

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Four

(Part VII) Four Chariots in Zechariah

We continue our series of essays on the relationship of the number four and the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit as found in the scriptures.

Zec. 6:1 “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. 2 In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? 5 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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

It will be noted that the horses in this passage are somewhat different from the horses in Revelation. First the order of the horses are different. In Revelations the horses are in order, white, red, black, and pale. In Zechariah the horses are in order, red, black, white, and grisled and bay. Second, there is no pale horse in Zechariah, but rather grisled and bay horses. In studying the horses in Revelation we noticed that only the Lord could successfully ride the horses there. In Zechariah there are multiple horses in each chariot, suggesting that many people could ride the horses.

The four chariots came out from between two mountains of brass. Brass is indicative of affliction and suffering. When God’s people in their experiences first get a glimpse of God’s holy law they see themselves under the affliction and suffering of the commandments contained in that law. The two mountains of brass would be typical of the law and the prophets.

Red is used in the scriptures to represent the shedding of blood in warfare. After that a child of God is born of the Spirit of God he begins to encounter a warfare, whereby

the flesh lust against the spirit and the spirit the flesh. Paul described the warfare this way in Rom. 7:15 “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”

This warfare takes place because of the two-fold nature of a born-again child of God. He has a carnal nature that Paul says “dwelleth no good thing.” He also has a spiritual nature that John says “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” Thus these two natures are at war within the child of God. There is an inward longing within the child of God to get right with God. But with all of his efforts to do so, sin keeps dragging him down and showing him that he has failed to satisfy the laws demands.

This leads to the second chariot in which there are black horses. Black is used in the scriptures to represent sin. The more we fight to get right with God, the more that we see our sins under God’s just and holy laws keeping us from accomplishing our goal. We end up saying as Isaiah said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” We are as the publican who came to the temple to pray and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” As we engage in this warfare we become more and more aware that we are sinners under the law. Paul wrote in Rom. 3:19 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” This knowledge of sin and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, eventually leads us to the third chariot.

In the third chariot are white horses. White is used in the scriptures to represent righteousness. In the second chariot as the publican we have concluded ourselves to be devoid of any righteousness of our own, and thus cry out for God’s mercy. It is when we are deeply convicted of our sins that we begin to see the need of a Saviour. The scriptures tell us that Jesus came to save sinners from their sin. But to be able to save sinners from their sin, it was necessary that he be without sin. As he was born of a virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. It was also necessary that he keep the law that we could not keep. He said in Matt. 5:18 “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be

fulfilled.” Thus Jesus fulfilled the law to the very jot and tittle. Next, it was necessary that he make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people in order to deliver them out from under God’s wrathful judgment of sin. This he did on the tree of the cross. He suffered the just for the unjust. As it is written in 2 Cor. 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Thus all for whom Christ died are made to ride in the third chariot of white horses.

The fourth chariot had grisled and bay horses. The word grisled means spotted and the word bay means deep red. The word spot in the scriptures is associated with sin. However, we have been redeemed from our sins as stated in 1 Pet. 1:18 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” While we walk in this life we know that we are sinners still, but we also know that we have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ in the new birth as the following verses show:

1. Heb. 10:22 “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

2. 1 Pet. 1:2 “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”

Thus we go forth in this life with the knowledge that we are sinners (spotted) and that we are cleansed by the sprinkled blood (bay) of Christ.