

THE SEVENS OF REVELATION

Nowhere else in Scripture is the use of numbers more prevalent than in Revelation, from obvious through implied to extraordinarily discreet. Sevens are the most overt presence ("seven" occurs fifty-two times). The more obvious are:

- 7 letters to the seven churches 2:1--3:22
- 7 seals on the scroll 6:1--8:1
- 7 trumpets 8:6--14:5
- 7 bowls of judgment 16:1-21
- 7 proclamations about Babylon 18:1-24

Scattered more discretely are seven beatitudes (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14), and often, as a descriptive mechanism, series of seven attributes. An example, arranged chiasmically, is the appearance of one like the Son of Man in the Prologue (Rev. 1:14-16).

- A HEAD: His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow;
- B FACE: His eyes were like a flame of fire,
- C LIMBS: His feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace,
X VOICE: and His voice was like the sound of many waters.
- C' LIMBS: In His right hand He held seven stars,
- B' FACE: and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword,
- A' HEAD: and His face was like the sun shining with full force.

At the conclusion of Revelation, the perfection of the heavenly city is reflected in the ideal of a sevenfold chiasmus.

- A Holy City: glory of God (21:9-11)
- B Twelve gates (21:12-13)
- C Foundations (21:14)
X Dimensions of the Holy City (21:15-18)
- C' Foundations (21:19-20)
- B' Twelve gates (21:21)
- A' Holy City: glory of God (21:22-27)

The setting for the throne of God in the opening scene of the heavenly court displays seven characteristics (Rev. 4:2-6).

Introduction: At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

1. And **the one seated** there looks like jasper and carnelian,
2. and around the throne is **a rainbow** that looks like an emerald.
3. Around the throne are **twenty-four thrones**,

4. and seated on the thrones and **twenty-four elders**, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads.
5. Coming from the throne are **flashes of lightning** and rumblings and peals of thunder;
6. and in front of the throne burn **seven flaming torches**, which are the seven spirits of God;
7. and in front of the throne there is something like a **sea of glass**, like crystal.

Commonly, ascriptions of praise are sevenfold.

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive **power** and **wealth** and **wisdom** and **might** and **honor** and **glory** and **blessing!**" (Rev. 5:12).

In Revelation 7:12, the "seven" are enveloped by "amen".

"Amen! **Blessing** and **glory** and **wisdom** and **thanksgiving** and **honor** and **power** and **might** be to our God into the ages of the ages! Amen".

With the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-16), John creates two descending hierarchies of sevens, one forming the seventh part of another. They represent the hierarchies of the heavens and the earth, both brought into cataclysmic chaos by the supreme power.

When He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came

1. a great **earthquake**;
2. the **sea** became black as sackcloth,
3. the full **moon** became like blood,
4. and the **stars** of the sky fell to the earth
5. The **sky** vanished like a scroll breaking apart
6. and every **mountain and island** was removed from its place.
7. Then the
 - a. **kings** of the earth and the
 - b. **great men** and the
 - c. **commanders** and the
 - d. **rich** and the
 - e. **powerful**, and everyone,
 - f. **slave** and
 - g. **free**, hid in the caves and among the rocks.

MISCELLANEOUS CHIASTIC STRUCTURES OF REVELATION

The first four characteristics of the Son of Man in the Prologue (Rev. 1:14-20) anticipate "these are the words of", but in reverse order, forming a chiasmus. The last four similarly link with images from the close of the Book.

Characteristics from the initial vision:

- a "eyes . . . flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze" (1:14b-15a)
- b "from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword" (1:16b)
- c "the first and the last . . . was dead . . . alive into the ages of the ages (1:17b-18a)
- d "7 stars . . . my right hand, and the 7 golden lampstand" (1:20)

Characteristics from "the words of . . ." in first four letters:

- Ephesus d' "holds the 7 stars . . . walks among the 7 golden lampstand" (2:1)
- Smyrna c' "the first and the last, who was dead and came to life" (2:8b)
- Pergamum b' "Him who has the sharp two-edged sword" (2:12b)
- Thyatira a' "eyes like a flame of fire . . . feet are like burnished bronze" (2:18b)

Similarly, whereas the first four letters open with images recalling the Book's introduction (Rev. 1:9-20), the closing verses of the last four anticipate themes at the end of the Book.

- Thyatira a "To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star" (2:28)
- Sardis b "you will be clothed like them in white robes" (3:5)
- Philadelphia c "I will write on you . . . the name of . . . New Jerusalem" (3:12)
- Laodicea d "I will give you a place with Me on My throne" (3:21)
- d' "Then I saw thrones, and those seated . . . authority to judge" (20:4)
- c' "I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming . . . from God (21:2)
- b' "Blessed are those who was their robes" (21:14)
- a' "It is I, Jesus . . . I am the bright and morning star" (22:16)

- A Forty-two months (11:2) // A' Forty-two months (13:5)
- B Twelve hundred and sixty days (11:3) // B' Twelve hundred and sixty days (12:6)
- C Three and a half days (11:9) // C' Three and a half days (11:11)