Symbolism in Numbers

Christ, the Master Teacher, often uses His creations to teach about His Plan of Salvation and gospel principles

**One.** The number 1 is symbolic of the **Lord, unity, and holiness**. He is called The Holy One of Israel (See 2 Nephi 25:29); “The Lord is one and His name one” (Zech. 14:7-9). “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” reads Deuteronomy 6:4. John 10:30 adds,  “I and my Father are one.” The first commandment given to Moses reads, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” inviting us to place God and His holiness first on our lives. When two people are married, it can be referred to as *Holy* Matrimony as the two become one.

**Two.** The number 2 is symbolic of **division**. Recall that there were two trees in the Garden of Eden causing division (Genesis 2:9). In the Old Testament, two birds (or goats) were taken for sacrifice and one was slain and one was set free Leviticus 14:4–3,16:15–16). The Savior admonished us to not be divided by serving two masters (see Matthew 6:24). Two cherubim guarded Ark of the Covenant, dividing or separating man from God (Exodus 25:18-20). Two angels were sent to Sodom (Genesis 19:1) as the Lord sought to divide the wicked from the righteous in that sinful city. Noah brought two of every kind of animal into the ark during the time when the Lord was separating the righteous followers from the wicked rebels (see Genesis 6).

**Three.** The number 3 is typical of **covenants**. We make sacred covenants using all three members of the Godhead, covenanting with God in the name of Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Tabernacle, a place of covenant making, had three places:  outer court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place (Exodus 27:9-19). The Ark of the Covenant contained three objects: The gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant (Heb. 9:4). There were three primary feast days in Israel as they sought to make and keep covenants with God: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-19). The baby Moses, who would eventually receive the new covenant (The 10 Commandments) from the Lord, was placed in the river after three months (Exod 2:3; cf. Acts 7:20; Heb 11:23). Esther, seeking for her and her people to establish an agreement with the Lord, said, “Go…and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days night or day…” (Esther 4:15-16). Abraham, making a covenant with God, went to offer his only son Isaac on the third day of his journey to Moriah (Gen 22:4). Samuel was called by the Lord three times (see 1 Samuel 3:7-10) before covenanting to serve Him. Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited Elizabeth and stayed for three months (Luke 1:56). Satan tempted Jesus three times, trying to persuade Him to break covenants (see Matthew 4:1-10). Christ prayed in three periods in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:39,42,44). Peter denied Christ three times (Luke 22:54-62). Recall that one third of God’s children rebelled against covenants in the pre-earth life (see D&C 29:6). Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Genesis 6:10), and the Lord established a new covenant with him. The Ark that Noah built was three stories high and 300 hundred cubits long (See Genesis 6:16). We read in modern revelation that the three degrees of glory separate God’s children based on covenants kept or broken (see D&C 76).

Other notable uses of the number three: Elijah poured water on his burnt offering three times (see 1 Kings 18:34) and stretched himself over a dead child three times in an effort to raise the boy from the dead (see 1 Kings 17:21). Daniel and his three friends were schooled for three years with regard to the language and literature of the Babylonians (Dan 1:3-5). Daniel prayed three times a day giving thanks to God (Dan 6:10, 13). Jesus served a three-year mortal ministry. On Golgotha were three crosses; darkness reigned for some three hours while Jesus was on the cross and there were three days of darkness in the Americas.  Paul stayed in Ephesus for three months and “spoke boldly” in the synagogue (Acts 19:8), and subsequently stayed three months in Greece (Acts 20:3) and stayed on the island of Malta for three months (Acts 28:11) and served three missions. Peter was instructed via a vision three times to eat animals previously declared to be unclean (Acts 10:9-16). The Lord talked for three hours to the brother of Jared (Ether 2:14).

**Four.** The number 4 may represent things that are **temporal** and tied to the earth. On the fourth day of creation the world itself was finished (Gen. 1:14-19; consider also the four corners of the earth, the four seasons, the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, etc). Four times Eve, the mother of all living, is mentioned in the Bible by name (Genesis 3:20, Genesis 4:1, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:13). Forty days of fasting and the Great Flood. In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13) there are four kinds of soil. While on the cross, the Roman soldiers divided up Jesus’ clothes into four parts (John 19:23), pointing our minds possibly to their fixation with things temporal and forgetting the Eternal Being that hung before them on the cross.

**Five.** The number 5 is a symbol for the **Atonement and grace**. There were five sacrifices portrayed in Gen. 15:9 by Abraham, symbolic of the ultimate sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. Leviticus outlines five sacrifices needed for forgiveness (Lev. 1-3 - Burnt Offering, Sin Offering, Meal Offering, Trespass Offering, and Peace Offering). The fifth time Noah’s name is used is in Gen. 6:8 which reads, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” The fifth time the name Ruth is found in the Bible, it speaks of grace: Ruth 2:2—”And Ruth said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean that I may find favor.” The fifth time the name Boaz is found in the Bible, it also speaks of grace: “Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, as I am an foreigner?” The fifth time that the book of 1 Samuel mentions David is in 1 Sam. 16:22, 22 “And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, ‘Let David now stand before me; for he has found favor in my sight.’” 1 Sam. 17:40 David chose five smooth stones to fight Goliath; we need the Atonement to fight our battles in life as well. Benjamin was honored by Joseph, who is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ, with five times more food than his brothers (Genesis 43:34) and five sets of clothes (Genesis 45:22). The tabernacle, a place where believers went to perform ordinances pointing to the Atonement, contained five curtains (Exodus 26:3), five bars (Exodus 26:26 - 27), five pillars and five sockets (Exodus 26:37) and an altar made of wood that was five cubits long and five cubits wide (Exodus 27:1); the height of the court within the tabernacle was five cubits (Exodus 27:18). The number five is found 318 times in the Bible. The number 318 is significant because it is the number of servants in Abram’s house who rescued Lot (Gen. 14:14), just as the atonement rescues us. In the Book of Mormon, Samuel the Lamanite prophesied to the people that in five years the ultimate grace of God would be manifest in the birth of the Messiah (see Helaman 14:2).

**Six.** The number 6 is synonymous with being **incomplete** (and correlates to wickedness). Recall that man was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:24-31); a day on earth consists of twenty-four hours (4 x 6) with twelve months in a year (6 x 2) and hours consisting of sixty minutes (6 x 10) and minutes containing sixty seconds (6 x 10). In the Old Testament, Cain’s descendants are given only as far as the sixth generation (see Gen. 4:16-24). Hebrew slaves were to serve for six years (Ex. 21:2). Moses had to wait for six days before he was allowed to go up the mount to meet the Lord (Ex. 24:16-18). Man must wait six thousand years to meet the Lord in the Second Coming of Christ (see Revelation 6:12). In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon erected a wicked idol 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. Goliath was six cubits and six inches tall (see 1 Samuel 17:4) wearing six pieces of armor (1 Samuel 17:5–7), with a spear whose head weighed six hundred shekels of iron (1 Samuel 17:7), the symbol of wickedness for centuries to come. Jesus’ first miracle changed six pots of water to wine for the wedding feast (John 2:6) teaching us that He can purify and change our wickedness into something better. The Mark of the Beast is 666 (Revelation 13:18).

**Seven.** In contrast with 6 is the number 7. Seven represents being **complete, whole, and perfect**. In the book of Revelation, we find seven seals (Rev 7:2); the seven stars; the Seven Churches and the seven lamps (Rev. 1:20). There is a lamb with 7 horns and 7 eyes (Rev. 7:7); 7 angels with 7 trumpets (Rev. 8:2); 7 thunders (Rev 10:3); a dragon with 7 heads and 7 diadems (Rev 13:3); a beast with 7 heads (Rev19:9); 7 angels having the 7 last plagues (Rev 15:1); and 7 golden bowls of the wrath of God (Rev 15:7) and a scarlet-colored beast with 7 heads (Rev 18:17) which are 7 mountains (Rev 18:23) and 7 kings (Rev. 18:24). In Revelation, the word “Jesus” is found seven times, “Jesus Christ” seven times and the wrath of God seven times. In the Old Testament, it took seven days to consecrate Aaron and his sons to the priesthood (Lev. 8:31-35). Enoch, whose city was whole and close to perfect, was said to be “the seventh from Adam” (Jude 1:14). Joshua’s 7 days' march with the 7 priests blowing 7 trumpets as they went around the walls of Jericho, and the 7-times march on the 7th day (Neh. 9:6). Job, a ‘perfect man’ (Job 1:1) had 7 sons (Job 1:2; compare Job 42:13). Naaman washed in the Jordan 7 times before becoming clean. Elisha laid upon a dead boy and after the boy sneezed 7 times, he arose (2 Kings 4:35). An animal was required to be 7 days old before it could be offered in sacrifice (Ex. 22:30). Israel was commanded to remove all leaven from their homes for a period of seven days (see 12:15, 19) prior to Passover. Delilah cut off seven locks of Samson’s hair. Blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat 7 times on Yom Kippur. Jesus made seven statements while on the cross. Seven rebellions by Laman and Lemuel are recorded in 1 Nephi. Seven churches are noted in the land of Zarahemla. (Mosiah 25:33). Seven converted Lamanite cities and lands are listed. (Alma 23:7-13). The Nephite monetary system is based on the number seven. (Alma 11). Seven are killed by Ammon at the Waters of Sebus (Alma 18:16). Lehite tribes are numbered at seven (Jacob 1:13). Think also of 7 days of creation; 7 notes making a perfect scale; 7 gospel dispensations; 7 colors of the rainbow; 7 seas of the ocean; 7 continents.

**Eight.** The number 8 relates to a **new beginning**. Eight souls were saved from the flood in Noah’s day which was a new beginning for humankind. The sons of Abraham were to be circumcised on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12), symbolic of a new beginning for the baby boy. In Leviticus 8:33, Priests emerged from the tabernacle on the eighth day, and began anew. There were eight miracles performed by the great prophet Elijah. The Tabernacle was dedicated in an eight-day ceremony, which was a new beginning for the children of Israel. The ancient temple’s outer court had eight steps (Ezek 40:31,34,37,41), symbolic of a new beginning that came as people entered the holy edifice. David, the new king, was the eighth son of Jesse, while Solomon was the eighth son of David. Eight people were brought back to life in the scriptures. There are eight New Testament writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude. Bethlehem, the cradle of the new beginning through Christ, is mentioned exactly eight times in the New Testament. Jesus and His apostles were transfigured on the 8th day (Luke 9:28). Jesus was raised from the dead on the eighth day, the new beginning of the Resurrection. The eighth dispensation will be the millennium, a new beginning. The Jaredites prepared eight barges (see Ether 3:1) as they began a new life in the Americas. Nephi and his family spent eight years in the wilderness after starting their new life outside of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 17:4). Alma and his new converts traveled “eight days’ journey into the wilderness” to escape King Noah and his men (Mosiah 23:3). We are baptized at age 8.

**Nine.** The number nine is associated with **posterity and judgment**. The Bible has nine records of stoning, nine records of blindness and nine records of leprosy, each symbolic of judgment. There are nine fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23, 22, nine gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor. 12:8- 10, 8, and nine beatitudes in Matt. 5:3-11. Jesus, our Judge, hung on the cross until the 9th hour (Matt 27:45). On a side note, human gestation lasts 9 months.

**Ten.** The number 10 relates to **divine order**. Examples of this divine order include the Ten Commandments, ten plagues, ten lost tribes of Israel, and ten percent tithing. Abraham’s servant brought 10 camels as gifts to Rebecca, symbolic of God’s orderly hand being upon the future marriage of Isaac to Rebekah (Genesis 24:10). Ten times was the name of God uttered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (see Exodus 30 and Leviticus 16). The Passover lamb was selected on the 10th day of the month (Exodus 12:3). The tenth time Isaac is mentioned is in Gen. 22:3 is where we see his father taking him to Mount Moriah. There were ten virgins mentioned in Matthew 25 by the Master; five were wise and five were 5 foolish (five had applied the Atonement and five may not have). The Savior taught using 10 servants entrusted with 10 pounds (Luke 19:13), the most capable of whom was placed over 10 cities (Luke 19:17).

**Twelve.** The number twelve typifies **priesthood and divine government**. There are 12 foundations in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). 12 gates and 12 angels at the gates (Rev. 21:12) and 12 pearls at the gates (Rev. 21:21). The city is foursquare at 12,000 furlongs (Rev. 21:16). The wall is 144 cubits high (Rev. 21:17), which is 12 x 12. Revelation mentions a tree with 12 kinds of fruit 12 times a year eaten by 12 times 12,000 or the 144,000 (see Revelation 21). There are 12 apostles in the New Testament and 12 Tribes of Israel and 12 Apostles today. In the Old Testament, Moses sent twelve spies into the promised land (Num. 14:22). There were twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate (Ex 28:21) and twelve stones placed by Joshua in the bed of Jordan (Neh. 7:59). Solomon had 12 officers ruling with responsibility (1 Kings 4:7). The baptismal font in temples rests upon the back of twelve oxen facing the four cardinal directions (see 1 Kings 7:23–26; 2 Chronicles 4:3–5). When Jesus fed the 5,000, his disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of leftovers afterward. Jesus’ says his disciples may have “more than twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53; see also see D&C 13). The woman had an issue of blood some twelve years (see Mark 5:25–34) before being healed. Jesus raised the dead twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus (see Mark 5:35–43).