

After the prophet Haggai spoke under inspiration the prophet Zechariah now spoke and added his voice to the inspired Word of the Living God.

After national calamity there was now an opportunity for national repentance. Repentance starts with the offender acknowledging their offence and then taking action *"Turn ye unto Me"* verse 3.

The night vision of a man riding upon a red horse is the opening vision of many. It is a symbolic vision and not a vision of actual happenings. The way to approach such is first to establish that the vision is not literal. This is usually done by the language chosen by the God being not possible to be understood literally.

"We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold all the earth sits still and is at rest." Verse 11. This is not literal for two reasons; it is not possible to walk to and fro through the earth because of the division of land by the oceans. Nor is it possible for one man to know that all the earth is at rest at any one time because when he walks in Australia how does he know that any of South America let alone all of it, is at peace?

As with the scheme outlined by Christ in the parable of the sower if we list the component parts of the vision then seek to apply meaning to each, we may be able to establish understanding.

A man	a mortal agency less than the angel who talked with Zechariah
Riding	In control of the animal, is that political economic or religious control?
A red	The colour of violence, anger, agitation
Horse	An animal depicts a distinct nation, a horse being chiefly an object of war
Stood	Motionless, the work has been concluded
Myrtle	An evergreen used in certain medicines suggesting healthy permanence
Trees	Also used as nations but generally as one among many or just the many
Behind	What occurred in the past or what will follow after depending on context
Horses	Many warlike nations, maybe even world war!
Red	As above
Speckled	Hebrew Saroq is the colour sorrel an alternative red, so different violence
White	The colour of Peace rather than righteousness (fine linen)

Taking these elements it leads to the understanding that the vision shows the completion of the divine plan of arriving at the place of healthy (cured) permanence (the Kingdom) achieved through human agency (Christ & the saints) which can only be achieved when the world war is behind and the competing powers of two types of red (violently disruptive national powers or allegiances) and one cohesive alliance, the internally peaceful white horse have concluded their work.

The most interesting element is that the man is not on a white horse as you would expect once that work was complete but upon a red horse. The solitary horse he is riding is still convulsed with violence and has not been replaced with peace. This means that the pacification of the world "*behold all the earth sits still and is at rest*" is not the final state of the purpose of God but that by his riding, he is controlling the irrepressible passions that still remain in the heart of mankind, still stained red!

This ties in with revelation 16v19 when the mighty earthquake of the 7th Vial following Christ's return as a thief will result in human civil war with Christ and the saints being one of those three parties who are ultimately victorious. The white horse therefore seems to represent the now unified and internally peaceful land of Israel (horses including allies) as distinct from the rider himself, the multitudinous.

The Kingdom once achieved (myrtle trees = many healed nations) is not the final rest but rebellion will break out in future as Revelation 20v2-10 depicts in greater expanded detail. Christ will ride the red horse and keep its natural anger and violence in check until the true final rest has been achieved at the end of the millennium.

This vision is not restricted to the times of Zechariah nor any subsequent period in history because that nation was never among the myrtle trees in any sense from the time of the fall of the original Kingdom of God under the Kings of Judah until the present-day belligerence against Israel from its many neighbours and others. It is a vision of future glory sent to sustain the faithful even if coloured with a red caveat!

I am aware that these ideas are not a mere repetition of the exact interpretation of Dr Thomas but are definitely and firmly built upon the concepts he has laid in foundation in his seminal works of the Truth.

The middle section of God's inditement against the agency countries He has used to discipline His people Israel verses 12-17 shows that He is "*very sore displeased*" even with those doing the work He gave them to do! A major lesson to pay attention to! You can do the work of God and displease Him at the same time!

The message of future hope shines forth – "*The LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem*". He never gives up on His people even when deservedly disciplining them.

The second vision in the chapter is about Horns. Using the same method, we can construct:

Four	The number of the world and creation, hence universally fashioned
Horns	The manifestation of Power, either by an individual leader or a nation itself
Four	As above
Carpenters	Hebrew = Craftsman or workman, a skilled artificer, able and competent.

These horns are identified as gentile powers which used their might to scatter Judah (rather than Israel). Assyria Babylon Greece and Rome were all instrumental in scattering the people of Judah particularly and therefore also the nation of Israel as well, in addition to the city of Jerusalem, as expressly mentioned in verse 19.

Others have suggested that these horns were four rulers who were instrumental in scattering the might of Israel Cyrus the great, Alexander the great, Pompeii Magnus and the great Prophet Mohammed have been nominated. Nebuchadnezzar however did more to scatter Israel and Jerusalem than Cyrus did (remember the decree to restore Jerusalem 2 Chron 36v23 Daniel 9v25).

Were there corresponding powers which God raised up to fray (reduce or humble) these four horns?

The Babylonians Egyptians and Medes reduced Assyria

The Persian and Median powers reduced Babylon.

The Greeks were reduced by Republican Rome.

Imperial Rome was reduced by the barbarians who settled Europe.

Looking at the rulers rather the nations as the horns.

Nebuchadnezzar was reduced by madness. Long but interrupted reign.

Alexander was reduced by drunkenness and intoxication. Struck down relatively young.

Pompeii was reduced by hubris and mistrust. Murdered in Egypt seeking refuge.

Mohammed was reduced by false religion. Died in old age.

Is the central message less the precise interpretation of the specific horns and craftsmen but that there being four implies that every offender against Israel who seeks to scatter them will receive their just deserts in having a different power arise to reduce anyone who tries? Four being the universal element rather than strictly the number itself in symbolic terms.