

Zechariah 6:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

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

The color symbolism of the horses carries theological significance. Adomim (אָדוֹמִים, red horses) likely symbolize bloodshed, war, and judgment—the color of blood. Red appears elsewhere in prophetic visions representing war and slaughter (Revelation 6:4, where the red horse brings war and removes peace from earth).

Shchorim (שְׁחֹרִים, black horses) may symbolize famine, death, or mourning—black being associated with calamity and judgment. In Revelation 6:5-6, the black horse represents famine and economic devastation. Alternatively, black may represent the darkness of divine mystery or the hidden nature of God's purposes being worked out in history.

These horses draw chariots that execute God's will among nations. The parallel to Revelation's four horsemen (Revelation 6:1-8) suggests archetypal symbols of divine judgment: war (red), famine (black), disease, and death. Zechariah's vision predates John's Revelation by nearly 600 years, demonstrating Scripture's consistent symbolic language for God's judgments.

Historical Context

The returning exiles had witnessed Babylon's conquest by Persia—a dramatic shift in world power. They understood that nations rise and fall under God's sovereignty. The colored horses represented different aspects of divine judgment being

executed against Israel's oppressors. Red horses going to the north country (v. 6) likely symbolized judgment against Babylon/Mesopotamia through warfare.

Jewish readers familiar with Israel's history would recognize God's pattern: He raises up nations to discipline His people, then judges those nations for their cruelty. The vision assured them that though currently weak and vulnerable, God's angelic armies were actively working to vindicate His people and punish their oppressors.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do the different colored horses representing various forms of judgment help you understand God's multifaceted sovereignty over nations?
2. What does Scripture's consistent use of color symbolism (red for war, black for famine) teach about the unity and coherence of biblical revelation?
3. When you see nations experiencing war or famine, how should you discern whether it represents divine judgment or simply fallen world conditions?

Interlinear Text

וּבִמְרֹכֶב הַ	הָרִאשׁוֹנָה הַ	סוּסֵי יָם	אֲדָמָה יָם	וּבִמְרֹכֶב הַ	הַשֵּׁנִי יָם
chariot	In the first	horses	were red	chariot	and in the second
H4818	H7223	H5483	H122	H4818	H8145

סוּסֵי יָם	שְׁחֹרִים:
horses	black
H5483	H7838

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

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