



## A Funny Perspective about Horses

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Discovery Channel's show called "Future Weapons" demonstrates the United States' newest and deadliest weapon.

For example, the Corner Shot 40 is a new rifle that allows a soldier to see and shoot around corners without exposing himself to danger. The Barrett M197 Rifle – is the world's deadliest, high-powered sniper rifle that can shoot a bullet at 3,000 feet per second killing or destroying the target from a mile away long before the sound of the rifle even reaches the ears of the victim. The EMP Bomb- "Electro Magnetic Pulse Bomb" sounds like science fiction – but it is a real bomb that is detonated above ground and will fry all electronic devices in the target area - rendering cars, computers and cell phones inoperable. It is promises to deliver everything that Y2K did not.

What is the purpose of such awesome military technology? "To dominate the battlefields of the 21<sup>st</sup> century...with new forms of destructive power; and...overwhelming force."

*When we fight a war – we want to win!* And to win, you need superior Military technology. 4,000 years ago there was a new piece of military technology - a weapon that revolutionized the ancient battlefield. That gave great power to the nations that owned it – do you know what it was? The horse! Cansdale writes: "When the first horse was harnessed to a war-chariot it quickly added a new dimension to invading armies, a change comparable to the arrival of tanks in World War I." (*All the Animals in the Bible Lands*, Cansdale, p76)

**This morning we continue our sermon series** called “God’s Barnyard Theology.” We have looked at the Lion, the Lamb, the Snake, the Dove, the Ant and the Ox, and this morning we continue with the horse.

**Horse as Military Animal:** When we talk about the horse as a piece of military technology in the Old Testament, it is not an incidental reference. In the Bible, the horse is mentioned 188 times and in all but one or two references the horse is presented as an instrument of war.

Says Pinney: “The chief distinction of the horse in Biblical days lay in its value for purposes of war.” (*The Animals In the Bible*, Pinney, p. 90). Smith’s Bible Dictionary: “The most striking feature in the biblical notices of the horse is the exclusive application of it to warlike operations; in no instance is the animal employed for the purposes of ordinary locomotion.” (with the exception of Isaiah 28:28).

**A Funny Perspective:** In the Old Testament – if you wanted to win on the battlefield, if you desired victory, if you wanted success – *you needed horses*. Well at least that is what 99% of the nations thought. But there was one nation that begged to differ – Israel. Israel had a funny perspective on horses. Israel dared to think that they did not need horses to win the battle. Why?

### **1) Truth about God: He doesn’t need horses – He takes care of us. Exodus 14.**

That funny perspective was born in Exodus chapter 14. Exodus 14 is commonly known as the story of the parting of the Red Sea - and many people think of Charlton Heston and the academy award winning special effect of the waves parting – But what is

the purpose of the story? It has a lot to do with a funny perspective about horses that comes form a couple of important theological truths about God. Go to verses 8-9:

Ex. 14:8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly.

Ex. 14:9 Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea...

Then God parts the Red Sea – the people walk through it to the other side - now jump to verse 23 to see what happens next:

Ex. 14:23 Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea.

Ex. 14:26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen."

Ex. 14:28 And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

After the great victory, Moses' Sister Miriam's (Exodus 15:21) sang "**Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.**" You can see why Israel had a funny perspective on horses. God turned everything upside down. Egypt had horses and Israel had donkeys. Egypt had speed and Israel had slow people. Egypt had soldiers and Israel had tottering grandmas and grandpas. Egypt had all the advanced military technology Egypt had horses and chariots and horsemen! They had the destructive power and overwhelming force! Victory was a certainty for Egypt – there was no earthly, rational reason to think anything else.

Israel's funny perspective on horses came from a couple of deep theological truths born in the waters of the Red Sea. Israel learned that **(1) "God doesn't need horses to win a great victory. (2) God will take care of his people in their weakness."** The Psalmist would later write: Psa. 33:17 **A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.** How true that is! When you stand at the edge of the Red Sea and see more than 600 chariots destroyed by God's hand. When you see a defenseless people delivered – You realized that the horse is a false

hope for victory – God does not need horses to win the battle – The helpless people only job was to walk forward and God delivered them.

**Application:** How about your life this morning? Do you need to hear this word from the Lord? God doesn't need horses to win a great victory. You don't have to have great wealth, education, strength, charisma to make a difference for God. Do you feel inadequate for the tasks God has given you? Do you feel that you are not fully ready? Do you feel vulnerable and a little unprotected? Great! God takes care of us in our weakness. Men and women – our weakness is our strength. Paul said **1 Cor 1:27 – “God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.”** Rejoice in your weakness!

D.L. Moody said, “Notice that all the men whom Christ called around him were weak men in a worldly sense. They were all men without rank, without title, without position, without wealth or culture. Nearly all of them were fishermen and uneducated men; yet Christ chose them to build up his kingdom. When God wanted to bring the children of Israel out of bondage, he did not send an army; he sent one solitary man. So in all ages God has used the weak things of the world to accomplish his purposes.”

Now having a few horses in the barn of your life is not necessarily bad. God has given all of us some wealth. Many of you have great talents. Many of you have charisma. You have some horses – that is great – that is fine –but remember, God does not need horses to win a great victory. The horse is a false hope for victory. God will take care of you in your weakness, not in your strength.

May we adapt this funny perspective that our strength is not in our horses, but in our weakness. That is the first point – from Exodus – God does not need horses to win a victory and God takes care of his people in their weakness. But there is a problem – and this is the second point.

## II. The Problem about man – We love horses. We don't want to be weak.

The problem is this funny perspective on horses is very hard to maintain. Psalm 147:10 says, “He does not take pleasure in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.” But the truth about people is that (1) – you see *we love strong horses!* And (2) we don't like to be weak. We want to be strong. Turn with me now to Deuteronomy 17. God, through Moses talks to the future Kings of Israel. God wants them to keep this funny perspective:

Deut. 17:14 “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’

Deut. 17:15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.

Deut. 17:16 “Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’

Now let's understand the context - Israel had some horses. Again – that's fine. But God does not want the King to go out of his way to build them up – to multiply them. And of all place for them to go get more horses – not to Egypt! God says – Hey – I don't need horses to protect you. So don't waste your money! Just trust in me! But flip over to 1 Kings 10:26:

1Kings 10:26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

1Kings 10:28 Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price.

It is hard to maintain this funny perspective about horses. It goes against logic. It would be like fielding a baseball team and expecting to win the World Series with the worst players. It would be like us fighting in Iraq with bows and arrows. You see we love horses and we want to be strong! We want overwhelming force. So Israel - they got horses - they went to Egypt – You see it is hard to maintain this funny perspective on horses.

**God says:** Deut. 20:1 “When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.”

And we say – “God, that is a hard thing - I want a back-up plan!

God says, Hos. 1:7 “Yet I will show love to the house of Judah, and I will save them – not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses or horsemen, but by the LORD their God.”

And we say, “God, that is some good preacher’s hyperbole.

God says, Is. 31:1 “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, And rely on horses, And trust in chariots because they are many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!”

And we say – God that perspective is too odd – too funny- too outside the box! I know you don’t need horses – but I love horses. I know you will take care of us when we are weak – but I want to take care of myself!

There was a 5-year old girl whose mother died. The hurt and loss were great. This girl grew up and said, “We are all wounded in one way or another by something in our lives, and then we spend the rest of our lives reacting to it... She said, “after I got over my heartache – I said, “I’m going to be really strong if I can’t have my mother. I’m going to take care of myself.” That was Madonna – the way of the world – Flee weakness – accumulate all the horses you can.

### **III. Lessons of the Horse:**

Where do we go with these truths from the horse? I think our answer is found in the book of Proverbs chapter 21:31. Prov. 21:31 “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD.” This is where we go with the horse.

1) **Prepare the Horse for Battle.** Does this surprise you?? Haven't you just been telling us not to have horses? No – Israel was never commanded not to have any horses – but not to multiply them and not to trust in them. Preparing your horse for battle is good and responsible.

For you young parents - it means seek to raise your children in a godly way. Do family devotions. Read books and go to conferences. For us as a church it means let's get ready for Fall Sunday School programs. Train teachers. Work with excellence and diligence. Put advertising in the newspapers. Set goals and objectives. Prepare the horse for battle – get ready – prepare! But...remember...always remember... victory belongs to the LORD!

2) **Victory is from the Lord.** The first thing we do with a horse is prepare it for battle – as best we can – and then just as quick, we recognize that as we do that – victory is not found in the speed or strength of the horse; Victory is from the LORD. This is the funny perspective - you prepare the horse, but you don't put your faith in the horse, but in God.

It was about two years ago we were catching up with our good friends, Dan and Patti Barton in Flagstaff. They have four children, their youngest is Taylor's age, their son grew up with Trevor, until we moved away. Their two oldest girls are in college.

This is a special family. One of the families that Tammy and I look to as mentors. As their kids were growing up, they were awesome Christian parents. They made sure the education of their children was carefully chosen. At times they home schooled and other times had their kids in the excellent public school in the neighborhood. Patti did Bible studies with their girls. They had family devotions. Dan was full-time staff at Campus Crusade staff at NAU for 20 years - he is now a College pastor at a church in Flagstaff. He would bring his oldest daughter Katie-Beth to meetings on campus. He modeled the Christian life to his children. I do not know anyone – anyone more intentional, more serious, more balanced, more biblical than Dan and Patti about training their children.

But the unexpected happened. Their oldest daughter rebelled. She began to question Christianity – started dating a young man who was not a Christian. There were arguments – there was hurt feelings – confusion – anger.

We were talking about all of this at Peter Piper Pizza - two years ago. While we were walking out of the pizza place, Dan said to me something I will never forget. I have thought about it often – and I want you to think about it – He said, “Craig, I thought we had done everything right as parents. I thought that in the Christian life - if you do this, and do that, your kids would have to turn out right, I thought we had the formula down - but it doesn’t work that way.”

I called Dan and talked with him a few nights ago when I asked him if I could use this illustration. Their daughter is still apart from the Lord spirituall. Dan said, “Tell your young parents don’t put your trust in the horse – don’t put your trust in a method. You don’t know what the Lord will do with your children, or what he will want to teach you.”

Whether it is your children or starting this church, or being successful at work, or improving your marriage. Prepare the horse for battle – Ok – but don’t trust in the horse – trust in the Lord. It’s a funny perspective – it is a true perspective - it is God’s perspective.