

## X. *The Chariots of God*

03-Feb-08          Zechariah 6:1-8

*Theme:*          God deals with the nations in one of two ways: either He destroys them through judgment or saves them through conversion.

*Key Verse:*      Zechariah 6:5 <sup>5</sup>And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.”

### Review

Last week we studied Zechariah’s seventh vision of “The Flying Ephah.” In this vision, Zechariah saw a basket with the woman named “Wickedness” trapped inside it, being carried away to the land of Shinar by two stork-winged women. The evil inside the ephah represented all those who were lawbreakers within the covenant community, especially those whose sins represented idolatry of wealth and economic prosperity.

In a reversal of the exodus, God removed wickedness from the Promised Land and returned it to the land of uncleanness and exile, where a counterfeit temple, a new tower of Babel, was built for the ephah of wickedness. Like a false Ark of the Covenant, the ephah was housed in this temple of wickedness where unholy worship was established in opposition to the Lord.

The vision of the flying ephah reminds us that while we build the church as the city of God and establish true worship, God will remove wickedness from our midst through separation of His holy people from the world and through our progressive, ongoing sanctification. However, the vision also shows us that although wickedness is being removed from the church, it is being established elsewhere. False worship is set up in the world to oppose the true worship of the church. Whether it is man-made religions, heretical cults, or secular philosophies, the mindset of the world is to worship at the temple of wickedness, established in the land of Shinar, the city of mankind. Although wickedness remains in the world and is in opposition to God’s people, we know that God will ultimately remove it forever at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Introduction

That brings us to the last of Zechariah’s Night Visions, which portrays God’s dealings with the enemies of His people. In this vision, the chariots of God’s angelic host are sent forth into the world to carry out His judgments. This vision forms a fitting conclusion to the entire series of revelation. In the first vision, God’s angelic scouts on colored horses returned from walking to and fro throughout the earth with a report of the nations at rest (1:11). The Angel of the LORD interceded on behalf of His people and asked “How long will this situation continue? How long will the nations be at rest while My people are downtrodden?” (1:12). This last vision addresses that prayer. Now, the angelic scouts of the first vision have been transformed into chariots of God’s judgment and are sent out into the world to accomplish His purposes.

The first vision declared God’s anger against the nations; the last vision addresses this situation. And in between, the focus of the six middle visions turned inward toward Israel. “After we know that God clearly discerns how the relation between Himself and the nations who antagonize His people stands, we yet observe that He postpones action. This is done that Israel might learn that the most important issue is not the punishment of the Gentiles but the building up of itself under the guidance of divine grace” (Leupold).

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As the long, exhausting night of revelation draws to a close, this last vision not only complements the first in the chiasmic structure, but it also builds upon the others. Kline describes the “two-directional sorting out process that transpires on a world-wide scale” in the course of these Night Visions. In the third vision, there is a call for exodus, a command for the people of God to “flee from the land of the north” (2:6). They are called to separate themselves from the sinful nations around them. And in the seventh vision, the flying ephah takes wickedness out of the holy land of the church and returns it to the “land of Shinar” (5:11). This is movement in the opposite direction, an “exodus” of evil from the midst of Israel and a return to Babylon, “the land of the north.” “By means of this twofold movement God effects a clear-cut separation between His seed of promise, the children of heaven, and the denizens of the world, children of the devil. The stage is thus set for Zechariah’s closing vision of the chariots of judgment” (Kline).

### Exposition

#### **A. The Eighth Vision: The Four Chariots (6:1-5)**

##### *1. Two Bronze Mountains (6:1)*

<sup>1</sup>Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze (Zechariah 6:1).

For the preceding vision, Zechariah had to leave the entrance of his visionary temple and stand in the courtyard to view the flying ephah leave the land of Israel (5:5). As he watched the ephah being carried away by the stork-winged women, he evidently was facing away from the temple. How so? Because at the beginning of this eighth and final vision, Zechariah turns around to look back at the temple he had previously exited.

And as he turns around to look at the temple, he sees the chariots of God issuing forth from the throne room of the Lord. Now, of course, the text does not directly say that, but that is the meaning implied by the two bronze mountains. The chariots proceed from God’s heavenly throne room, and these bronze mountains are symbolic of the gates of heaven.

Nineteenth century commentators such as Moore and Baron tend to try and identify these mountains with actual places around Jerusalem. Thus, Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives are often mentioned as possible identifications for these two bronze mountains from which the judgments of God are sent out.

However, it is not necessary to speculate on which earthly hills are intended by these visionary symbols. Modern commentators such as Jordan, Mackay, and Phillips rightly identify these bronze mountains as representing the pillars that guarded the entrance to the temple of God. Solomon’s temple had two beautiful bronze pillars in front of it, named Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7:13-22). These pillars guarded the entrance to the temple, which was the earthly throne room of God. What Zechariah sees are these bronze pillars grown exponentially into bronze mountains, a fitting symbol of the entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, of which the earthly temple was only a shadow or type (Hebrews 8:5).

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, was an important material due to its strength. Bronze is a stronger metal than wrought iron, although it is more expensive, due to the relative scarcity of its components. So, the vision of bronze mountains guarding the gates of heaven speaks to the strength and might of God, to “the impregnability and immovably fixed character of the LORD’s kingdom” (Mackay).

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### 2. Four Chariots (6:2-3)

<sup>2</sup>With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, <sup>3</sup>with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds (Zechariah 6:2-3).

Issuing out from between the bronze mountains of God’s heavenly temple are four chariots, drawn by four teams of colored horses. To understand the significance of this vision, we first have to study what chariots represent in Scripture, and then review our understanding of the number “four” and the colors of the horses from our previous studies.

In the Scriptures, the chariot is a strong, offensive military weapon. The strength of Israel’s enemies was often measured in terms of chariots, whether they belonged to the Egyptians against Moses (Ex. 14:1-28), the Canaanites against Joshua (Jos. 11:4-9), Sisera against Deborah and Barak (Jdg. 4:3-16), the Philistines against Saul (1 Sam. 13:5), the Syrians against David (2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18), and so on.

The General George Patton Museum is located in Fort Knox, Kentucky. It is a military museum dedicated not only to General Patton, but also to the history of mechanized warfare. If you enjoy military tanks, this is the place for you! But interestingly, the museum begins its history of mechanized warfare with the chariot. Richard Phillips, a former tank commander in the US Army, calls the chariot “heavy cavalry, the shock troops of the ancient world, not unlike our modern-day tank units. Chariots went forth not to scout but to crush the power of the enemy.” In the first vision, individual colored horses were used as scouts; now in the last vision, teams of colored horses pulling chariots come forth as God’s powerful weapons of judgment.

Because of the strength they represented, multiplying chariots was seen in the law of God as a trap to be avoided by the king of Israel, as well as many wives and great riches:

<sup>15</sup>You shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. <sup>16</sup>But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ <sup>17</sup>Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself (Deuteronomy 17:15-17).

Why did God forbid the kings of Israel to multiply horses (chariots), wives, and riches? Because these were snares that would turn the king’s heart away from God. An abundance of riches would make the king forget that God owns everything. Marrying many wives to seal international alliances would introduce foreign, pagan gods into the land of Israel. And adding royal horses and chariots to the standing army would make the king rely on his own strength rather than trust in the Lord of hosts. And that’s exactly what happened to King Solomon. Solomon had such great wealth in gold that silver was “accounted as nothing” (1 Ki. 10:21); he had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen (1 Kings 10:24); and he had 700 wives and 300 concubines who turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:3). He may have been the wisest man in history, but once he started multiplying horses, wives, and riches, he forgot the God who gave him all those things (1 Kings 11:9).

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Rather than trust in their own military strength, the kings of Israel, and indeed the entire people of God were instead supposed to rely on the chariots of God. This principle is clearly illustrated in a story from the life of Elisha, when the king of Syria rose up against the king of Israel:

<sup>15</sup>And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him [Elisha], “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” <sup>16</sup>So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” <sup>17</sup>And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:15-17).

Thus, as we read of the four chariot teams of God sent forth from His holy dwelling, we should regard them as angelic messengers or powers that go out in the world to accomplish the will of God. It should be clear that the fiery chariots of the Lord of hosts are more than sufficient to protect His people and to carry out His will on the earth. In Psalm 68, David proclaims the strength and majesty of God, displaying His goodness to His people and scattering His enemies. Among the many ways that David describes the strength of God, it should not surprise us to find the chariot:

<sup>17</sup>The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place (Psalm 68:17).

So, the Lord of hosts sends out His angelic chariot hosts from heaven, from the holy place where He resides, into the world to accomplish His will. We’ve already seen in our study of the “Four Horns and Four Craftsmen” (see pp. 38-40) that the number “four” is often associated in Scripture with the “four corners of the earth” or “the four winds (or spirits) of heaven” (*cp.* 6:5). Thus, “four” is the number of the world. In other words, all of creation is encompassed by the imagery of the four corners and the four winds. So, when four chariots issue forth from heaven and “walk to and fro throughout the earth” (6:7), we can be assured that God’s might and power is sufficient to deal with all His enemies, wherever they may be.

There may also be a connection between Zechariah’s vision of these four chariots and Ezekiel’s vision of God riding on a glorious chariot-throne. In Ezekiel chapter 1, the prophet sees an amazing vision of God’s glory cloud, which he describes in some detail. Ezekiel describes what he sees as a fiery chariot, supported by four cherubim each having four faces and four wings. The fiery chariot cloud speaks of God’s omnipotence. Each of the cherubim moved in a different direction, hence signifying the four directions of the compass or the entire world. This signifies God’s omnipresence. And beside each cherub was an awesome wheel full of watchful eyes, symbolizing God’s omniscience. This entire glory cloud sparkled and shone and carried the throne of God wherever He wanted to go. In essence, this picture of God’s throne is a glorified chariot, with four angelic “horses” and wheels. “What we have in Zechariah’s vision is a dividing of that one chariot complex of four faces into four individual chariots, or better, an explosive extension of it to the four winds of heaven” (Kline). So, when we see the chariots of God departing heaven and going throughout the earth, we should think of it as God Himself coming in judgment upon the nations.

In our study of the first Night Vision, we discussed the significance of the colored horses. In the first vision, only three colors were mentioned: red, sorrel, and white. We saw from Revelation 6:1-4 that red is the color of bloodshed and warfare, while white is the color of victory and

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conquest. The “sorrel” horse seemed to be a mixture of red and white and thus represented a progression from war to victory.

In this eighth Night Vision, we once again have red and white horses, representing warfare and victory, but there are two additional colored horses: black and dappled. The “dappled,” “grizzled,” or “mottled” horses here are different from the “sorrel” horse of the first vision. Once again, Revelation chapter 6 can help us understand the meaning of these two colors:

<sup>5</sup>When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup>And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.” <sup>7</sup>When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” <sup>8</sup>So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth (Revelation 6:5-8).

The black horse brings sorrow and death from economic hardship. This will become significant as we study the destination of the chariot pulled by the black horses. Since the first three chariot teams of Zechariah 6 correspond to the first three horses of Revelation 6, it seems apparent that the dappled horses of Zechariah correspond to the pale horse of Revelation. What is the symbolism of this last chariot team? Other translations besides the NKJV are more helpful here. The NIV translation says that the pale horse was given power to kill “by sword, famine and plague,” while the ESV says “with sword and with famine and with pestilence.” So, the rider of this horse is “the Angel of Death who brought famine and pestilence” (Jordan). Again this connection is significant in the context of the destination of dappled chariot team.

At the end of the description of these four chariot teams is an additional qualifier; they are called “strong steeds.” It seems uncertain whether this description applies only to the last team of horses – the dappled horses of plague and pestilence – or if it applies to all the chariots of God. This same description is also used in verse 7, and again it is unclear if it refers only to the dappled team or to all the horses. I think it is probably best to understand this phrase as referring to all the chariots of God – they are all powerful and sufficiently strong to carry their judgments to the four corners of the earth.

### 3. *Four Spirits (6:4-5)*

<sup>4</sup>Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”

<sup>5</sup>And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth” (Zechariah 6:4-5).

After Zechariah sees the four chariots of God proceeding from between the two bronze mountains of God, he asks his faithful guide, the interpreting angel, what was the significance of the vision. In response, the attendant angel uses another word picture to describe the chariots of God: “these are four spirits of heaven.” An acceptable, alternate translation (given by the ESV) is that “these are going out to the four winds of heaven.” The Hebrew word *ruach* can mean either “spirit” or “wind.” As we have previously seen, the four winds of heaven correspond to the four corners of the earth or the four compass points and thus represent the entire world.

Psalms 104 connects all this imagery of chariots, wind, spirits, and angels:

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<sup>3</sup>He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind, <sup>4</sup>Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire (Psalm 104:3-4).

“It is not, therefore, a gentle summer breeze that the angel identifies with these chariots, but a gale-force wind that sweeps human barriers aside. Angels, chariots, mighty winds, and flames of fire—all are used in the Bible to show God’s invincible but invisible agencies for doing His sovereign will” (Phillips). So, whether the chariots are the four spirits of heaven or are going out to the four winds of heaven, the meaning is essentially the same – all of the earth is coming under the judgment of God’s holy messengers.

There is one final description of these angelic messengers in verse 5: they are stationed “before the Lord of the whole earth.” We saw in the fourth vision that when Joshua was “standing before the Angel of the LORD” (3:1), this language indicated his position of priestly service. Likewise, these angelic messengers wait on the Lord and serve Him in His sanctuary. They are His servants who stand before the throne of God to carry out His will.

So, in summary, Zechariah sees the angelic servants of God, represented as strong chariots, depart from between the bronze mountains guarding the gates of heaven. They are sent on an earthly mission of worldwide judgment: red for warfare, white for conquest, black for economic hardship, and “dappled” for pestilence and death.

### **B. The Eighth Vision: The Chariots Sent Out (6:6-8)**

#### *1. North and South*

<sup>6</sup>“The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them and the dappled are going toward the south country.” <sup>7</sup>Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, “Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.” So they walked to and fro throughout the earth (Zechariah 6:6-7).

The vision continues with a more detailed description of where each chariot team is sent. In a general sense, they are sent to “walk to and fro throughout the earth” (6:7), to the four winds of heaven (6:5), but verse 6 give us more details about the mission of these chariot teams. We would expect that the four chariots are sent to the four compass points, but that is not so.

First, notice that only three of the four chariots which issue forth out of heaven are sent out into the earth: the black, white, and dappled horses. The red chariot of warfare is not sent out on the earth at this time. Jordan comments that the red horses are kept in reserve. “The captain of the Lord’s host – the Lord Jesus Christ – is on a red horse of war. We would anticipate here, that it would be the red horses that would be sent out primarily, to bring warfare and bloodshed to the earth and execute God’s judgments. But they are not the ones sent out. God will execute His judgments in other ways at this course of history, and thus the red horses are held in reserve. Also, since the red horses are associated with the captain of the host, it seems that He remains behind in the Temple area to give direction.”

In the second place, notice that the remaining horses are sent out in only two compass directions: north and south. The dappled horses are sent to the south; the black horses are sent north, and the white horses are sent after them in the same direction. The NIV translation says “toward the west,” but this is almost certainly wrong. To reach this reading, the Hebrew text has to be altered by one consonant, so that “after them” becomes “after the sea,” which would be a

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reference to the Mediterranean lying to the west (Mackay). This fits the preconceived conception that the four horses should go to the four compass points, but it is not supported by the Hebrew text. So, we need to understand the significance of only two compass directions being singled out.

Historically, the enemies of God's people have come in either one of two directions. To the west lay the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east was the scorching Arabian desert. Israel had little to fear from enemies in either of these directions. However, north and south was a different matter: to the north lay Syria and the Mesopotamian kingdoms of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia; to the south lay Egypt. It was from these two compass points that the major enemies of God's people came. The "King's Highway" connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia ran through the land of Canaan, thus making Israel the crossroads of international conflict throughout the centuries. For much of their history, Israel was either under the domination of Egypt to the south, or to one of the kingdoms to the north.

"The north country" almost certainly refers to the land of Shinar, or Babylon (*cp.* 2:6; 5:11), a part of the Persian Empire in Zechariah's day. As we have seen in our study of the third and seventh visions, Babylon is representative of the nations of the world that are opposed to God's people. It is the city of man in opposition to the city of God. It is the land of exile, the land where wickedness is established. It is the place where the things of this world are worshipped, rather than the things of God. The sixth and seventh visions portrayed the gathering together in Babylon of those who lie and cheat and steal in the pursuit of riches. Thus, in a symbolic way, those who worship wealth and prosperity rather than the Lord dwell in the land of Babylon.

Therefore, it makes sense that the black horses of economic hardship are sent to the north country of Babylon. God is saying that if you make created things your gods, be prepared to have them taken away from you. This symbolism is picked up in Revelation 18, where the fall of Babylon the Great is described primarily in terms of economic disaster. When God sends the black horse of hardship, the economy collapses and wealth fails:

<sup>11</sup>And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore.... <sup>19</sup>They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate" (Revelation 18:11, 19).

The meaning of the black horse sent to the north country is clear. Those who put their trust in earthly things – things that can be bought and sold by men – will ultimately see their faith fail as this world and all its contents are burned up in the righteous judgment of God (*cp.* 2 Pe. 3:7). Idolatry of created things is in vain, "for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36; *cp.* Mt. 16:26). The apostle Paul certainly understood this message. He gave up all his earthly attainments and personal attempts at self-justification for the righteousness of Jesus Christ:

<sup>7</sup>But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup>Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith (Philippians 3:7-9).

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Meanwhile, the dappled horses of pestilence and death are sent “toward the south country,” that is, Egypt. Again, it is entirely appropriate that this chariot team, representing plagues and death, is sent to Egypt, the land of spiritual bondage, slavery, and death. God defeated Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the exodus by sending plague after plague, following pestilence with death and destruction. Ultimately, the Angel of Death rode through the land of Egypt, destroying the first-born of every household that did not have the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the lintels of their home. “In terms of Biblical typology, whatever aspect of sin and wickedness is symbolized by Egypt, God deals with them in plagues. And whatever aspect of sin is signified by the history of Babylon and Persia, God deals with that by economic collapse. Thus, the ‘northern sins’ are dealt with economic disaster and the ‘southern sins’ are dealt with by plagues” (Jordan).

We can see that the north and south countries – Babylon & Egypt – are representative of the whole world, because in verse 7 the strong steeds are sent throughout the earth. God’s judgments are not limited physically to the geographical places of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Rather, all those who follow the sins of Egypt and Babylon – who oppose God’s people and worship other gods – will have the horses of God’s judgment descend upon them.

### 2. God’s Spirit at Rest (6:8)

<sup>8</sup>And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, “See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country” (Zechariah 6:8).

This verse causes some confusion among the commentators, perhaps because it is unexpected. The focus has been on the judgments of God going out against the nations, but here in verse 8, we have the Spirit of God resting at peace in the north country, in Babylon. Baron tries to interpret this verse as God’s anger resting on Babylon. Others, such as Mackay and Phillips, say that God’s anger is appeased or ended, knowing that vengeance is being delivered to the north country. But neither of these explanations seem satisfactory to me.

Kline points out that the chariots of God issuing forth from the heavenly sanctuary are a picture of God’s chariot-throne going forth to conquer the nations. In Zechariah’s vision, the black horse of economic hardship is followed by the white horse of conquest and victory. So it seems that verse 8 is declaring to us that God has won His victory – He has conquered His enemies and now He is at rest. He is sitting on His throne and ruling the nations. The key word in this verse – “rest” – is used elsewhere to describe God’s enthronement:

<sup>2</sup>Then King David rose to his feet and said, “Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it (1 Chronicles 28:2).

<sup>8</sup>Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength (Psalm 132:8; cp. 2 Chronicles 6:41).

### Conclusion

How is that victory accomplished? How does God conquer His enemies? Biblically, there are two ways: He either destroys them, or He converts them. I believe that both are in view in this vision.

The dappled horse of pestilence and plague goes to the south country to bring death to God’s enemies. There is no hope for them; there is no second chance given. God’s righteous decree falls upon them.

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But the north country in this vision is treated differently. The black horse of economic hardship – a removal of the things that are worshipped by idolaters – is followed by the white horse of victory. And then the Spirit of God comes and rests upon the north country. This is not a picture of God’s anger upon His enemies, nor is it a picture of His anger being appeased; rather it is a picture of Him dwelling in the midst of His people. God removes our idols and replaces them with Himself. When His Spirit rests in the north country, it is ultimately a picture of His reigning in the hearts of His converted people.

Jordan points out that a near-term historical fulfillment of this vision occurred in the days of Esther, when the enemies of God’s people were defeated and “many of the people of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Est. 8:17). The “fear of the Jews” refers to a holy or righteous reverence to the God of the Jews, not to feelings of fright from the Jews themselves. So, in Esther’s day, there were many converts to true faith, and the people of God grew through conversion, not conquest.

We saw in Zechariah 2 that there are two ways that God spoils His enemies: He can shake His hand in anger against them (2:8-9), or He can gather the nations to Himself and make them His people (2:10-11). The history of the Scriptures makes this abundantly clear. God declared to Abraham that He would bless those who respond to Him and His people, but that He would curse those who resist Him (Gen. 12:3). Thus, the Egypt of Joseph’s day was greatly blessed because Joseph’s pharaoh recognized the Lord God (*cp.* Gen. 41:38) and treated his family kindly, even receiving the blessing of Jacob (Gen. 47:5-10). Fast forward a few hundred years when a new pharaoh arose over Egypt “who did not know Joseph” (Ex. 1:8). Under Moses’ pharaoh, Egypt was destroyed because he tried to oppress God’s people and opposed the will of God.

Here is another example of God dealing differently with kings and nations. Sennacherib of Assyria tried to humiliate God’s people in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Ki. 18-19). And yet it was Sennacherib who was humiliated by the Lord, and later assassinated by his own sons while worshipping in the temple of his pagan God (2 Ki. 19:35-37). Meanwhile, another king of a mighty nation, Nebuchadnezzar, was raised up by God to punish His wayward people. This king of Babylon was also humiliated by God – brought low from his place of pride (Dan. 4) – but his story has a different ending. Instead of being destroyed like Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar was converted, and He praised the Most High God who lives forever (Dan. 4:34-36).

So, there are two sides to God’s dealing with His enemies: He can either curse them and destroy them like Moses’ pharaoh or Sennacherib; or He can convert them and bless them like Joseph’s pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. He adds daily to the church those being saved (Acts 2:47). And that is the ultimate meaning of this vision. God is sovereign over history. He controls the chariots of judgment that patrol the earth to carry out His will. He is reigning right now from heaven and is in control over the whole earth. His purposes are being carried out.

Thus, this vision of the chariots of God should encourage and comfort the church. We may feel like insignificant myrtle trees in the abyss of the nations, but the Lord Jesus Christ is in our midst and is reigning over His creation. The chariots of God are at work throughout the earth and nothing can impede His sovereign will from being accomplished.

Next week: Theology Conference

In two weeks: Lesson 11 – The Crowning of Joshua – Zechariah 6:9-15

Close in Prayer.