

One, Two, Three

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Biblical numerology is the study of how numbers in Scripture sometimes carry meaning or significance beyond their numerical value. It can be a slippery endeavor.

Sometimes it's clear that a number carries underlying significance, and one is able with relative ease to determine what that is. Think, seven. Other times, however, a number's significance is less obvious, and one has to examine the Scriptures more extensively to identify a pattern of usage (if, in fact, there is one). And in the process, one finds: (1) that numbers sometimes overlap in significance or meaning; (2) that numbers with apparent associations aren't always used in ways that align with those associations; and (3) that numbers usually appear only as incidental details, and carry no other meaning than their numerical value. In short, one discovers that not every numerical appearance is part of a pattern, and that no numerical pattern is without exception.

To some degree, then, studying the Bible's numbers is a bit like studying Old Testament types or New Testament parables. The student finds that there's enough information to ascertain intended meaning, but that not every piece of information is intended to contribute to that meaning.

And not all numbers have meaning. In fact, most of them don't. But some definitely do. And below, are three.

One: The Number of Union &/or Unity

- Of the union of husband and wife, Moses wrote: *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined [i.e. united] to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (**Genesis 2:24**).
- At Babel, all of humanity was united in purpose such that the LORD said of them, *"Indeed the people are one"* (**Genesis 11:6**).
- Describing His unity with the Father, Jesus declared, *"I and My Father are one"* (**John 10:30**).
- Concerning unity among the apostles, Jesus prayed *"that they may be one"* (**John 17:11**).
- Concerning unity among Christians, Jesus prayed, *"that they all may be one"* (**John 17:21**).
- Christians enjoy the *"unity of the Spirit"* (**Ephesians 4:3**), since they are those who *"by one Spirit have been baptized into one body"* (**1 Corinthians 12:13**).
- And Christians can experience a fuller oneness with one another when they attain to *"the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God"* (**Ephesians 4:13**).

Two: The Number of Distinction, Difference, &/or Division

- When God created humanity, He made two distinct genders: *"male and female He created them"* (**Genesis 1:27**).
- To Rebekah, God said, *"Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body"* (**Genesis 25:23**). And these two nations [Israel and Edom], perpetually at odds with one another, would come from two boys very different from one another: *"Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents"* (**Genesis 25:27**).

- While in prison, Joseph encountered the baker and the butler, two men with two very different futures: “*Pharaoh will lift up your head*” versus “*Pharaoh will lift off your head*” (**Genesis 40:12, 19**).
- When the Word came to His own, He was of two distinct natures: Son of God and Son of Man.
- When He died, He ratified the second of two different covenants, the former served “*in the oldness of the letter*,” the latter “*in the newness of the Spirit*” (**Romans 7:6**).
- He died between two thieves, two men who chose very different paths: one repentant in the end, one rebellious to the end (**Luke 23:39-42**).
- He will someday separate for eternity these same two types of people “*as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats*” (**Matthew 25:32**).
- Finally, the word of God pierces “*to the division of soul and spirit*” (**Hebrews 4:12**).

Three: The Number for God or that Which Flows From Him

- God is Father, Word, and Spirit.
- He is “*Holy, holy, holy*” (**Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8**).
- We are made according to His likeness (**Genesis 1:26**), and so are “*spirit, soul, and body*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).
- God gave Moses three signs to prove he was divinely sent: rod becoming a serpent, hand becoming leprous, and water becoming blood (**Exodus 4:1-9**).
- It was the third plague that moved Pharaoh’s magicians to say, “*This is the finger of God*” (**Exodus 8:19**).
- In the law of Moses, God ordained that “*three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD*” (**Exodus 24:17**): the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Ingathering (**Exodus 23:14-16**).
- The inner sanctuary of the temple (the Most Holy Place), where God dwelt between the cherubim (**Numbers 7:89; 1 Samuel 4:4**), was a room of three identical dimensions: “*twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high*” (**1 Kings 6:20**).
- Three times, God spoke from heaven during Jesus’ ministry: at His baptism (**Matthew 3:17**), at His transfiguration (**Matthew 17:5**), and soon before His crucifixion (**John 12:28**).
- Jesus, “*the eternally blessed God*” (**Romans 9:5**), resurrected on “*the third day*” (**Luke 24:46**).
- He performed three resurrections during His ministry: the 12-year old girl (**Mark 5:35-42**), the widow’s son (**Luke 7:11-16**), and Lazarus (**John 11:41-44**).
- He selected three men for His inner circle: Peter, James, and John.
- Three times, He selected them to accompany Him: when He raised the 12-year old girl (**Mark 5:37**), when He was transfigured (**Matthew 17:1**), and when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:37**).
- Three times, He prayed in the Garden (**Matthew 26:39-44**).

- Three times, He prayed on the cross: “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (**Luke 23:34**); “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*” (**Matthew 27:46**); “*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit*” (**Luke 23:46**).
- The gospel of Jesus Christ, “*the gospel of God*” (**Romans 1:1**) includes three facts of primary importance: Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).
- There are “three that bear witness” to Jesus Christ: “*the Spirit, the water, and the blood*” (**1 John 5:7-8**).