

The Cavalry and Calvary

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD (Proverbs 21:31)

A cavalry unit is a group of soldiers specially trained to engage in mounted combat. Before the invention of mechanical vehicles, cavalry soldiers rode on horses, which provided the advantages of swiftness, mobility, maneuverability, and height over an enemy on foot. Among the most famous depictions of the U.S. Cavalry are the horse-mounted units that protected settlers spreading into the untamed frontier of the western United States after the Civil War. In more ancient times, chariot-riders served as the cavalry, such as in Egypt (Exodus 14:9) and Babylon (Ezekiel 26:7), which gave those nations significant military advantages and resulted in their regional domination during their peak years. Around the 1st century A.D., the Parthians (enemies of Rome from the East) were masters of mounted archery in combat. In the Middle Ages, armored knights rode armored horses.

After World War I, motorized vehicles were utilized and cavalry units became mechanized with tanks. In the Vietnam War, the Army used helicopters for airborne engagements, designating those units as Air Cavalry. Today, the 1st Cavalry Division is the only active U.S. Army cavalry unit.

Sometimes the words cavalry and Calvary are erroneously substituted for one another. I remember when I was a kid how upset my dad would get when he would read the error in local newspapers, and then write a letter to the editor to explain the difference. Calvary is the name of the hill where Jesus and the two thieves were crucified. The cavalry is a group of mounted soldiers.

The word Calvary is not actually in the original language of the Bible. The Greek term *Golgotha* is used, which was derived from an Aramaic term. Golgotha means “place of the skull.” From that phrase was derived a Latin term *Calvariae*, from which we get the English word Calvary. We sometimes sing the hymn *At Calvary* which reminds us of how hopeless our station would be without the event that took place there.

Being the place where Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from our sins, we might say it is the place where the divine one-man *cavalry* came to our rescue! Without His atoning sacrifice, we would be helpless and hopeless under the rule of our enemy, Satan. Without His heroics, we would be slaves to sin and prisoners of death. Had He not been lifted up on the cross, neither could we be lifted up to heaven. Christ charged bravely into the conflict, knowing ahead of time exactly what would happen, that He would suffer and die. And yet, like the brave soldiers of the U.S. Cavalry, He did His duty.

Revelation 19:11-21 depicts Jesus mounted on a white horse and followed by His army, also mounted on white horses. In that apocalyptic illustration, the King of Kings defeats the beast and the kings of the earth. When He returns, He will call home His soldiers to fly away into the clouds, to be transformed into conformity with His glory, and to live with Him in eternity. Will you be among those who ride with Him on the metaphorical white horses?

*These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.
(Revelation 17:14)*