

## One Thousand Years!

A study of numbers as used in the Bible is indeed an interesting study. There is no lack of people who have written on Bible numerology as it has been called by some.

One does not have to listen to many teachers of Bible prophecy or read a few pages in one of the many books available on the subject before coming across the topic of what is known by many Christians as the millennium (a word which nowhere appears in the Bible) or 1,000 years. The primary source of this topic is found in the book of Revelation, Chapter 20, where the words "*a thousand years*" appears six times. In this Learning Activity we will be looking at the Bible use of this expression, "*a thousand years.*"

Whenever we attempt to understand a grammatical expression in the Scriptures it is oftentimes helpful to look at its previous uses in the Bible. We shall begin our research by searching for other biblical uses of the number 1,000.

1. Leviticus 26:8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

In the verse above, it is stated by God that if the Israelites "*walked in my [God's] statutes, and keep my [God's] commandments, and do them*" that 100 Israelites would be able to cause ten thousand enemies to flight! This, in its literal sense, is stating that one Israelite would be able to frighten away or beat up on one hundred enemies!

2. Deuteronomy 1:11 May the LORD, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you!

3. If you read the verse above in its context of verse ten preceding, what had God promised insofar as His multiplying the number of Israelites? God had said He would make the size of the Israelite population to be 1,000 times the number of the stars of heaven!

4. Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

5. In your words, what does the verse above say? That God will keep His covenant and mercy with those who keep His commandments for 1,000 generations!

6. Deuteronomy 32:30 How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up?

7. In the verse above, how many could one person "*put to flight?*" 1,000 or 5,0000 if teamed up with a second person.

8. Job 9:3 If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.

9. What is the point of the verse above? The verse illustrates how little man knows compared with what God knows.

10. Psalms 50:10 For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.

11. If there are more than 1,000 hills in the world, do you think that God owns any of the cattle that might be on the hills that number more than 1,000? Of course He does!

12. Psalms 84:10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

13. What is the point of the verse above? How good it is to be in the courts (under the influence) of God.

14. Psalms 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

15. In the verse above, do you think the reference to "*a thousand years*" should be taken as literal? No, it is obviously not intended to be taken literally.

16. Psalms 91:7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

17. Song of Solomon 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone;<sup>[a]</sup> on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.

18. In the verse above, do you think the verse is actually meant to be taken literally where "*a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men*" will be hung around "*thy neck*?" No. The thousand mentioned in this verse is not meant to be taken literally, but rather figuratively.

19. Isaiah 7:23 In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels<sup>[a]</sup> of silver, will become briers and thorns.

20. Isaiah 60:22 The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.

21. Daniel 7:10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

22. 1 Corinthians 4:15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

23. In the verse above, do you think that each Christian literally has "*ten thousand instructors*?" No. This number is not meant to be taken literally.

In the Scriptures there is language used which is either literal or figurative. Literal language must be taken as expressing its meaning word for word in its conventional sense avoiding any exaggeration, metaphor or embellishment. The words say what they mean and mean what they literally say.

On the other hand there is language in the Bible that is meant to be taken figuratively. This language is based upon the use of figures of speech and should not be taken literally. When a statement appears to be contrary to our experience or to a known fact or revealed truth, or seems to be at variance with the general teaching of the Scriptures, then we may reasonably expect that figurative language is being used.

24. Based upon the above definitions of "literal language" and "figurative language," how would you classify all of the previous uses of the number 1,000 and its multiples in this Learning Activity? All of the examples of the number 1,000 and its multiples are figurative language and are not meant to be taken literally.

At the beginning of this Learning Activity we stated that in the book of Revelation there is language that many Christians have taken to indicate that Jesus Christ will one day return to earth and set up a millennial (1,000 year) kingdom and rulership. We need now to look at these scriptures.

25. Revelation 20:2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

We have studied the topic of Satan in Learning Activity #38 and found that he is no longer a player in the present grand scheme of things. We will shortly deal with Satan being bound for a thousand years as found in this verse.

26. Revelation 20:3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

In this verse we see that Satan was to be released from being bound for a "*little season*" after his thousand years of being bound was fulfilled.

27. Revelation 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Here we see people (souls) who were faithful to God under difficult circumstances "*lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*" Do you think that at the end of 1,000 years they will no longer live and reign with Christ?

28. Revelation 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

In this verse, the Scripture defines the "*first resurrection*" as taking place at the completion of the thousand years.

29. Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Here we are told that those who participate in the first resurrection reign with Christ a thousand years.

30. Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison.

Now we see Satan being released out of his prison at the end of the one thousand years.

The question we must ask ourselves is, How are we to interpret and understand the meaning of the use of "*a thousand years*" in the Revelation Chapter 20 verses listed above?

There is a principle of interpreting Scripture that states if we are to understand the meaning of certain words or phrases in the Bible we should look at how that word/phrase is being used in other parts of the Scriptures. If we apply the meaning of one thousand years and its multiples in the scriptures we investigated in #1 through #24 above we would have to conclude that the expressions in Revelation 20 must be figurative and not be taken literally.

We have therefore concluded that the use of "*one thousand*" is meant to be taken in a figurative manner and is being used to describe fullness, divine completeness, maturity or full stature of something and is not to be understood as a literal 1,000 year period of time.