



GULF SHORES

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NUMBERS IN REVELATION

The reader/interpreter of Revelation must recognize the symbolism of numbers in the Apocalypse. In Revelation, as throughout the Bible, numbers often contain symbolic as well as literal connotations. Thus, the symbolic associations provide added dimensions to the literal understanding. The numbers which most commonly contain symbolic value in Scripture are listed below, with representative references:

- 1 = The number two represents unity, primacy, and independent existence (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). Often times Jesus will be referred to as the Holy One.
- 2 = The number two means an addition to give strength, help, confirmation (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**). The disciples were sent out by Jesus two by two into the ministry (**Mark 6:7**). Two witnesses are required to establish truth (**Deuteronomy 17:6, John 8:17, II Corinthians 13:1, I Timothy 5:19**). In Revelation are the beast out of the earth who has two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon (**Revelation 13:11**). He is the false prophet. However the two witnesses are the true prophets of God (**Revelation 11:3**).
- 3 = The number three is the simplest compound unity. This is the number for God (**Matthew 28:19**) or the Godhead/Holy Trinity.
- 3 1/2 = This is the number seven cut in half. This number represents incompleteness or imperfection. Christ's ministry was cut short to 3 1/2 years (**Daniel 9:26-27**).
- 4 = The number four represents the world with its four seasons and directions on the compass (**Revelation 7:1, 20:8**). The four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth (**Revelation 7:1, 20:8**). The great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language is also a four-fold description.
- 5 = The number five is the one of a handful of numbers for humans. Man is portrayed by the various five-member parts of the body (**Leviticus 14:14-16**). Most of us have five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot.

6 = The number six is also used to represent man, who was created on the sixth day of creation. However, this number should be seen as consummate evil and failure (**Revelation 13:18**), because it falls short of perfection, which is represented by the number seven (a combination of the numbers three and four). The most obvious use of this number is in the notorious passage containing 666 (**Revelation 13:18**). This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

7 = The number seven is a number of perfection or completeness (**Revelation 1:4**). The number seven is used 55 times in Revelation. It usually means fullness or completeness as in seven days of the week (God rested on the seventh day). This will be considered deeper in this study. Notice some examples of the number seven:

7 Churches	1:4, 2:1-3:22
7 Letters	2:1- 3:22
7 Angels (Messengers)	1:20, 2:1-3:22
7 Spirits	1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6
7 Golden Lampstands	1:12, 20, 2:1, 4:5
7 Stars	1:16, 20, 2:1, 3:1
7 Seals	5:1, 5:5, 6:1
7 Horns	5:6
7 Eyes	5:6
7 Angels (Heavenly)	8:2, 6, 15:1, 6, 7, 15:8, 16:1, 17:1, 21:9
7 Trumpets	8:2, 6
7 Thunders	10:3, 4
7,000 People	11:13
7 Heads	12:3, 13:1, 17:3, 7, 9
7 Crowns	12:3
7 Plagues	15:1, 6, 8, 21:9
7 Golden bowls	15:7, 16:1, 17:1, 21:9
7 Hills	17:9
7 Kings	17:10, 11
7 Visions	20-21

10 = The number ten is five doubled. It represents human completeness (**Revelation 2:10**). Ten is used to describe the days of persecution, ten horns and ten kings. Remember that God used Ten Commandments to teach the law to Israel (**Deuteronomy 20:1-17**). We also read of the ten plagues in Egypt (**Exodus 7-11**).

12 = The number twelve is God's perfect manifestation of Himself to the created order (**Revelation 21:12**). God established twelve tribes of Israel and twelve apostles. The woman of 12:1 with a crown of twelve stars on her head represents the Old Testament people of God who bring forth the Messiah (**Genesis 37:9**). We have the new Jerusalem with twelve gates and on the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (**Revelation 21:12**). The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (**Revelation 21:14**). Both these indicate that the New Jerusalem has saints from both the old and new testaments. Also associated with the New Jerusalem are the numbers 144 (12x12) and 12,000 which are multiples of twelve. The 144,000 (12x12x1000) represents the church on the earth (**Revelation 7:4**) and in heaven (**Revelation 14:1**).

100 & 1000 = These numbers represent a perfect or complete period of time. It symbolizes a time of fullness or a long indefinite period. The Messianic reign of Christ will be as long as the Lord determines (**Revelation 20:6**).

Other = Revelation also speaks of 1,260 days, 42 months, time, times and half a time. These numbers can be measured by their value in a decade, a year, a month, or a week. When these time periods are used in Revelation they indicate either persecution or protection, but they are limited, not infinite.

In this book John also combines three types of literature: apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary. The author alludes extensively and frequently to the Old Testament. There is no direct citation from the Old Testament, but the Book of Daniel is especially significant as a source in John's use of images, language, and allusions.