

The End

Lucky Number 7

"This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."

(Revelation 13:8)

Introduction

"It is the job of a scholar to make the difficult, simple."

In our last lessons, we took a look at the various bad guys throughout Revelation, their attempts at power, how God brings them to nothing, and how we conquer alongside Jesus. Today, we make the move towards numerology, the study and value of various numbers and what their repeated presence means throughout the book of Revelation. We'll start our numbers journey, by looking at the number "seven"...

Occurrences of Seven

There are at least 34 verses that include reference to the number "seven", and many of those verses contain multiple (sometimes as many as six!) occurrences of the word within them. As a result, we'll record below the different kinds of "sevens" that occur throughout the book:

"Seven churches" (1:4, 11, 20)

"Seven spirits" (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)

"Seven golden lampstands" (1:12, 20; 2:1)

"Seven stars" (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1)

"Seven torches of fire" (4:5)

"Seven seals" (5:1, 5; 6:1; 8:1)

"Seven horns" (5:6)

"Seven eyes" (5:6)

"Seven angels" (8:2, 6; 10:7; 11:15; 15:1, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)

"Seven trumpets" (8:2, 6)

"Seven thunders" (10:3, 4)

"Seven heads" (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9)

"Seven plagues" (15:1, 6, 8; 21:9)

"Seven golden bowls" (15:7; 16:1, 7; 17:1; 21:9)

"Seven mountains" (17:9)

"Seven kings" (17:10, 11)

Before we discuss the meaning of seven, we must first understand the overall importance of "seven", specifically that its appearance in Revelation is not unique to the Bible...

Old Testament Occurrences of Seven

This will not be an exhaustive list, or even a long one, but will work to showcase the direct connections to Revelation or other important sevens throughout the OT:

Seven days in the creation week

God rested on the seventh day and commanded Sabbath rest for His people

Seven days for temple dedication

Seven feasts of God

Seven priests blowing seven trumpets after marching seven times at Jericho

King Josiah was seven years old when he began his reign and began to rebuilt the Temple of YHWH

King Hezekiah reinstated the observance of the feast of Unleavened Bread (a seven day festival) and the people were so excited they celebrated an additional seven days

Elisha had Naaman wash in the Jordan seven times

Blood was sprinkled seven times on the mercy set on Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14)

Seven days to atone for the altar and purify it (Ex. 29:37; Ezek. 43:26)

Seven weeks are counted to get to Pentecost (seven days, seven times)

Seven x seven years get us to the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10). Each of the seven bundles are a year of release

From a genealogical standpoint, seven generations separate Adam and Enoch (the first person to not die), Abraham to Moses, and David is stated as being the "seventh" of his family (1 Chronicles 2:15).

We need to forgive our brothers/sisters seven times seven (or seventy times seven)

Within Jewish tradition, there are 613 commandments Jews must follow, but just seven commandments for the rest of humanity (see the Noahide laws).

In addition to this, at Jewish weddings, seven blessings are recited over the bride and groom under the *huppah* (canopy). In some cases, the bride circles the groom seven times, and in other contexts the couple circles one another seven times.

Gematria and Isopsephy

"Is the practice of assigning a numerical value to a name, word, or phrase by reading it as a number"ⁱ

From a historical standpoint, gematria can be traced back to an Assyrian inscription dating back to the 8th century BC and commissioned by Sargon II. The inscription reads: "the king built the wall of Khorsabad 16,283 cubits long to correspond with the numerical value of his name."ⁱⁱ

We should note, that this type of thing has been used in a number of different cultures like Greek (isosephy), Latin, Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylon, etc.

The idea of this is seen in Revelation 13:18:

“This calls for wisdom: let one who has understanding **calculate** the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.”

The word “calculate” means “to count with pebbles, to compute, calculate, reckon”

The biblical text asks for the reader in Revelation to make the connection between the number being presented and the “man” that the number is referring to.

Here are some charts for the Hebrew/Greek letters and how they translate to numbers:

Decimal	Hebrew	Glyph	Decimal	Hebrew	Glyph	Decimal	Hebrew	Glyph
1	<i>Aleph</i>	א	10	<i>Yod</i>	י	100	<i>Kof</i>	ק
2	<i>Bet</i>	ב	20	<i>Kaf</i>	כ	200	<i>Resh</i>	ר
3	<i>Gimel</i>	ג	30	<i>Lamed</i>	ל	300	<i>Shin</i>	ש
4	<i>Dalet</i>	ד	40	<i>Mem</i>	מ	400	<i>Tav</i>	ת
5	<i>He</i>	ה	50	<i>Nun</i>	נ	500	<i>Kaf (final)</i>	ך
6	<i>Vav</i>	ו	60	<i>Samekh</i>	ס	600	<i>Mem (final)</i>	ם
7	<i>Zayin</i>	ז	70	<i>Ayin</i>	ע	700	<i>Nun (final)</i>	ן
8	<i>Het</i>	ח	80	<i>Pe</i>	פ	800	<i>Pe (final)</i>	ף
9	<i>Tet</i>	ט	90	<i>Tsadi</i>	צ	900	<i>Tsadi (final)</i>	ץ

Letter (upper and lower case)	Value	Name	Trans-literation	Ξ ξ	60	Xi	x
A α	1	Alpha	a	Ο ο	70	Omicron	o
B β	2	Beta	b	Π π	80	Pi	p
Γ γ	3	Gamma	g	(Ϟ ϟ)	90	Koppa	q
Δ δ	4	Delta	d	Ρ ρ	100	Rho	r
Ε ε	5	Epsilon	e	Σ σ	200	Sigma	s
(Ϝ ϝ / Ϛ ϛ)	6	Digamma (later Stigma)	w	Τ τ	300	Tau	t
Z ζ	7	Zeta	z	Υ υ	400	Upsilon	y
Η η	8	Eta	ē	Φ φ	500	Phi	ph
Θ θ	9	Theta	th	Χ χ	600	Chi	ch
Ι ι	10	Iota	i	Ψ ψ	700	Psi	ps
Κ κ	20	Kappa	k	Ω ω	800	Omega	ō
Λ λ	30	Lambda	l	(Ϡ ϡ)	900	Sampi	ts
Μ μ	40	Mu	m				
Ν ν	50	Nu	n				

So what is the big deal with the number 7?

The Hebrew letter “Zayin”, has a number of representations. It has to do with food and nourishment as well as “weapon” or “sword”. The letter itself also looks like a “7” when written out.

Some explanations for these dual meanings are that 1) there are times when warfare/fighting precedes having the provisions you need (think the spiritual battles in Revelation and the rest that ultimately follows or the wilderness wandering struggles and the manna that was provided).

2) Another suggestion is that since “Zayin” represents both “7” and “sword” it is not surprising that it is used to divide or “cut up” time (z’man) into units of sevens (Sabbath day rests, seventh year rest of land, year of Jubilee).

For the Jewish people, the number “7” represents completeness, or rest (so bread = having what you need; time = eventually getting to what we need).

Practice: Let’s run this filter of completeness through various “sevens” in the Old Testament (Sabbath rest at end of creation week; blood sprinkled seven times during Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:14, 19, 29, 34)

Q: With the idea of “completeness” in mind, what do we think all of these “sevens” represent in Revelation?

Conclusion

Admittedly, Hebrew numerology is a challenging subject to understand and teach. Whether we understand “how” though, is second to understanding “what”. The number “seven” for the Jewish people, represents fullness and completeness. All of these “sevens” we are presented with in the book of Revelation represent the “fullness” of the enemies attempt to destroy the people of God, the “fullness” of God’s wrath on those enemies, and the reminder that God is watching over the “whole” of His people and will bring them to a place of “complete” righteousness. In other words, God will not leave anything unfinished, but will bring everything to completion in the end.

Take Home

What other numbers have repeat occurrences in the book of Revelation and where can you find them?

ⁱ The Jewish Encyclopedia. New York: Funk & Wagnalls.

ⁱⁱ Daniel Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, vol. 2, University of Chicago Press, 1927, pp. 43, 65.