



## *The Numbers Of God: Twelve*

The number twelve figures prominently in the scriptures and emerges as a figure in both the Old and the New Testaments. The first thing that comes to mind perhaps are the twelve sons of Jacob. Jacob, or Israel, as he was named by God, was the grandson of Abraham and the one through whom the promise that was made to Abraham would be realized. In order to do that God established a nation that would eventually bring Christ into the world. The nation had it's beginnings with the twelve sons of Jacob. Israel blessed each of them in turn including the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh (**Gen 49**) as a double portion of the blessing among his brethren for the things that had befallen him. The nation grew to a great number during the 430 years of Egyptian bondage (**Ex 12.40**) and were given the task by God of subduing the land of Canaan. As we have seen over the past few weeks, the numbers that God uses are employed in such a way as to denote his power, judgment and work. The number twelve in this instance stands as a testimony to the preservation of God in the creation of the nation of Israel and stands as a representation of his promises. These promises are the foundation for all that follows and therefore speaks of the faithfulness of God by showing that he will do the things that he has stated. As Moses received the Law, and instructions for the garments to be worn by the priest, God instructed that a breastplate was to be made. Into this were set stones that represented the twelve tribes (**Ex 28.21**). This was to be worn by the priest in the discharge of his duties and thus represented not only the faithfulness and presence of the Lord with his people, but also demonstrates that the promises made were sure. As the Israelites crossed the river Jordan they were to take twelve stones from the dry bed of the river and establish a memorial to show that God had caused his people to cross on dry land and the ark of the Lord had passed through there (**Josh 4.1-7**). The bread of the presence, or showbread, was laid out on the table of showbread once a week before the vail of the temple representing the presence of God with

his people (**Lev 24.5-8**). The bread was unleavened, as is the bread that is used to remember Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Once more we see the promises of God reflected in this connecting the faithful of all time with the great sacrifice for the sins of the world. When the prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal in a contest at Mount Carmel, he used twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel, to make the altar upon which the sacrifice was consumed by fire from God showing that he was indeed the Lord (**1 Kng 18.31-39**). God's power demonstrated that he was greater than the idols worshiped by his erring people. As Christ began his ministry he chose twelve disciples who would be with him and who would later carry on the work of spreading the Gospel (**Matt 10.1-2**). Christ was the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. The number twelve here is consistent with the working of God in that the power of God, Christ and the Gospel, would be revealed and remain in the world until time should end. In this sense we see that God used the number twelve to represent the spiritual completion of the promises that were made. They were represented by the word of God when he spoke to Abraham and later represented physically in the establishment of the twelve tribes of Israel, a nation whose existence was to keep the name of the Lord alive in the earth (**Ex 19.5**) and to bring the Messiah into the world. The foundation of God, solidly set in his word, is the spiritual completion of those promises and remains with us now, proof that God will do what he states. God, through Christ, has established a kingdom, built on this foundation of the apostles and prophets reminding us that we need to remember the promise and also to remember the judgment that will come upon us if we choose to neglect these great blessings.

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