

Lesson 52: HORSES
Revelation 6: 1-8

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps you know by now that everything in this world, and everything in the stories of the Word, is actually a kind of *symbol* of something having to do with the Lord or heaven or human life. In the New Church, we call the knowledge of this “symbolism” the Science of Correspondences. This knowledge, given by the Lord through the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, tells about hidden meanings that exist in nature and in the Word.

Did you know that, long ago, before the Word that we use was written, there was another Word, called the Ancient Word? The Ancient Word was dictated to people on our earth by the Lord, just like our Word was. But the Ancient Word was written in the language of symbolism, or “correspondences.” The people of the ancient church knew the language of symbolism. They could read or hear a story, like the story of Noah and the flood, and understand that the story was telling them things about God and heaven and life.

But when the ancient church was dying out, people were forgetting the language of symbolism. The people of ancient Greece had learned stories from the Ancient Church, but they did not know their meanings anymore. So characters in stories that were really representing different things about God now were thought to be stories about many different gods. And all knowledge of what animals and the forces of nature symbolized in these stories was lost.

Greek myths are fun to hear and listen to. And the reason they are so interesting is that they actually have hidden meanings within them about God and heaven and hell and human life that have been long forgotten.

Today we will talk about the symbol of a horse. (SHOW A PICTURE OF A HORSE) Horses are noble and powerful animals, able to work well with people and to be of tremendous use in work and in battle. They have amazing strength and endurance, and can carry a rider much further than he could ever walk himself. Horses are also noble and powerful symbols, both in Greek myths and in the Word—symbols of *understanding*. Back when you first *understood* how letters go together to make words, that *understanding* carried you into a whole new world of reading. Every time you understand something new, it’s like you are being carried into a new land where you’ve never been before. Your understanding carries you there, just like a horse carries a rider.

In Greek mythology, there is a beautiful winged horse named Pegasus. Do you know the story of Perseus, who went out seeking the dreadful monster Medusa, who had snakes growing from her head instead of hair? (SHOW A PICTURE OF PEGASUS COMING OUT OF MEDUSA’S HEAD) When Perseus had succeeded in cutting off the head of Medusa, a white winged horse came of the monster’s neck. This was the birth of Pegasus. When evil things are destroyed, the Lord can bring beautiful new things, and this story seems to show that.

(SHOW A PICTURE OF PEGASUS) Pegasus is a horse, but a *winged* horse. He can fly! Those wings are a picture of spiritual thoughts. When we know about the Lord and His

Lesson 52 – Oak Arbor New Church Sunday School, page 2

ways, our understanding can fly! Up high like that, we can see so much more in life than we could before.

(SHOW A PICTURE OF THE NINE MUSES) Also in Greek mythology are nine women called the Nine Muses. The Muses were taught by their mother, the goddess of memory, to remember all the great knowledge of the world and to turn it into songs.

It was said that Pegasus came to the hill where the Nine Muses stayed. Pegasus kicked a hoof against the ground, and broke open a spring that became a fountain. This fountain was then dedicated to the Nine Muses.

The Nine Muses symbolize all the wonderful knowledge we can learn about this world. When we know about the Lord and His ways, knowledge of the Lord can come down into everything else we learn and, like Pegasus, break open a fountain of real intelligence for the Nine Muses.

(SHOW A PICTURE OF BELLEROPHON RIDING PEGASUS) Pegasus was later used by a man named Bellerophon, who rode him to go into battle against a dreadful monster called the Chimera. When you *understand* things about good and evil, you can more easily battle against evil. This is like Pegasus helping Bellerophon to battle the monster.

There are other amazing horses in Greek myths. (SHOW A PICTURES OF APOLLO AND A PICTURE OF POSEIDON) The ancient Greeks believed that Helios, the sun god, existed in the sun that traveled across the sky each day. Helios made this daily journey in a fiery chariot that was pulled by powerful horses of fire. Poseidon, the sea-god, also had a chariot that was pulled by horses.

Can a horse ever be a bad symbol? Yes! A horse symbolizes understanding, or you could also say intelligence. But intelligence can sometimes be used for bad reasons. Do you know the story of the Trojan Horse? (SHOW A PICTURE OF THE TROJAN HORSE) In Ancient Greece, the people of the city of Sparta were at war with the city of Troy, because the prince of Troy had stolen the Spartan king's wife. This war raged on for ten years, and then the Spartans formulated a plan. Unexpectedly one day, the soldiers of Troy looked out of their city toward where the Spartan army had been encamped, and saw that the Spartan army was gone! All that was left was a huge wooden horse. The Trojans were so intrigued by this horse that they brought it into their city. That night, Spartan soldiers who had been hiding inside the hollow horse came out, and conquered the city of Troy from within. Sometimes a person can use their intelligence to trick someone else, like the Greeks used the Trojan horse to trick the Trojans into letting them into the city.

Can you think of any places in the Word that a horse is mentioned? When the children of Israel were crossing the Red Sea, the Egyptians chased them with horses and chariots. (SHOW A PICTURE OF THE RED SEA CROSSING) This, again, is like when thoughts that *seem* intelligent really want to keep people in slavery, not wanting them to be free to find the real truth.

Lesson 52 – Oak Arbor New Church Sunday School, page 3

When it was time for the prophet Elijah to die, his servant Elisha saw an amazing sight. (SHOW A PICTURE OF ELIJAH GOING TO HEAVEN) He saw Elijah rising up to heaven in a fiery chariot, pulled by fiery horses. Horses of fire represent an understanding of the Word that is warmed by love. This is what takes a person to heaven, as these fiery horses were taking Elijah to heaven.

When Elisha was a prophet, he was once in a city of Israel when fierce Syrian raiders surrounded the city with horses and chariots. Elisha's servant saw the great army, and was terrified. But Elisha was not afraid. He knew that the protection of the Lord was with them, and he prayed for the Lord to open his servant's eyes. (SHOW A PICTURE OF THE ARMY OF HEAVEN) Suddenly, Elisha's servant saw all around them a HUGE army of fiery horses and chariots. He saw that they were not alone, but that the host of heaven was with them. In the end, the Syrian raiders failed to conquer the Israelite city.

When the apostle John was on the Isle of Patmos, he saw many horses in the visions that the Lord showed to him. (SHOW A PICTURE OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN) There were the four horses and riders that show a picture of different kinds of understanding of the Word people can have. The white horse shows a true understanding of the Word. The red horse shows when people try to use the Word for evil purposes. The black horse shows when people are losing the ability to understand the Word, and the pale horse shows when all understanding of the Word is completely gone.

(SHOW A PICTURE OF THE LORD ON A WHITE HORSE) The most triumphant horse was the white horse, on which rode the Lord Himself. The Lord was seen with flashing eyes and many crowns. He was dressed for battle, with all the armies of heaven behind Him. This was a picture of the Lord going out to battle against the hells. He uses the new understanding of the Word, that he has now given to people, to do this battle, and this is what the white horse represents.

So a horse is an animal that can carry you to new lands – either in the world, or in your mind.

PROJECT: HORSE PICTURES

Talk with the children about what pictures they'd like to make, either of horses in Greek myths or horses in the Word. They can make individual pictures on white paper, which you can then mount together on a poster board to display, or they could work on a group poster picture with many horses in it.

They can draw freehand, or use the enclosed horse stencils. They can use different colored paper or tissue paper to create their pictures, or draw with colored pencils, crayons, or markers.

They should title their pictures, to show what story it is depicting.

You could have a main title for the finished poster, which can be written on in marker, or made of letters cut from construction paper, traced with the letter stencils. (Doing letter stencils is a great way to occupy a child that doesn't want to spend a lot of time on drawing.)

The main title could read:

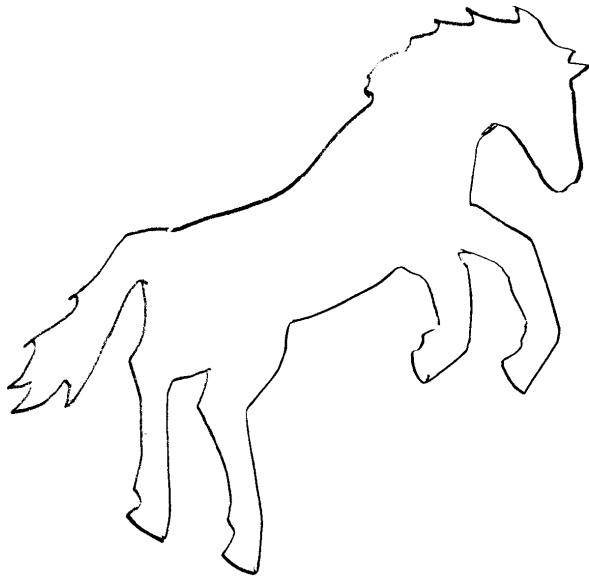
HORSES SYMBOLIZE UNDERSTANDING

You may also photocopy and cut out the following text to glue somewhere on the poster:

Project Quote

As a horse can carry a rider to new lands,
so a strong and well-fed understanding can
carry a person's mind to new spiritual lands.
As a horse can carry a soldier into battle,
so a strong and clear understanding can be
of great help in battles against the hells.

Project Patterns



PATTERNS

