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The Importance of the Number Seven in the book of Revelation



A unique feature of the Book of **Revelation** is the number **seven**. There are:

1. **seven** churches **(1:4, 11, 20)**.
2. **seven** Spirits **(1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6)**.
3. **seven** golden lampstands **(1:12-13, 20, 2:1)**.
4. **seven** stars **(1:16, 20, 2:1, 3:1)**.
5. **seven** lamps **(4:5)**.
6. **seven** seals **(5:1, 5:5)**
7. **seven** horns **(5:6)**.
8. **seven** eyes **(5:6)**.
9. **seven** angels **(8:2, 6)**.

10. **seven** trumpets **(8:2, 6)**.

11. **seven** thunders **(10:3, 4)**.

12. **seven** thousand **(11:13)**.

13. **seven** heads **(12:3, 13:1, 17:3, 7, 9)**.

14. **seven** crowns **(12:3)**.

15. **seven** angels **(15:1, 6-8, 16:1, 17:1, 21:9)**.

16. **seven** plagues **(15:1, 6, 8, 21:9)**.

17. **seven** vials **(15:7, 17:1, 21:9)**.

18. **seven** mountains **(17:9)**.

19. **seven** kings **(17:10-11)**.

This unusual format can hardly be an accident. The word **seven** occurs in **Revelation** more than any other book in the Bible. In fact, it occurs more than all the other books in the New Covenant combined. It was not a literary device used by **John** because he was merely recording what he had seen and heard. The list of "sevens" above are the ones that are directly identified by the Greek word for **seven**, or *hepta.* However, there are other groups of **seven** things in **Revelation**, but they have to be counted up by the reader to notice that there are seven of them. For example, there are

20. **seven** beatitudes (the statements beginning with: **Blessed (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14)**.

21. **seven** years of judgment. **Dani'el 9:24-27** refers to the seven year tribulation period. **Revelation 6** begins the seven years of judgment.

22. **seven** divisions of each of the letters to the **seven** churches (the description of **Christ**, the city, the church, the commendation, the concern, the command, and finally, the counsel).

23. **seven** attributes of the Lamb **(5:12)**.

24. **the seventh** dispensation completing Scripture **(20:1-10)**.

Many other associations of **seven** can be found in **Revelation** as one studies it in depth. For that matter, there are many other numbers also prominent in the book such as 666, 144,000, twelve gates, four horsemen, ten kings and 1000 years. So the obvious question is, why? Why is the book of **Revelation** so permeated with this emphasis on numbers? Actually, this same phenomenon is found throughout the Bible. For example, in **Matthew 1:1-11**, the vocabulary has 49 Greek words (7×7), 28 words begin with a vowel (4×7), the remaining 21 words begin with a consonant (3×7), 7 words end with a vowel, 42 (6×7). The 49 words in the passage have 266 letters (38×7). Out of the 266 letters, 140 are vowels (20×7), and 126 are consonants (18×7). Also, of these 49 words, 14 occur only once (2×7), 35 occur more than once (5×7), of those 42 (6×7) are nouns and 7 are not. The remaining common nouns have exactly 49 letters (7×7). Masculine nouns occur 56 times (8×7). The names of only 3 women appear in the passage, and the Greek letters of their names add up to exactly 14 (7×2). It would have taken **Matthew** several months, working eight hours a day to construct the genealogy, even if it were possible. Yet the names were chosen **before Matthew was even born**! Actually, this same phenomenon is found throughout the Bible (see my commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Ae – The Number Seven**). Multiples of the number **seven** are **God's** numerical fingerprints that **He** has left on *every verse* of Scripture.

In the very special case of the book of **Revelation**, however, the mathematical formula is clearly intentional and meaningful, so that to ignore it would be to miss much of the message of the book. Consequently, the various numbers and the reasons for their use will be discussed as we come to them while working our way through the book.

The number **seven** has always been regarded as representing *fullness* or *completion*. This is true not only in the Bible but among almost all peoples throughout history. **Seven is the number of perfection.** The emphasis on **seven** as a number of fullness is understandable, of course, in terms of the weekly calendar by which we order our daily lives. Again, most countries throughout history have followed the **seven**-day week.

But this does not really answer the question, for it does not explain why nations ever started following a **seven**-day week in the first place. The **seven**-day week has no astronomical basis, as do the month or the year, nor does the number **seven**

have a physiological basis like the number ten.

The only real explanation why people have always followed a **seven**-day week and why the number **seven** has always symbolized fullness and completion is the divine decree from the Bible: **And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done (Genesis 2:3)**.

The LORD completed **His** great work of creating, constructing, and energizing the entire cosmos and all its creatures in the very first seven-day period of history. Since the beginning of sin and the curse that followed, **He** has been accomplishing **His** mighty work of redeeming and saving **His** creation.

One day **His** work will be completed, although it will have taken longer than **seven** days. Much of this latter work was preparatory, getting the world ready for the coming of its **Redeemer** to pay the price for its deliverance and restoration. The TaNaKh, beginning with **Genesis**, describes the history of this preparation, and the B'rit Chadashah details the coming of **the Savior**, the payment of the price, and the establishment of a great witnessing community of **His** redeemed people under the leadership of the apostles.

Eventually, this great work of **the redemption of those who are ADONAI'S possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:14)** will also be completed, and **the LORD's** eternal rest will begin. The book of **Revelation**, written by the last of **His** apostles at the very end of the Apostolic Age, provides **His** people with guidance through all the other ages to come, focusing especially on the great climatic events that will bring **God's** work to *completion*, *fullness* and *perfection.* The book of **Revelation**, therefore, above all else, is designed to assure us that what **God** has said is true; that what **He** has promised, **He** will do. The book of **Revelation** is real, future history, as sure as **Genesis** is real, primeval history. Its characters are real and the events it prophesies will indeed come to pass. **ADONAI** will finish **His** work. **He** is **the Promise Keeper**.[7]