

HORSES IN THE WORD

Rev. F. E. Gyllenhaal

Lessons: Revelation 19:11-16; *Apocalypse Revealed* 820 (portions)

When the disciple John was on the Isle of Patmos, he saw a vision of a beautiful white horse and the Lord sitting on the horse. The Lord had eyes as a flame of fire; on His head many crowns; His garments were of a most beautiful and rich red; out of His mouth went a sharp sword; on His thigh was written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS; and His name was THE WORD OF GOD.

Horses are mentioned in the Word more times than any other animal. We read about horses in well over a hundred places. We read about white horses, red horses, black horses, pale horses, big horses, little horses, snorting horses, horses that were neighing, and even horses of fire. Some of the horses mentioned in the Word were not seen on earth but in the spiritual world. Elijah, when he died, was carried up into the other world in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. Later, Elisha and his servant, with their spiritual eyes opened, saw thousands and thousands of horses and chariots and angels in the heavens. They were guarding Elisha and his servant who then were besieged by two hundred thousand Syrians. Elisha saw these horses of fire in the other world. He saw them with his spiritual eyes, just as John, with his spiritual eyes, saw the Lord riding on a white horse in heaven.

More is also said in the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church about horses than about any other animal. So horses must be very important in this world, and they must mean things that are very important for us to know. This is why from ancient times (from the Most Ancient Church) horses have had certain meanings and have been the animal most loved by people. The Greeks knew some of these meanings long ago, and they wrote about a sun god riding in a chariot of fire drawn by four horses of fire and about a sea god riding in a wonderful chariot drawn by four prancing horses.

So what do horses mean, and why did the Lord ride on a white horse? Horses mean the understanding, and a white horse means the understanding of the Word. But what is the understanding? When you want to know why an electric fan turns round and round, and someone tells you it is because electricity is turning it, you say you understand. Or when you want to know why a door bangs when nobody has touched it, and someone tells you that the wind blew it closed, you say you understand, and you mean that now you *know*. It is the same with everything that is written: there is a time when you do not know what writing means, but when you do know, then you understand. And so the

Lord rode on a white horse to teach people that they must understand the Word in order to know that He is the Lord God Jesus Christ. Only from the Word, and so from Him, can we know about Him and about many other things. And even more important than knowing these things is understanding them and loving them.

What has all this to do with the New Church? What does it have to do with the birthday of the New Church which we celebrate on the nineteenth day of June? Well, the Lord knew, even when He was in the world, that there would be a New Church and he knew that there would be a beginning or birthday of that New Church. The disciple John could know nothing about the New Church, or about its birthday. Yet the Lord showed him the white horse, and Himself riding on the white horse in heaven. Now, the Lord has told us that what John saw was a prophecy of the birth of the New Church.

For the Lord, through the Heavenly Doctrine, has now given the spiritual meaning of the Word, and He tells us that all of these things can now be understood. This is what He meant by the vision of Himself as the Word of God riding on a white horse. For in the Word, to ride a white horse means to understand the Word. And as you understand the Word of the Lord, you may be said to ride a white horse too. When we understand the Word, the Lord gives us the truth to guard us against whatever is evil. And so when John saw the vision of the Lord riding on a white horse, he also saw behind the Lord an army of angels all on white horses following the Lord. That meant that angels understand and love the Word of the Lord.

So let us celebrate the birthday of the New Church and the new understanding of His Word which the Lord has now given to all people.

Amen.