

Ten is used figuratively in the Bible to indicate fulness or completeness. The number appears in two hundred verses in the Bible for a total of two hundred and twenty-six times. In the Pentateuch (5 books of Law), the number is simply used literally, most notably in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20.

In the Old Testament books of history, the number is used literally ninety-seven times. One notable use is when the women of Israel began to praise the upcoming young David by proclaiming after his battle with Goliath, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands!" (1 Sam. 18:7; etc.). This would have cost David his life had it not been for God's care of him. Also, when the nation of Israel divided during the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, ten tribes left and formed the northern nation.

In the Old Testament prophets, the number ten appears thirty-eight times in thirty-one verses. The prophetic book of Daniel uses the number ten figuratively often. For example, in a night vision Daniel saw a terrible beast with ten horns (Dan. 7:7). Again, ten horns symbolize ten kings (Dan. 7:20, 24) showing us fulness or completeness of power.

In the New Testament, the number appears thirty times. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like ten virgins who took their lamps to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1). Ten talents was the number possessed by the man to whom five talents were given and he doubled them (Matt. 25:28). Luke records the parable of the woman who had ten coins and lost one (15:8). Then there were ten lepers cleansed by Jesus (Lk. 17:12-17). It's amazing how many times the number ten shows up in the Gospel accounts.

In Revelation, ten is used eleven times, always symbolically. For example, Christ warns the saints in Smyrna that they will have tribulation ten days (2:10). I doubt anyone would argue that this was a literal ten days, but is figurative for a short, but full persecution.

Again we see, as we did in Daniel, a beast with ten horns and on his horns ten crowns (13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16). Obviously this has reference to the Roman Empire and its complete authority over the world at that time.

Today's date is October 10, 2010. Is that significant? It is for those who obey the Gospel for it is today (2 Cor. 6:2). Ten happens to be my favorite number. Today is also my brother's birthday. He is about 110!

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