

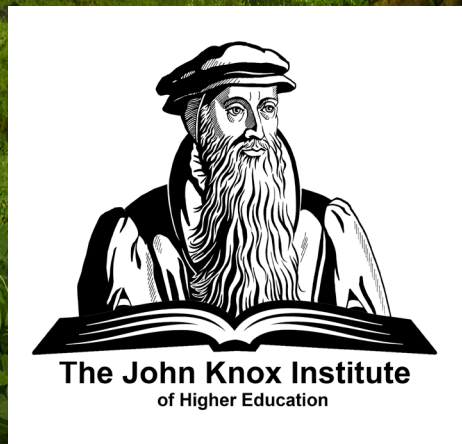
# *The Visions of Zechariah*

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

*by Rev. William Macleod*

Lecture #9

**The Eighth Vision:  
God Reigns**



**John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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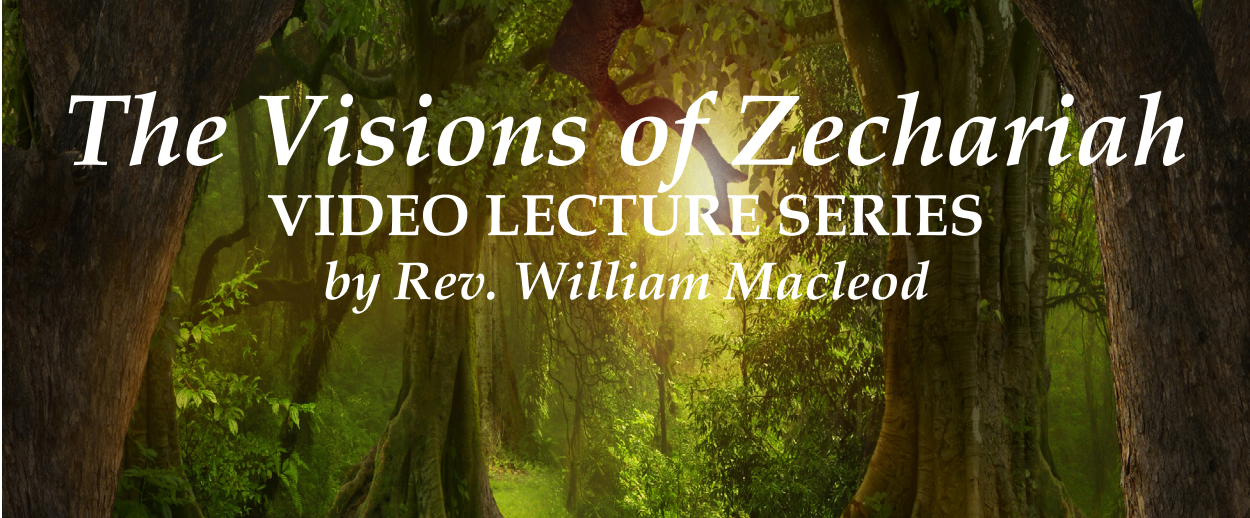
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# *The Visions of Zechariah*

## VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

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### Lecture #9 – Zechariah 6:1–8

## The Eighth Vision: God Reigns

We now come to lecture 9 in our series on Zechariah's visions. This deals with the eighth vision, the vision which sets out the truth that "God Reigns." It is to be found in Zechariah, chapter 6, and verses 1 to 8.

The church today appears very weak. Huge forces are arrayed against it. Satan is always very busy. He hates God and all that belongs to God. He tries all he can do to hurt the cause of God, the church of God, and he wants to undermine the glory of God. He is the great opponent of the church of God. The overriding ambition of Satan's life is to lead astray the people of God, and he uses all his followers and all his resources to achieve that end. He is highly intelligent. He is of great experience. He has been learning his trade ever since the fall of man. He knows what is likely to work in tempting people, and he never seems to forget anything. He has thousands of demons at his command, and also millions of wicked men who are his slaves. Also, inside every born-again Christian, there is the flesh. This is the remains of corruption, sometimes called fallen human nature. It is indwelling sin, which Paul describes as a "law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"—Romans 7:23. Satan has access to our minds and can play upon our desires and stir up our lusts. We need the whole armour of God to resist him. The church today is weak because Christians are so busy caring for their families, and enjoying their many pleasures which are freely available, at their work, and so on, that they have no time for their own souls. Instead of looking after the health of their souls, they are forgetting that they are in a war, and that they have powerful enemies who are determined to destroy them. Paul warned elsewhere, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"—Ephesians 6, verse 12. Christ sent us forth to spread the kingdom by the preaching of the gospel, and so, bringing the world into subjection to him. Our concern is to save men and women from hell, but Satan is busy opposing us.

In days gone by, almost everyone believed in a Creator who made the world and man upon it. This meant that people generally believed in God as the Judge, before whom they would all one day have to stand, and to give an account for their lives. On the basis of this judgment, there

was a heaven or a hell in the next life. But today many believe in the so-called “big bang” as that which formed the world, and evolution as that which produced man. It seems strange that out of nothing there should be a bang which brings a universe into existence. Also, when one notes the amazing complexity of the simplest form of life, it is amazing that scientists should believe in the spontaneous generation of living organisms, and then also believe that by means of little steps, man eventually would evolve from these single-cell creatures. Actually, in the process, there would have to be so many huge and impossible steps to produce such body parts as eyes, as ears, a heart with warm blood as opposed to cold blooded creatures, and sexual organs in creatures which originally reproduced asexually.

Yet many are happy to believe in this, because the only alternative is to believe in the Creator God to whom they are responsible. Evolution helps them to get rid of God and quietens their consciences, these consciences which warn them that one day they will be judged. The universities, the schools and the media unite in proclaiming that there is no God. Evolution is taken as a fact, and those who do not believe in it are laughed out of court. This creates a huge resistance to the preaching of the gospel. Sadly, even many churches also accept evolution, rejecting the teaching of the Bible and so, help to undermine the gospel demands.

Secular thinking which has no place for God has taken over our society. People are constantly told that they must hold their religion to themselves as a private matter of beliefs and practices. Postmodernism teaches that one man’s religion is as good as the next. King Charles spoke of himself as a defender of all faiths, including the faith of humanists. So there is in the eyes of many today no such thing as objective truth in the realm of religion.

Another powerful force in the world today is the sexual revolution. The 1960s pop culture undermined marriage. Contraceptives and abortion allowed women to freely engage in sexual activity with multiple partners without the problem of children being born. The Bible teaches that sex is to be practiced only within marriage, and that marriage should only be between a man and a woman, and is to be for life. The God-ordained family has been undermined. Premarital sex has become the norm. Many never marry and, even when they do, divorce is very common. The internet promotes pornography on a massive scale, and many see no fault in watching it. Homosexual practices have become acceptable. Now transgenderism confuses many of our teenagers. Our society can see no sin in any kind of sexual activity apart from paedophilia, and one wonders how long it will be till that is also acceptable. Christians who take a stand for Biblical sexual ethics are mocked as old fashioned and indeed, called hateful. They are persecuted, if they will not affirm the immoral choices of their neighbors.

Sadly, many churches, especially the large, mainline churches, see their role as simply to reflect what is acceptable in society in general. They were affected by higher criticism in the nineteenth century. This taught that the Bible had errors in it, and therefore could not be fully trusted. Human reason is taken as the standard, and not divine revelation. There are no such things for these liberals as miracles or prophecy. The Bible is simply man’s reflections about God and religion. Indeed the Bible is treated as just one book among many. It is regarded as having no special authority. All its statements can be challenged by human reason. The church has generally become centers for social work and left-wing politics. Its prophetic voice was lost.

Today there is great spiritual apathy. Only a tiny proportion of the population attend church. When Christians preach on the street, or try to engage their neighbors in conversation about their souls and their need to repent and believe the gospel, they are either met with a yawn, or with hostility. Few are willing to listen to what the evangelical church has to say, and the liberal church

has really no gospel message at all. In this situation, the prophecy which we have here in Zechariah chapter 6 is highly relevant and provides great encouragement.

So first of all, Four Chariots, verses 1 to 3—“And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.”

This eighth vision is similar to the first where the horsemen go forth and survey the earth. The chariots there are carrying out the purposes of God. Both convey the idea that God reigns. He is the Sovereign who is in control, and who rules in the affairs of men and women. Nothing happens but according to his will and plan. The intervening visions between our first one and this eighth one have been dealing with Israel’s own relationship with God.

It is interesting to note that the chariots go out between mountains of brass. They go out from the presence of the Lord. The Lord dwells in his temple. The temple of Solomon had two great pillars of brass at its entrance, one called Jachin and the other Boaz. These pillars have now become mountains. This speaks of strength, durability, and protection. God dwells in his holy place and from there, the chariots emerge; from there, he rules the nations. Men and devils are in rebellion against him, but they can make no impression on the great mountains of brass. Satan’s fiery darts fall harmlessly. Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Man’s godless philosophy, his humanism, his immorality, his secularism, his cultural Marxism, and his blasphemy make no impression on God. Think of Psalm 2: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure”—Psalm 2, verses 1–5. How important it is to keep this vision of the Almighty before our eyes. God is in control. He is not in a panic. He sits, he watches, and laughs as puny men and devils plot rebellion against him. When his time comes, and when he sees fit, he will speak in wrath and pour upon them his fiery indignation. None can resist his will. His enemies will become his footstool and the footstool of his people. Think of Romans 16, verse 20: “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” We are on the winning side. Fear not man whose breath is in his nostrils—Isaiah chapter 2, verse 22; or Romans 8:37, “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

Chariots in ancient times were a bit like tanks today. They are powerful symbols of war. Here there are four chariots. This speaks of the four corners of the earth. God’s rule is universal. No part of the earth is exempt from his control. In the words of the psalmist, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place”—Psalm 68, verse 17. God reigns, and none can stand against him. His armies are immense. His purposes will certainly be carried out.

The colors of the horses are symbolical also. Red horses speak of war and bloodshed. Actually, God is involve in every war. It is not chance, or fate, or man’s decision alone that causes war. From our viewpoint, it seems like megalomaniacs invading other countries and waning to rule over them. We look at powerful men like President Putin of Russia today, or Hitler in the past, but actually God is in control. God sends war. Putin is his servant. This of course does not justify Putin’s cruel war in the Ukraine. Putin, at the end of the day, will have to answer to God for all the carnage and suffering he caused. But it is God’s red horses which marched through Ukraine. We might worry about the break out of nuclear war, but none can press the nuclear button but as God

will it. What comfort it is to know that God controls the chariots of war.

Black horses speak of mourning and death. Death is universal in this world. There is for all of us “a time to be born, and a time to die”—Ecclesiastes 3:2. Our lives are in God’s hands, and he has set the exact moment of our birth and of our death. How important for us it is to prepare for death. It will soon come to us all. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”—Hebrews 9:27. We live our lives before God, and one day at his appointed time, our soul and body will be separated, and if we are wicked, we will open our eyes in hell, and if we are righteous, we will open our eyes in heaven. In every death God is calling men and women to give their account to him.

The white horses speak of victory. Nothing can thwart God’s plan. He carries out his purposes to their conclusion. God will eventually usher in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness. The color of the horses in the final chariot are more difficult to translate. Here we have the term “grisled”. Others translate it as “piebald”. It would seem to be a mixture of colors. The term “bay horses” is translated by some as strong horses. The essential truth conveyed by the vision is that God rules the nations and the different colors represent the different conditions found on the earth. Those building the temple meet with different challenges, but God will enable them to overcome them all.

Verses 4 to 8, The Four Spirits Sent—“Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

The prophet asks the angel to explain. In Hebrew, the word for spirit and for wind is the same. These four chariots are the four spirits of God, the four messengers of God, or the four winds of God. They go forth at his command. They do not simply roam over Israel, but over the whole earth. They go through the lands of the Muslims, and the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the atheists. None can escape their attention. God reigns over all the earth, and indeed over the whole universe, and heaven, and hell as well.

The black horses go forth to the north country. The white go forth after them insuring complete victory. This is the direction from which the great enemies of Israel came in the past—Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia. The black horses spell death to these enemies of God’s people. Babylon was a great city but the time came when it was destroyed. It was a proud city and would have laughed at the words of the Jewish prophet if they had heard them. As one commentator put it, T. V. Moore, “Now the wind whistle through the reeds of the Euphrates, where Babylon then sat in her pride; and loneliness, desolation, and death are stationed there, the sentinel witnesses of the truth that his words returns not to him void, that his spirit is quieted in the land of the north.” Babylon’s destruction was total, and to this very day, it is a ruin. President Saddam Hussein planned to rebuild Babylon, but he too was destroyed. The grisled went to the south country, that is, Egypt, another old enemy. Wave after wave of desolation passed over that once mighty land of pyramids, of sphinxes, and temples, now just a shadow of her former glory.

The bay went out patrolling the whole world, again sent by God and carrying out his will. God rules the nations. He raises up one and casts another down. Those that went to the north country

quieted God's spirit in the north. The Chaldeans had been used to chastise God's people, but when they had carried out their task, the task that God had assigned for them, these enemies of his people were then destroyed. God loves his church and will punish all their enemies. Since these days other empires have come and gone—Persia, Greece, Rome, and the more modern ones. But God cares for his church. Through every age, he looks after his people, and all their enemies will become like the dust under their feet. But the final destruction of all the enemies of God and his people awaits the second coming of Christ, when he will return, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day"—that's 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 8–10. Amen.