophecy of this book. The Spirit of the Lord had already come to Zechariah as He has also come to Haggai earlier that same year. In both cases, the purpose was the same. It was a call to action.

The Jews were once more living in their land. The Babylonian Captivity had ended with the coming of the Persians and the Jews had been given permission to return to the land. A number of them had done so and they had begun to rebuild their temple, but then politics reared its ugly head and this rebuilding project was halted. The temple still lay in ruins. The legacy of the Babylonian destruction remained.

It is in this situation that Zechariah is given a vision. It is a vision of horsemen.

THE VISION OF THE HORSEMEN

I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him. (Zechariah 1:8).

Zechariah sees a night vision. I am not sure that this has any special significance except to add to the drama of the vision. This vision is of four horsemen. We know from our New Testament perspective that this is not the only time that such a vision has been seen.

Zechariah 1	Zechariah 6	Revelation 6
Red horse	Red	White
Red horse	Black	Red
Sorrel horse (speckled?)	White	Black
White horse	Dappled (Spotted)	Ashen (Pale green?)

Translators have struggled with the color of the third horse. The NAS translates this as a “sorrel” horse. The NIV renders this color as “brown” while the KJV described it as “speckled.” The same Hebrew word is used to describe a “lucious vine” (Isaiah 5:2; 16:8; Jeremiah 2:21) and there was even a valley by the same name -- the Valley of Sorek from

which Delilah came (Judges 16:4).

As we look at all three of these passages, we see that the horses have similar, but not identical colors. There is enough of a similarity to suggest a commonality between them.

1. The Identity of the Horsemen: *Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are." ¹⁰ And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth." (Zechariah 1:9-10).*

If we are puzzled as to the identity of these horsemen, Zechariah was no less puzzled. He asks the question as to their identity and the answer he is given is that they are *those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth*. The translation makes this sound quite official, but the Hebrew term used (Hithpael infinitive of הִלָּךְ) merely means "to walk" or "to go." These horsemen are sent to go across the earth.

Notice that these horsemen have been sent by the Lord. He is their Master and He is the one who has sent them. When they report their findings, they report to the Lord. When they do their work, they are doing His work. They ride at His bidding.

This is important because, when we see these horsemen in Revelation 6, there are some bad things that accompany them. There is war and there is famine and there is death and taxes and poverty. These are not good, but we should recognize that the presence of these things is not a sign that the Lord has lost control of history. He continues to reign as the king of the universe, even when bad things take place.

2. The Report of the Horsemen: *So they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet." (Zechariah 1:11).*

The report of the horsemen is that *all the earth is peaceful and quiet*. The conquests of the past were past. This was now a time of peace. The Jews had been permitted to return to their land and, for the present time, there were no dangers confronting them.

THE INTERCESSION OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, "O LORD of hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of

Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years?"
(Zechariah 1:12).

This is the “so what?” of the passage. It is the culmination of the chapter and sets the stage for what is to follow. The horsemen have completed their patrol and have made their report. On the heels of that report, the angel of the Lord makes a request.

1. The Identity of the Intercessor: *The angel of the Lord (1:12).*

There are plenty of angels in the Bible, but there are times when we see a reference to the angel of the Lord and it speaks of One who is greater than the angels. I am not sure that this is one of those times, but it is interesting to see this particular angel with a ministry of intercession.

2. The Request of the Intercessor: *How long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years? (1:12)*

In spite of the peace and safety of the people in the land, there was one troubling feature that remained. The temple remained unrestored. It was still in ruins. Indeed, the entire city of Jerusalem remained in ruins. It had been in ruins since the days of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

Notice that the request makes reference to 70 years. It had been this long since the Temple had been destroyed.

3. The Answer to the Intercession:

¹³ And the LORD answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words. ¹⁴ So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. ¹⁵ But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster." ¹⁶ Therefore, thus says the LORD, "I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," declares the LORD of hosts, "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.' ¹⁷ Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"" (Zechariah 1:13-17).

The angelic prayer is answered in three parts:

- This is an Answer of Grace and Comfort: *And the LORD answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words (1:13).*
- This is an Answer of Compassion and Hope: *"I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," declares the LORD of hosts, "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem." (1:16).*
- This is an Answer of Prosperity: *"Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem."'" (1:17).*