

The Symbolism of the Number 17 in Scripture

by Greg Austin

In *The Tabernacle in the Wilderness: Its Design and Prophetic Symbolism*, we saw that various symbols are used by God consistently throughout Scripture to represent various aspects of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Man

We saw that Man is represented in Scripture using the color red, which even extends to the use of the reddish metal, copper, and the reddish wood, acacia seyal, in the design of the Tabernacle and elsewhere. We also saw that the Hebrew word for man, "adam", properly means "reddish" or "to show blood".

God

We saw that God is represented in Scripture using the color blue as well as the metal with the same incorruptible quality as God, gold.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer

In our analysis, we saw that Jesus Christ, who was fully Man and fully God, was the blending of the two symbolic colors of red and blue, as was represented by the color purple. These three colors are the only colors present in the three entrances that must be crossed in order to get to the Ark (the Gate, the Door, and the Vail). These three colors also make up the 10 curtains of the first covering called the Tabernacle. The metal used to represent the Atonement price paid by the Blood of Jesus Christ was the metal, silver, which was required of the Hebrew males to make atonement for their souls (symbolically, of course).

Throughout Scripture, God has utilized various numbers to symbolize certain things. A Bible student with much experience will recognize that the numbers 3, 7, 12, and 666 are used symbolically in Scripture. It is without a doubt that God has placed a significant symbolic meaning on these and other numbers that He utilizes in the written Word. In fact, entire books have been written in order to attempt to provide some explanation of the significance of these and other numbers used in Scripture.

Rather than attempt to write an entire book of the subject, Lord willing, the author would like to demonstrate that, as with both colors and metals, God has designated one number to be representative of His Son, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This number is 17.

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In analyzing the number 17, if you have read *The Tabernacle in the Wilderness: Its Design and Prophetic Symbolism* you should have the background necessary to understand the two aspects of Jesus Christ and how God consistently symbolizes those aspects. From His Father, Almighty God, Jesus Christ was fully God. From His mother, Mary, Jesus was fully Man. The aspect of being fully God might be referred to as the "Spiritual" aspect of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the aspect of being fully Man might be referred to as the temporal, or "Carnal", aspect of Jesus Christ.

Almighty God built these two aspects into His Creation so that we may easily remember them. Using the Scripturally significant colors as an example, the Earth is surrounded by a sky of blue. On a clear, sunny day no matter where you are in the world, if you look up you will see a blue sky. Likewise, if you look into the clear waters of the Caribbean from above, they will appear to be blue as well. The blue that you clearly see in both of these items, the sky and the sea, is easily to perceive as long as you have physical eyes to see and are not colorblind. This blue, though, is not something physical that anyone can hold or put in a jar. While you may be able to fill a jar with the air from the sky or water from the Caribbean, the jar will not be able to capture the blue. In fact, both the air and the water will probably be clear and without any color when viewed in the jar. This is how Scripture defines the Spiritual aspect of the Triune God and His doctrine. If you have been given eyes to see and ears to hear, then you will recognize both.

Similarly, the color red¹ is used in Scripture to symbolize Man. Our Creator gave us an easy way to remember that red is symbolic of the flesh by making the blood of our bodies red in color. If you accidentally cut yourself, the red becomes not only visible, but touchable as well. Unlike the blue of the sky, the red of your blood can be put in a jar and the contents of that jar will appear red.

Our Creator built these colors into His Creation so that we may easily remember what they symbolize. Having created absolutely everything, including mathematics, God built numbers which are also symbolic of things Spiritual and things Carnal into His Creation. Like the colors, the numbers are very easy to remember.

Just as blue is symbolic of things Spiritual, the number 7 is symbolic of things Spiritual as well. In Scripture, the number 7 is ALWAYS used in a manner to symbolize the Spiritual. While there are instances where a diligent reader may be inclined to consider the use of the number 7 to be mere coincidence or that it is actually referring to something Carnal. One such instance, for example, are the letters to the 7 churches in Asia which appear in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Revelation. The common belief, even among many Bible-believing Christians, is that the letters to these 7 specific congregations only applied to those congregations which existed in 94 A.D., when Jesus Christ gave John the Revelation. Nothing could be farther from the Truth. Because Jesus Christ specifically listed 7 churches, we can know for certain that the intent of the letters was Spiritual in nature. These letters were written to the Spiritual Church which was bought with the Blood of Jesus Christ.

The author's proof that the number 7 only relates to things Spiritual comes from God's Creation. Almighty God has designed us with 7 sensory receptors in our head: 2 ears, 2 eyes, 2 nostrils of our nose, and one tongue. These receptors can only perceive things that already exist. These 7

¹ Also known by various other names in the KJV, but all still symbolic of the same thing.

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sensory receptors cannot produce anything, like an idol for example. They can, however, perceive an idol that someone has created. In His Word, God continually uses these 7 receptors in analogies related to perception. "Eyes to see" and "ears to hear" are two good examples that cover 4 of our receptors. The purpose of the Altar of Incense in the Tabernacle was to make a sweet smell unto the Lord and in the 8th chapter of Revelation, we are told that the smell of the incense was symbolic of the prayers of the Saints, or the Spiritual Church:

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

Revelation 8:3-4

The final receptor is the tongue. While the tongue is a necessary tool used for speech, speech is a creative and Carnal act that requires breath from the lungs for its creation. The tongue on its own allows us to taste. The Spiritual Church is referred to using the sense of taste by Jesus Christ in the following passage:

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

Matthew 5:13

Seven, the Spiritual number, is built into God's Creation so that we may easily remember its symbolism in Scripture by the 7 sensory receptors in the human head. These receptors only receive and aid in perception and do not create anything Carnal.

The number 10 is used in Scripture to denote items that are temporal or Carnal in nature. The most recognizable use of the number 10 in this manner is the Law given to Moses, which consisted of 10 individual Commandments. The diligent Bible student will find that the number 10 is used symbolically throughout Scripture in order to denote something as belonging to this Carnal world. Things symbolized by the number 10 in Scripture are tangible and can be touched.

Once again, Our Creator, God, built the number 10 into His Creation in a manner that is easy to remember. The Hebrew units of measurement used in the Tabernacle were derived from Man's hands and arms. The works of Man are accomplished using his two hands which contain 10 fingers. Idols and graven images are made with these 10 fingers. Things made with the 10 fingers exist in this world only and not in the Spiritual.

The God-Man, Jesus Christ, however, was 100% Spiritual and 100% Carnal. Jesus was the perfect blending of the two, the Spiritual and the Carnal. As with the color purple, which is a blending of blue and red, the number of Jesus Christ used throughout Scripture is the number 17. Seventeen consists of both the Spiritual, represented by the number 7, and the Carnal, represented by the number 10.

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The information which follows will probably be new to you, even if the information above was not. Lord willing, the author will show that Scripture absolutely uses the number 17 in order to symbolize Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The starting point for our analysis, is the first covering of the Boards of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. We saw earlier that the first covering made of fine twined linen of blue, purple, and red with cherubims was, without a doubt, a symbol of the Promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. This first covering, which is most properly called the Tabernacle, consisted of 10 individual panels which were each 4 cubits wide by 28 cubits long. The dimensions of one panel, then, could be expressed as 4 by 28. This ratio of width to length is exactly 1 by 7. Therefore, the Tabernacle consisted of 10 panels which have 7 built into their proportions. We saw that the 10 panels were joined into 2 larger panels of 5 smaller panels each, being joined together at the Vale, which was the Flesh of Jesus Christ. One of these panels covered the Holy Place and one panel covered the Most Holy Place, which we saw were symbolic of the Carnal history of the Spiritual Church in the Shadows of the Old Testament and the Light of the Gospel, respectively.

While we are examining the number of Jesus Christ in the Shadows of the Old Testament, the author would like to draw the reader's attention to the 119th Psalm. In the 105th verse of the 119th Psalm, we are told:

"NUN. Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Psalms 119:105

The "word" referred to in this verse is a direct reference to Jesus Christ, who was also symbolized by the 7-Branded Lampstand in the Tabernacle. This is confirmed at the beginning of the Gospel of John when we are told:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was
God."

John 1:1

The reader will note that this direct reference to Jesus Christ in the Psalms occurs at the 119th Psalm, which is $17 \times 7 = 119$. The 105th verse is $17 \times 5 = 105$. The Hebrew letter "nun", which denotes the beginning of this series of verses, is the 14th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which is $7 \times 2 = 14$. The celebration of Passover, a foreshadowing of the death of Our Lord and Savior, was commanded to be observed on the 14th day of the first month, forever.

The format of the 105th verse of the 119th Psalm also blends the Carnal and the Spiritual consistent with the symbolism of the number 17. The first half of the verse concerns "a lamp unto my feet". Both a lamp and feet are Carnal things that can be "touched." The second half of the verse deals with "a light unto my path." Neither a light nor a path are items that can be "touched" and are therefore, symbolically Spiritual. The word "path" in this verse concerns the writer's journey through life as opposed to a physical "path" through the woods or a concrete highway.

In another interesting piece of Scriptural symbolism, the Children of Israel were led out of the Wilderness and across the Jordan river by Joshua, son of Nun. There are 3 items of foreshadowing in this fact:

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- The first item of interest is that the Hebrew name of Jesus Christ, was Yahshua, which means "Yah (God) will save"². While worthy of its own in depth analysis, in order to remain concise the author must point out that the letter "J" and its corresponding sound did not have an equivalent in either Hebrew or Greek, nor did it exist with its current sound in English when the Bible was translated into English in the 1500s. The name, Joshua, IS the name of Jesus Christ;
- The second item of interest is that the Hebrew word "Nun" [H5125 & H5126], as in "son of Nun", according to Strong's means, "perpetuity" or "to resprout". While it is possible that the reference to Joshua's being the "son of Nun" is a reference to his actual father named Nun, it is Scripturally significant that Joshua is the son of "rebirth", having led the physical Children of Israel across the Jordan river and into the Promised Land. Jesus Christ (Yahshua) IS both the Son of Perpetuity and the Son of Rebirth.
- The third item of interest is the fact that the verse in the 119th Psalm that refers directly to Jesus Christ is denoted with the Hebrew letter "Nun", which is pronounced the same as the Hebrew word "Nun", further showing the awesomeness of Our Creator and the complete consistency of His message and symbolism in Scripture.

The number 17 is also embedded in various significant dates used in Scripture.

- Noah's Flood began on the 17th day of the second month (Gen. 7:11);
- Noah's Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on the 17th day of the seventh month (Gen. 8:4);
- Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years before he died (Gen. 47:28); and,
- Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the 17th day of the first month.³

² Matthew 1:21 and Strong's H3442.

³ Again, this could be an entire study unto itself. For the sake of brevity, the reader must understand that the Scriptural "day" begins at sunset (Gen 1:5) and that any portion of a day is counted Scripturally as a "day". Jesus Christ was put to death on Passover, the 14th day of the first month in fulfillment of the foreshadowing celebration of Passover (Lev 23:5 & Luke 22:15). The Last Supper was actually the Scripturally-ordained Passover feast celebrated the evening (or beginning) of the 14th day of the first month. Jesus was crucified during the within 24 hours of the Last Supper, during the daylight hours of Passover. Scripture notes that He was put into the tomb still during the daylight hours of the 14th day, as the 15th day of the first month was a High Sabbath when no work could be done (Lev. 23:7). These daylight hours at the end of the 14th day count as one of the 3 days. Jesus was in the tomb for the day and night portion of both the 15th day (the 1st day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a High Sabbath) and the 16th day (which was Saturday, the weekly Sabbath). Jesus remained in the tomb for some part of the night of the 17th day, being resurrected and leaving the tomb before dawn (Matt 28:1). There you have the 3 days (14th, 15th, and 16th) and the 3 nights (15th, 16, and 17th) that Jesus was in the tomb, being resurrected on the 17th day of the first month.

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In the last miracle in the Gospels, which is contained in the 21st chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus instructs His Disciples to throw their fishing net into the sea after a night of catching no fish. When they go to pull the net out of the water, they find that there are 153 fish caught in the net and that the net did not break.

Many learned and Godly men have spoke and written on this miracle, but few have addressed it from a mathematical perspective. The number 153 has an unusual mathematical property that few would recognize. The number 153 is the number 17 combined with all of its component numbers expressed as:

$$1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12+13+14+15+16+17 = 153$$

Therefore, the 153 fish represent the Spiritual Church, which is also known as the Bride of Christ, combined with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.⁴

What is interesting, the highly analyzed, yet thoroughly misunderstood number, 666, shares this same property. The number 666 is purely the Number of Man, Man having been created on the 6th day.

$$\begin{aligned} 6 \times 6 &= 36 \\ \text{or} \\ 6+6+6+6+6+6 &= 36 \end{aligned}$$

$$1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12+13+14+15+\dots+36 = 666$$

Rather than continuing on with too much additional analysis, the author will point out one final instance of the number 17 and its symbolic reference to Jesus Christ. The number 17 is built into the number of books making up The Word, which we saw earlier is, itself, a reference to Jesus Christ.

If the reader counts the number of separate books in the KJV, he will notice that there appear to be 66 books. We just briefly saw what significance the number 6 has in Scripture. God forbid that He would imprint the Number of Man, 6, onto His Word. This is one of those instances where, if something does not seem to be consistent with the symbolism in Scripture, it probably isn't.

There are 27 individual books in the New Testament. The number 27 appears to be Divinely inspired as the correct number, because 27 is 3^3 ($3 \times 3 \times 3$) or a Trinity of the Trinity. This leaves 39 to be the number of books in the Old Testament. The number 39 is 13×3 and has no Godly symbolism attached to it. In fact, the number 13 has quite the opposite attached to it. Nimrod, who built Babel, was the 13th generation of mankind and Judas, who betrayed Jesus, was the 13th Apostle. Like the number 66, the number 39 just does not fit.

⁴ "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

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A little diligent research showed that several books of the Hebrew Scriptures were separated into 2 individual books, helping to distort the actual number of books in the Old Testament. The books, or scrolls, making up the original Hebrew Scriptures were divided into three main groupings, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. They were further subdivided as follows⁵:

The Law (5 Books)

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

The Prophets (8 Books)

- Joshua
- Judges
- Samuel (1 Samuel and 2 Samuel in the KJV)
- Kings (1 Kings and 2 Kings in the KJV)
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

The Writings (11 Books)

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- Song of Solomon
- Ruth
- Lamentations
- Ecclesiastes
- Esther
- Daniel
- Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra, Nehemiah in the KJV)
- Chronicles (1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles in the KJV)

The actual number of books of the Old Testament is 24 from the Old Testament perspective. The number 24 is used consistently in a positive manner throughout Scripture, being 8 x 3, as well as 12 x 2. It should also be noted that there were 24 "courses" of priests established by David.⁶

⁵ The author utilized the *Complete Jewish Bible*, translated by David H. Stern, for the make-up of the original Hebrew Scriptures.

⁶ 1 Chronicles 24:1-19.

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With 27 books in the New Testament and 24 books in the Old Testament, the Word consists of a total of 51 books, not 66. The number 51 is consistent with the symbolism related to The Word, Jesus Christ, in that 51 is 17×3 .

With the above analysis in mind, Lord willing, the reader will begin to see the more of the marvelous handiwork of Our Creator each time the Bible is read. The number 17, like the color purple in the Tabernacle, is symbolic of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Greg Austin
c/o Primitive Church Ministries
P.O. Box 31326
St. Louis, Missouri 63131
USA

info@PrimitiveChurchHour.com

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