

The Number 12

Twelve can be found in 187 places in God's word. Revelation alone has 22 occurrences of the number. The meaning of 12, which is considered a perfect number, is that it symbolizes God's power and authority, as well as serving as a perfect governmental foundation. It can also symbolize completeness or the nation of Israel as a whole. For example, Jacob (Israel) had twelve sons, each of which represented a tribe begun by a prince, for 12 princes total. Ishmael, who was born to Abraham through Hagar, also had twelve princes.

God specified that twelve unleavened cakes of bread be placed every week in the temple with frankincense next to each of the two piles that were made. The priests were commanded to change the bread every Sabbath day (Leviticus 24).

Christ called and choose twelve men to bear witness to what he did and to spread the good news of the gospel to the entire world. After he was raised from the dead, Jesus told the eleven disciples (Judas had killed himself) that God had given him ALL power and authority in both earth and heaven (God's divine authority - Matthew 28:18).

Twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel (144,000 total) will receive salvation during the end time's Great Tribulation (Revelation 7). A set of 144,000 (12 x 12,000), possibly the same as those in chapter 7, will be taken from earth in order to serve and follow the Lamb of God (Revelation 14:1 - 5). Christ's bride in Revelation 12, the church, wears a crown containing twelve stars.

New Jerusalem, which is made in heaven and brought to the earth by God himself, contains 12 gates made of pearl which are each manned by an angel. Over each gate will be one of the names of Israel's twelve tribes. The walls are 144 cubits high (12 multiplied by itself - Revelation 21:16 - 17), with the city itself being 12,000 furlongs square.

Other Appearances of the Number Twelve

There are twelve names in the Bible that have only two letters. They are Ai (Joshua 7:2), Ar (Num. 21:15), Ed (Joshua 22:34), Er (Genesis 38:3), Ir (1Chronicles 7:12), No (Jeremiah 46:25), Og (Num. 21:33), On (Num. 16:11), Pe (Psalm 119:129), So (2Kings 17:4), Ur (Genesis 11:28) and Uz (Genesis 10:23).

The lineage of twelve patriarchs saved by Noah's Ark are Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Heber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Solomon appointed twelve officers over Israel.

How is the number 12 related to an anointed service?

Twelve people are specially noted in scripture as being anointed for a unique task or responsibility. They are Aaron and his four sons to serve as priests (Exodus 29:7 - 9) and Saul (1Samuel 10:1), David (1Samuel 16:13) and Solomon (1Kings 1:39) to serve as kings over a united Israel. David's son Absalom, who wanted to take the throne of his David but was killed (2 Samuel 19:10), was also anointed by some to be king. The remaining three specially anointed are King Jehu of Israel (2 Kings 9:6) and Kings Joash (2Kings 11:12) and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30) of Judah.

Additional info on the Biblical Meaning of 12

The Scripture's first recording of Jesus' words occurs when he is twelve years old (Luke 2:42).

The high priest's breastplate, also called the breast-plate of decision, had twelve stones embedded in it. Each stone represented a tribe of Israel. The Urim and Thummim were part of the High Priest's breastplate. They were primarily used to consult God regarding important matters (1Samuel 28: 3 - 6, Numbers 27:21 and so on). Both the first century historian Josephus and the Talmud identify the Urim and Thummim with the breastplate stones.

Of all the numerals found in scripture, twelve, along with three, four, seven and ten, are unmistakably used in a symbolic fashion in God's word.