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BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – THE MEANING OF NUMBERS IN THE BIBLE

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This is a study about the meaning of numbers in the Bible. Some of them are important to us Christians and are related to some biblical event:

Number 1

It conveys the concept of unity and the unparalleled character of God, the unity between Christ and the Father, the unity between believers and God, the unity that exists among believers, between husband and wife:

- “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be **one**. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (Jn. 17: 20-21).
- “The Father and I are **one**” (Jn. 10: 30).
- “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become **one** flesh” (Gen. 2: 24).
- “But anyone united to the Lord becomes **one** spirit with him.” (1 Cor. 6: 17).

Number 2

It means the number of the covenant made with the chosen people, placed on the two tables of the Law given to Moses; something firmly established by God; God’s unchanging covenant with His people; the two peoples with whom the Lord made a covenant: Jews and Gentiles; agreement and alliance between two people:

- “When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the **two** tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” (Ex. 31: 18).
- “Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain, carrying the **two** tablets of the covenant in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, written on the front and on the back. The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.” (Ex. 32: 15-16).
- “On the evidence of **two** or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness.” (Deut. 17: 6 – Worshiping other Gods).

- “But if you are not listened to, take one or **two** others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” (Matt. 18: 16).
- “Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of **two** or three witnesses.” (1 Tim. 5: 19).
- “The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind. They are seven years of famine... And the **doubling** [meaning: double, two] of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.” (Gen. 41: 26-27, 32)
 - “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups [*Jews and Gentiles*] into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the **two** [*Jews and Gentiles*], thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups [*Jews and Gentiles*] to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it” (Eph. 2: 14-16).
 - “Do **two** walk together unless they have made an appointment? [NIV: Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?]” (Am. 3: 3).
 - “**Two** are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.” (Ecc. 4: 9).

Number 3

It symbolizes the Trinity, the perfect number, holiness:

- “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of **the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matt 28: 18-20).
 - “There are **three** that testify: the Spirit [*i.e., the miracles in the Word*] and the water [*i.e., the water of baptism*] and the blood [*i.e., the blood of Jesus*], and these three agree [*i.e., that Jesus is divine, complete, and the only savior of the world*]”. Late manuscripts of the Vulgate say: “testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree” (This not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century). (1 Jn. 5: 7-8).
 - “And when **Jesus** had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a **voice from heaven** said [*God the Father*], ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Matt. 3: 16-17).
 - “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in **three** days I will raise it up.’” (Jn. 2: 19).
 - “He did not let anyone follow him [*to Jairus’ house*] except Peter, James and John the brother of James.” (Mk. 5: 37) – This means that to His saints (I am referring to the **three** apostles) God reveals His miracles, His mysteries and His holiness.

In the Bible we also see the number three hundred, as the number of people’s ages in Genesis (Gen. 5: 22, 23; Gen. 17: 25), the census number of the tribes of Israel (Num. 1: 23; Num. 2: 13; Num. 26: 25); the number of Solomon’s concubines (1 Kin. 11: 3); the number of those who returned from captivity with Ezra (Book of Ezra and Nehemiah), the amount of tribute (Hezekiah, for example – 2 Kin. 18: 14), and even the 300 denarii mentioned by Judas Iscariot in Mark (Mk. 14: 5) and John (Jn. 12: 5) because of Jesus’

anointing by Mary. But there are more specific situations where 300 seems to be the perfect number determined by God to achieve His purpose, to sanctify His people from some influence or sin, for example: the measurement of the length of Noah's ark (Gen. 6: 15) to separate him and his family from that corrupt generation; the 300 warriors of Gideon (Judg. 7: 6, 7, 8, 16, 22; Judg. 8: 4) to exalt His power and His holiness; and the three hundred foxes whose tails Samson set on fire and released into the Philistine fields (Judg. 15: 4) to exterminate their arrogance.

Number 3 ½

As mentioned in the Book of Daniel and Revelation, 3 ½ years, equivalent to forty-two months (Rev. 11: 2; Rev. 13: 5) or 1,260 days (Rev. 12: 6) or 'a time, two times and half a time' (Dan. 12: 7 – equivalent to half a week of years); 'a time, times and half a time' (Rev. 12: 14), are non-literal measures of time in the bible, but they symbolize a short period of affliction; a period of time which the Lord would shorten by His mercy (Rev. 12: 6; 14). It also symbolizes the dominion of the unbelievers in the world, as it happened in relation to Jesus and the time of His ministry; it is the symbol of the victorious power of the world, unlike the number seven, the number of divine fullness. The world felt victorious at Jesus' death, but that was just the beginning of something bigger. The bible says that Jesus made a firm covenant with many: "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease" (Dan. 9: 27a – cf. Isa. 42: 6; Isa. 53: 11; Jer. 31: 31-34; Matt. 20: 28; Matt. 26: 28; Lk. 22: 20; Rom. 5: 15; Heb. 9: 28), abolishing (causing to cease) Jewish sacrifices and Levitical temple worship forever, for the old covenant was revoked; this is what Antiochus IV Epiphanes did in the past, and the eschatological Antichrist will try to do to imitate the deed of Jesus.

Number 4

It is the number of the Gospel (we have four evangelists), of The Word, the relation between man and God; to the Jews, it is the symbol of a perfect number, of the man united to the Trinity: four sides of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 11: 16; Ezek. 48: 30-34), four orders of tribes around the Tabernacle (Num. 2: 1-34), four letters in the Hebrew name of the Lord – YHWH (יהוה).

Number 5 /50

According to Jewish point of view, the number five has the spiritual meaning of the faithful fulfillment of the promises of God regarding the five books of the Pentateuch (Torah), that is, the events that occurred as divine predestination. Thus, we have the numbers 5 or 50 in the Bible confirming God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, such as: the Year of Jubilee (every 50 years, Lev. 25: 8-13) and Pentecost (50 days after Passover, Lev. 23: 15-21; Deut. 16: 9-12). We can see the number 50 frequently used in the measurements of loops and clasps of the Tabernacle (Book of Exodus) and in the number of men of the tribes (book of Numbers) or 50 as the age limit for priestly service (Num. 4: 3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47).

The number 5 is frequently used as the number of curtains and boards of the Tabernacle (in Exodus); the number of animals for the peace offering by the princes of the tribes (in Numbers); the 5 stones that David picked up from the brook before meeting Goliath (1 Sam. 17: 40). It is also a very frequent number in 1 Kin. in the measurements

of Solomon's Temple and certain utensils, including the length of the wings of the cherubim of the Holy of Holies (2 Chr. 3: 11, 12, 15); in the measurements of Ezekiel's Temple 40, 41 and 45 (often the numbers 5, 25 or 50), that is, it represents something holy and predetermined by God.

In the New Testament, we also have the account of Jesus multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish to feed a multitude (Mk. 6: 30-44). By bringing the five loaves to the Lord, the disciples were showing that the promises given to them were still insufficient to satisfy their needs. By multiplying the five loaves, the Lord wanted to show that His promises are infinite and will all be fulfilled to the point of satisfying the crowds.

Hundred fifty-three large fish

In Jn. 21: 10-11, when Jesus appeared to the disciples in Galilee after His resurrection, the bible writes: "Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught'. So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn." A hundred fifty-three would be the symbol of God's plan for His children, His chosen ones, that is:

100: the great unity between believers and God, as well as the unity among the brothers, the same way that is the unity between Christ and the Father. He was warning His Church to watch over, not to sleep and always remain faithful in order to be complete.

50: the faithful fulfillment of the promises of God in the lives of His children more than they can ask or think, as He Himself says in His word. The full outpouring of His Spirit, as it was at Pentecost.

3: The participation of the Trinity as the perfect number, showing God's holiness.

Putting all together, Jesus was showing His disciples and us that He had come to give us the example of unity with the Father and men, to encourage us to believe in His promises and to remind us to live a life of holiness. This would be the rule for all of God's children.

Number 6

It is the number of man (Gen. 1: 26-31). For some, 6 is the imperfect number, symbol of failure; 666 is the number of the trinity of evil (Rev. 13: 18: the number 3, which is the number of the Trinity, is repeated three times here = 666) or, then, evil in a superlative degree, although Satan has limitations (he cannot touch God and those who are in heaven; he cannot generate apostasy in true believers).

- "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the **sixth** day." (Gen. 1: 27; 31).

- "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person *[number 6]*. Its number is **six hundred sixty-six**" (Rev. 13: 18).

- "He will deliver you from **six** troubles; in seven no harm shall touch you." (Job. 5: 19). In this verse, 6 is a number that was established to draw attention to something important. 7 is the perfect number, therefore conveying the idea of deliverance from all possible problems.

Number 7

Seven is God's perfect number, something complete, something in which one can rest because it is totally fulfilled. God created the world in seven days. Moses received the Ten Commandments on the seventh day after ascending Mount Sinai. Two of the main festivals instituted by God were celebrated for seven days (Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles).

- “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the **seventh** day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the **seventh** day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” (Gen. 2: 1-3).

- “The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the **seventh** day he called to Moses out of the cloud.” (Ex. 24: 16).

- “**Seven** days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the **seventh** day there shall be a festival to the Lord.” (Ex. 13: 6 – Passover).

- “In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you shall eat unleavened bread.” (**Seven** days of feast; Ex. 12: 18 – Passover).

- “Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting **seven** days, there shall be the festival of booths to the Lord [*the Feast of Tabernacles*].” (Lev. 23: 34)

Number 8

Regarding the number 8, we have been taught that it is the number of Christ, but in fact, nothing is written in the Bible about this. Let's explain it better:

The early Christians used the fish as a symbol of their faith in Christ, representing their birth from the waters. The word 'fish,' in Greek Ἰησούς Χριστός Θεός Υἱός Σωτήρ (Iēsoùs Christòs Theoù Yiòs Sōtēr), "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." An acronym is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of an expression with more than one word. They used the symbol as a way to identify each other, for they needed to be cautious at that time due to persecutions. However, Jewish numerology derived from Kabbalah (the mystical branch of Judaism), that is, the esoteric method called gematria, has erroneously explained that Jesus' number is 8. Some people think that the sum of the letters in the word Ἰχθύς (ichthýs, fish) is 888. But the value 888 does not come from the Greek word Ἰχθύς, but rather from the proper name of Jesus in Greek (Iesous – Ιησούς):

I (Iota) = 10

η (Eta) = 8

σ (Sigma) = 200

ο (Omicron) = 70

υ (Upsilon) = 400

ζ (Final Sigma) = 200

Adding the values: $10 + 8 + 200 + 70 + 400 + 200 = 888$

For us Christians, the few biblical explanations we can recall for the number 8 are the institution of circumcision given by God to Abraham (Gen. 17: 11-12; Lev. 12: 3; Lk. 1: 59; Act. 7: 8; Phil. 3: 5; Gal. 2: 3), the solemn assembly of the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23: 36; 1 Kin. 8: 66) and Ezek. 43: 26-27 in relation to the consecration of the altar:

- “You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is **eight** days old, including the slave born in your house and the

one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring.” (Gen. 17: 11-12).

• “Seven days you shall present the Lord’s offerings by fire; on the **eighth** day [*8th day of the Feast of the Tabernacles*] you shall observe a holy convocation and present the Lord’s offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations” (Lev. 23: 36).

• “On the **eighth** day [*the Feast of the Tabernacles*] he [*Solomon*] sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents, joyful and in good spirits because of all the goodness that the Lord had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel.” (1 Kin. 8: 66).

• “Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. When these days are over, then from the **eighth** day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord God.” (Ezek. 43: 26-27).

Therefore, if we could find a simple and pure biblical explanation for the number 8, we could say that 8 symbolizes: **1)** the number that completes or concludes what God has determined (the solemn assemblies of the feasts after seven days, when He becomes benevolent towards them and, therefore, they praise Him); **2)** the more than perfect number, the profound covenant of faithfulness of God with men (the circumcision of the flesh and of the heart: Gen. 17: 9-14; Deut. 10: 16; Rom. 2: 28-29; Col. 2: 13). In other words: the covenant between men and the true God.

Number 9

We’ll talk about it last, as it brings an additional comment.

Number 10

Zero, when added to another could indicate multiplication in any way. As we have seen, number 1 conveys the concept of unity and the unparalleled character of God, the unity between Christ and the Father, the unity between believers and God, the unity that exists among believers. Putting the number zero on its side, this can mean ‘many times’, the same way that one hundred is equivalent to a large number, and a thousand or ten thousand, an infinitely large number. The number ten may also mean the first number of a major beginning (Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, beginning a new era for mankind), something complete or fidelity (Jesus completed the Father’s planned work of redemption for humanity, fulfilling His promise to die for us and rise again, symbolizing His victory over death), besides being considered by some as the number of the Church (The bride of Christ, united to Him through holiness and faithfulness). In Rev. 20: 2, when the Bible refers to the thousand years of Satan’s imprisonment, we see that 1000 means 10^3 (ten cubed), that is, a complete period from the 1st to the 2nd coming, the symbolic number of the church age, of fullness, wholeness, of a spiritual condition of the redeemed (the souls of the dead in heaven with Jesus, and the living doing His work on earth, preaching His word of salvation and repentance).

Number 11

From a biblical perspective, the number 11 signifies: 1) imperfection, something incomplete, or transition; 2) disorder or disorganization; 3) a loss, a disintegration of systems or a break in harmony; 4) it can also mean judgment or the end of a period. Eleven

sits between the numbers ten and twelve, which symbolize something complete, something that God created as stability for His children, demonstrating His sovereignty. Therefore, I separated the Bible verses according to the characteristics above. For example:

1) Imperfection, something incomplete or transition:

- “The same night he [*Jacob*] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his **eleven** children [*because Benjamin had not yet been born*], and crossed the ford of the Jabbok” (Gen. 32: 22). Just as Jacob crossed the ford of Jabbok with his eleven sons, the number eleven here signifies a phase of transition or something incomplete, because if the number of patriarchs determined by God was 12, it would still be necessary for Benjamin to be born to complete His plan.

When we look at the verses about the construction of the Tabernacle, for example, we can see that they mention **eleven curtains** of goats' hair (Ex. 26: 7; Ex. 26: 8; Ex. 36: 14-15), the second covering of the tabernacle. The 1st covering, the innermost one, consisted of ten linen curtains with purple, crimson, and blue threads and designs of cherubim. And the 3rd and 4th coverings don't have measurements described there. The meaning of this is quite interesting, and you can read about it in the topic about the Tabernacle:

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However, since the **eleven** curtains were of goat's hair, we can say that, in terms of the qualities related to our soul and our personality, and the sacrifice of surrendering our inner values to God (the goat – see the explanation in the respective topic), this number 11 could reflect something incomplete and imperfect, because the tabernacle in the desert was a transitional phase from slavery to the freedom of a nation, where God's promise (the Promised Land) would truly be fulfilled (Josh. 21: 45). We can also say that it was a time of spiritual growth, learning to love God, to serve Him and to obey Him (Josh. 22: 5).

2) Disorder or disorganization, which is somewhat linked to item 4), that is, judgment or the end of a period, and which can be exemplified by the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, had a government of disorder and social disorganization, and suffered the consequences of His judgment, ending in the hands of the Babylonians:

- “Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned **eleven** years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah” (2 Kin. 23: 36).

- “Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned **eleven** years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God.” (2 Chr. 36: 5).

- “Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned **eleven** years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.” (2 Kin. 24: 18).

- “Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned **eleven** years in Jerusalem.” (2 Chr. 36: 11).

- “Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned **eleven** years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.” (Jer. 52: 1).

3) A loss, a disintegration of systems or a break in harmony: we can see this in the OT, in the story of Joseph, and in the NT, in the suicide of Judas and the choice of Matthias.

In the OT, the reduction of Jacob's 12 sons to 11 (both in the supposed death of Joseph – Gen. 37: 33-36; Gen. 42: 13, and in his dreams with the eleven stars – Gen. 37: 9), brought loss and temporary disintegration of the patriarchal family; in the supposed death, because a dead son left the family physically incomplete, it was a great loss; and in the case of dreams, because Joseph excluded himself from the level of equality with his brothers to become superior to them, generating jealousy, and because they did not believe that this was a prophetic determination from God. The Lord had to change this "sick" family system, generate a separation and a break in harmony, and then restructure it on a higher spiritual level, worthy of a true patriarchal clan.

- "He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, 'Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and **eleven** stars were bowing down to me.'" (Gen. 37: 9).

- "He recognized it, and said, 'It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.' Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, 'No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.' Thus his father bewailed him. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard." (Gen. 37: 33-36)

- "They said, 'We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more.'" (Gen. 42: 13)

In the NT, the death of Judas Iscariot apparently dismantled a structure created by Jesus Himself upon which to build His church. To replace this loss, the apostles chose Matthias (Act. 1: 13-26). The number of 11 was incomplete and insufficient to carry out God's project of His new covenant:

- "Then the **eleven** disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go." (Matt. 28: 16)

- "Later he appeared to the **eleven** as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen." (Mk. 16: 14)

- "and returning [*the women*] from the tomb, they told all this to the **eleven** and to all the rest." (Lk. 24: 9)

- "That same hour they [*The disciples of Emmaus*] got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the **eleven** and their companions gathered together." (Lk. 24: 33).

- "And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the **eleven** apostles." (Act. 1: 26)

- "But Peter, standing with the **eleven**, raised his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.'" (Act. 2: 14)

5) We can still find some verses with the number eleven, but apparently unrelated to the explanations above:

- "And in the hill country [*of Judah*], Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, Dannah, Kiriat Sannah (that is, Debir), Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh — eleven towns and their villages [*inheritance given to this tribe*]" (Josh. 15: 48-51 – NIV).

- “It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.” (Deut. 1: 2 – NIV).

- “On the third day [*of the Feast of the Tabernacles*]: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish” (Num. 29: 20).

It is interesting to note that on the first day of the feast, thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old were offered for the burnt offering. And the number of bulls decreased until the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish. On the eighth day, the day of the solemn assembly, the number of animals was reduced by half: one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish, but only one bull (On the seventh day were seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish).

Number 12

It means the number of divine election, the number of God’s calling, of God’s elective projects (who or what He chooses to show His glory), of the fullness of God’s people. God made day and night twelve hours long, chose twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles. Ishmael was the father of the twelve Arab tribes. Esther was prepared for twelve months with myrrh and ointments to be brought to King Ahasuerus. The stones on the breastpiece of Aaron’s garment had twelve stones, relating to the twelve tribes of Israel. The molten sea [NIV: the Sea of cast metal] of Solomon’s Temple rested on twelve oxen and his throne had twelve lions, two on each side of the six steps.

Some characters in the New Testament are associated with the number twelve to show God’s power in Jesus’ miracles, such as Jairus’ daughter (who was twelve years old) and the woman with flow of blood (who had been ill for twelve years). Twelve baskets remained after the first multiplication of loaves and fishes, the wall of the New Jerusalem has twelve gates and twelve foundations. Jesus mentioned twelve legions of angels that He could summon to deliver Him from His imprisonment and His suffering on the cross.

Regarding the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter, we can say that the fact that she was twelve years old meant that she had been chosen and elected by God himself for a purpose, which is why she did not perish. Therefore, when our dreams (“children”) are God’s dreams placed within us for a special purpose, they will never die because through them the Lord will show His sovereignty and His power among men.

We can say the same thing about the woman with flow of blood (Mk. 5: 24b-34 cf. Matt. 9: 20-22; Lk. 8: 43-48). She behaved like a disciple, risking herself to touch Jesus, even in her condition, and therefore was healed, for she was already chosen by God to bear witness to His miracles and to follow the Master.

In Rev. 7: 4, John mentions the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from Israel. One hundred and forty-four means: twelve times twelve. One hundred and forty-four thousand signifies an infinitely large number of those saved for the Lord; a symbol of totality ($12 \times 12 \times 1000$), referring to all who will be saved (in the Old and New Testaments) and those who will be sealed during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7: 3; Rev. 9: 4 cf. Ezek. 9: 4-6; Rev. 7: 13-14) with the seal of the Father and the Son, instead of having the mark of the beast (Rev. 13: 17); therefore, to be preserved from the calamities to come.

Let’s read the texts:

- “As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of **twelve** princes, and I will make him a great nation.” (Gen. 17: 20)

- “While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were **twelve**.” (Gen. 35: 22).
- “All these are the **twelve** tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing.” (Gen. 49: 28 – Jacob’s blessing upon his sons).
 - “There were **twelve** stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the **twelve** tribes.” (Ex. 39: 14).
 - “It [*The molten sea or the Sea of cast metal of the Temple*] stood on **twelve** oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside.” (1 Kin. 7: 25).
 - “while **twelve** lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps [*of Solomon’s throne*]. Nothing like it was ever made in any kingdom” (1 Kin. 10: 20).
 - “The turn came for each girl [*Esther and the young women of the harem*] to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being **twelve** months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their cosmetic treatment, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics for women.” (Est. 2: 12).
- “Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for **twelve** years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak” (Matt. 9: 20).
- “And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, **twelve** baskets full.” (Matt. 14: 20 – the first multiplication of loaves and fish).
- “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on **twelve** thrones, judging the **twelve** tribes of Israel.’” (Matt. 19: 28).
- “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than **twelve** legions of angels?” (Matt. 26: 53).
- “And immediately the girl [*Jairus’ daughter*] got up and began to walk about (she was **twelve** years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.” (Mk. 5: 42).
- “And when day came, he called his disciples and chose **twelve** of them, whom he also named apostles.” (Lk. 6: 13).
- “Then Jesus summoned his **twelve** disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.” (Matt. 10: 1).
- “Jesus answered, ‘Are there not **twelve** hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world.’” (Jn. 11: 9).
- “It [*The New Jerusalem*] has a great, high wall with **twelve** gates, and at the gates **twelve** angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the **twelve** tribes of the Israelites” (Rev. 21: 12).
 - “And the wall of the city [*The New Jerusalem*] has **twelve** foundations, and on them are the **twelve** names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (Rev. 21: 14).
 - “And when he [*Jesus*] was **twelve** years old, they went up as usual for the festival [*Passover*].” (Lk. 2: 42).

A commentary on the Bar Mitzvah

Regarding that last verse (Lk. 2: 42), I would like to make a comment and ask a question:

“If the Bar Mitzvah ritual for Jewish boys shows that he is responsible before Jewish law, and is performed at age thirteen, why did Jesus go up to Jerusalem at age twelve that Passover and discuss with the Jewish teachers as if they were His equals?”

The public Bar Mitzvah ceremony (Bar Mitzvah for boys and Bat Mitzvah for girls) as we know it today is a tradition that originated, including with this name, in the 15th century and developed in the following centuries, with more complex rituals in the 17th–18th centuries, mainly among Ashkenazi Jews (originating from Central and Eastern Europe; the Hebrew word ‘Ashkenaz’ is of medieval origin for Germany. The singular is ‘Ashkenazi’ and the plural, ‘Ashkenazim’). Bar Mitzvah means ‘son of the commandment’ (Bat Mitzvah = ‘daughter of the commandment’). Mitzvot (מצוות) is the Hebrew plural of ‘mitzvah’ (מצוות), which means ‘commandment’ or ‘precept.’ The traditional view of the Mizvot (the 613 commandments contained in the Torah or Pentateuch) is based on the enumeration of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides or Rambam, the most influential Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages. Thus, Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah (Repetition of the Torah) was compiled between 1170 and 1180 while he lived in Egypt. Jewish boys at age 13 and girls at age 12 (this began in the US in 1922 with Judith Kaplan) demonstrate that they are ready to assume their religious adulthood with knowledge of the ordinances. They are responsible for their actions before God, not their parents anymore. From that moment on, they assume their place as full and active members of the Jewish community.

The preparation lasts two years, during which they study the Hebrew laws of the Torah and community laws, learn what they should do in the ceremony, and also traditional Hebrew without vowels, since the Torah is written in this way, not in the current form with vowels. The girl is also required to have her Bat Mitzvah, but the ceremony varies among the different branches of Judaism, from Orthodox to Progressive. In some denominations, the reading of the Torah for the girl is not performed.

The ceremony lasts about an hour and a half. They put on the Tallit (prayer shawl) for the first time, and the boys put on the Tefillin (small boxes with scriptures) during the service, symbolizing their new religious responsibility.

https://www.searaagape.com.br/palavrasbiblicas_oquesignifica.html#talit

https://www.searaagape.com.br/palavrasbiblicas_oquesignifica.html#tefilin

The young man chants blessings and prayers during parts of the service. The main point of the ceremony is the ‘Aliyah’, the public reading of a passage from the Torah (Aliyah = ‘Call to the Torah’). The Parashah is the passage from the Torah that is read, as well as the Haftarah or haftorah [in Hebrew, הַפְּרָאָה, ‘parting’, ‘taking leave’ (dismiss, to set free), plural form, haftarot or haftoros, which is a series of selections from the books of the Nevi’im, נְבִיאִים (‘Prophets’), of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh). After the reading, he (or she) gives a short sermon (reflection), the D’var Torah, on the passage read, applying it to his or her life. Finally, the father recites a blessing thanking God and declaring the child’s responsibility for their own actions. And then, the rabbi or synagogue leader offers a special blessing to the young man. After the religious service, they have a small reception with wine and light snacks at the synagogue. The blessing recited over the wine or grape juice is called Kiddush (Hebrew: קִדּוּשׁ, literally, ‘sanctification’ or ‘separation’), the same blessing used to sanctify Shabbat or Jewish holidays. The wine or beer that is served is sometimes accompanied by cakes, biscuits and fish [source: wikipedia.org]. Finally, there is a large celebration (Se’udat Mitzvah) with family and friends, with food, music and gifts, to celebrate the young person’s new phase.

However, the idea of religious responsibility has existed for over 2000 years. In Jesus’ time, the transition to this maturity consisted of a process of learning and discussion about Jewish laws and the Scriptures. According to Luke (Lk. 2: 41-52), at the age of 12 Jesus already demonstrated that he was ready to assume his religious duties in the synagogue of his community, especially since it was the moment when he became aware of his divine mission. The Bible writes that He was “sitting among the teachers, listening

to them and asking them questions" (Lk. 2: 46), and the answer He gave to Mary and Joseph confirmed that He was already aware of His mission: "He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'" (Lk. 2: 49). But we can't say that that experience was exactly a Bar Mitzvah ceremony. There must have been a simple ceremony in the synagogue in Nazareth before He was ready to go to the temple in Jerusalem for Passover. Even because if it were an official ceremony, Mary and Joseph would be present and aware of it, not searching for a son who has been missing for three days without them realizing it [just a thought of mine].



Images above: Jewish boy reads the bible during his Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall, Old City of Jerusalem – Photo Peter van der Sluijs – wikipedia.org
A Conservative Bat Mitzvah in Israel – Yiddish Wikipedia.

Below: Jesus, at twelve years old, was in the temple listening to and questioning the teachers of the law.



Number 13

Taking advantage of the Bar Mitzvah commentary, we can find some biblical verses where the number 13 is mentioned, such as: the number of bulls or sheep for burnt offerings (Num. 29: 13); the number of cities conquered by Joshua (Josh. 19: 6; Josh. 21: 4, 6, 19, 33); the time Solomon took to build his palaces was thirteen years (1 Kin. 7: 1); the number 13 is present several times in the book of Esther, in relation to the day when decrees were written, sealed, and fulfilled for the death of the Jews, as a day when the Jews reversed their fate, destroying their enemies:

- “Then the king’s secretaries were summoned on the **thirteenth** day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king’s satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s ring. Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces, giving orders to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the **thirteenth** day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.” (Est. 3: 12-13).

- “By these letters the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the **thirteenth** day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar” (Est. 8: 11-12).

- “Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the **thirteenth** day, when the king’s command and edict were about to be executed, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain power over them, but which had been changed to a day when the Jews would gain power over their foes” (Est. 9: 1).

- “This was on the **thirteenth** day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews who were in Susa

gathered on the **thirteenth** day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness.” (Est. 9: 17-18)

In **Judaism**, the number 13 symbolizes the 13 attributes of God’s mercy (Ex. 34: 6-7). In Christian terms, I would say, the description of the divine qualities given to Moses to obtain His forgiveness after the incident with the golden calf, and when Moses sees His glory. It also symbolizes religious adulthood in the Bar Mitzvah (perhaps this can be explained by the transition from childhood to adolescence, from 12 to 13 years old) and also has a relationship with gematria, where the numerical value of the words love (Ahavá) and unity (Echad) add up to 13. In short: the number 13 is a symbol of power, spiritual connection and divine protection and is associated with positive changes.

Analyzing the biblical verses above **from a Christian perspective**, we can say that the number 13 is linked not only to spiritual maturity, but also to surrender, for example: a “sacrifice” of worship or a personal surrender so that God’s will be done, instead of our own (as were the burnt offerings, Num. 29: 13, for example); also, an effort to conquer something important that has already been promised by God to us, as was the case with the cities conquered by Joshua (Josh. 19: 6; Josh. 21: 4, 6, 19, 33) or in the construction of Solomon’s royal palaces, where time, money, workers, and skills were spent on their realization. If we look at the book of Esther, we can see that the number 13, although initially linked to an evil intent of the enemy, was reversed into victory through God’s mercy, sovereignty, and protective action over His people. Therefore, it signifies the positive reversal of a situation, and there is no reason to associate it with something wrong, incomplete, or bad luck.

Number 40

The number 40 refers to a time of learning, a time in the desert, or the time of a generation. Moses spent forty years being trained as a prince of Egypt, forty years in Midian as a shepherd, and forty years in the desert leading the people to the Promised Land. Moses stood in the presence of God on Sinai, fasting for 40 days. Let us remember the number 40 in the book of Judges where it is often written that there was a rest from the oppression of the enemy (“And the land had rest forty years.” – Judg. 5: 31b). Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert, as did Elijah, from the desert to Mount Horeb. The lame man who was healed at the Beautiful Gate of the temple by Peter and John was also over forty years old when he received the healing (Act. 4: 22). The reign of David and Solomon was 40 years. The Flood lasted 40 days. They all learned during this period of time.

Number 50: already explained in number 5.

Number 70

The number 70 corresponds to the number of nations (peoples) that repopulated the earth after the Flood (Gen. 10: 1-32; 1 Chr. 1: 5-23), just as the descendants of Jacob were a way of repopulating Egypt; a great moment for humanity, fulfilling part of the promise to make Abraham a great nation. Therefore, the number seventy can symbolize a time of reconstruction, of refilling our devastated land.

Number 9

In the **New Testament**, we can see the number nine written as the **ninth hour** (which corresponds to three o'clock in the afternoon for us), and linked to the greatest biblical event, the crucifixion, therefore symbolizing redemption and God's grace upon humanity:

- Mk. 15: 33-39 (with focus on verses 33-34): “³³ At the sixth hour [*at noon*] darkness came over the whole land until the **ninth** hour [*At three o'clock*].³⁴ And at the **ninth** hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’—which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, ‘Listen, he's calling Elijah.’ One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ‘Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down,’ he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’”

The same episode is described in:

- Matt. 27: 45-46; 50: “From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock [**ninth hour**] Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’... Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.”

- Lk. 23: 44-47: “It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon [**ninth hour**], while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’”

Still in the New Testament, we can see the number **nine** written in the parable of the lost sheep and in the healing of ten lepers, confirming its symbolism as the number of redemption and God's grace upon humanity. In the first two episodes (Matt. 18 and Lk. 15) the number **ninety-nine** is written, as if reinforcing the idea of remission, the number of the righteous, of those who have been redeemed:

- Matt. 18: 12-13 (the parable of the lost sheep): “What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the **ninety-nine** on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the **ninety-nine** that never went astray.”

- Lk. 15: 4, 7 (the parable of the lost sheep): “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the **ninety-nine** in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?... Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over **ninety-nine** righteous persons who need no repentance.”

- Lk. 17: 17-19 (the healing of ten lepers): “Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other **nine**? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well.’”

The healing of ten lepers signifies that those who are already God's people (the **nine** who were Jewish, not Samaritans, including the tenth leper healed) also need to give thanks, not only those who are not yet saved and receive blessings from Him, since the one who returned was a Samaritan, not a Jew. The interesting thing is that it was precisely a Samaritan, after glorifying God for the healing, who was able to hear from Jesus the word that brought him an even greater healing: salvation, redemption: “Rise and go; your faith has made you well” [NABRE: “Then he said to him, ‘Stand up and go; your faith has saved you’”]. He was just one man, the number 1 symbolizing his unity with God, that is, the faith he had in his heart already brought him union with the Lord; therefore, only one word from Jesus was needed to confirm his salvation and the redemption of his

soul. “Stand up and go; your faith has saved you”, Jesus said. The Greek verb used here for “save; saved or “made you well” is sózó, σώζω, Strong #4982, meaning: to save, heal, preserve, rescue. It comes from a primary verb ‘sos’ (contraction of the obsolete ‘saos’, ‘safe’): to save, that is, to deliver or protect (literally or figuratively); to heal, heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole.

In the **Old Testament**, we can see other biblical verses where the number **nine** is written as **nine, ninety, ninety-nine, nine hundred, or ninth**.

In Judaism, the **number 9** is linked to: **1)** completeness, maturity; **2)** the closing of one cycle and the beginning of another, that is, spiritual renewal after a period of waiting (like the 9 months of gestation) or trial, as seen in the nine days of mourning that precede Tisha B’Av (destructions suffered by Israel); **3)** sometimes, it is seen as a symbol of divine judgment.

https://www.searaagape.com.br/estudosjudaicos_tisha-bav.html

1) Completeness, maturity:

- Gen. 17: 1, 17, 24: “When Abram was **ninety-nine** years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless’... Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is **ninety years old**, bear a child?’... Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

2) Spiritual renewal after a period of trial:

- Lev. 23: 32 (The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, Lev. 23: 27): “It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves; on the **ninth** day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your sabbath.”

Although Yom Kippur is called ‘Shabbat HaShabbatot’ (the Sabbath of Sabbaths) because it is a holy day of absolute rest and fasting, without any kind of work, it is not always celebrated on the Saturday of the week. The festival begins at sunset on the **ninth** day of the Jewish month of Tishri (September and October) and ends at nightfall on the following day, the tenth day of Tishri.

3) As a symbol of divine judgment for the sin of His people, allowing oppression and even destruction by enemy peoples:

- Judg. 4: 3, 13: “Because he had **nine hundred** iron chariots and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help... Sisera gathered together his **nine hundred** iron chariots and all the men with him, from Harosheth Haggioim to the Kishon River.”

- 2 Kin. 25: 1-3: “And in the **ninth** year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the **ninth** day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.”

- Jer. 39: 2 (This refers to the capture of Jerusalem during the reign of King Zedekiah – 2 Kin. 25: 1-3): “in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the **ninth** day of the month, a breach was made in the city.”

- Jer. 52: 6 (repetition of the previous narrative): “On the **ninth** day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.”

In summary: in the NT, verse 9 symbolizes redemption and forgiveness of sins through God's grace, because in Jesus His plan of salvation for mankind was completed. The verses seen in the OT express the same idea, that is: spiritual renewal after a period of trial, lamentation, or oppression (as a consequence of sin); completeness, maturity.

The prayer times of the Jewish people

Making a connection to the prayer times of the Jewish people, we can see that the third, sixth, and ninth hours of prayer were mentioned in the New Testament, primarily in the book of Acts of the Apostles. Let's look at the verses:

- Act. 2: 1, 15 (Pentecost): "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place [*in the Upper Room, praying*]... Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning [**third hour**]".
- Act. 3: 1: "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon." [**ninth hour**].
- Act. 10: 3: "One afternoon at about three o'clock [**ninth hour**] he [*centurion Cornelius*] had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, 'Cornelius,...'"
- Act. 10: 9: "About noon [**sixth hour**] the next day, as they [*the soldier and the two servants sent by the centurion Cornelius to Joppa in search of Peter*] were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray [*of the house of Simon the tanner, where he was staying*]."
- Act. 10: 30 (Peter arrives at Cornelius' house): "Cornelius replied, 'Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock [**ninth hour**], I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me.'"
- Matt. 20: 3, 5 (The parable of the workers in the vineyard): "When he went out about nine o'clock [**third hour**], he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock [**sixth and ninth hours**], he did the same [*called workers to the vineyard*]."

In summary:

Third hour: 9 a.m.

Sixth hour: 12 p.m.

Ninth hour: 3 p.m.

• David wrote: "Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he will hear my voice. He will redeem me unharmed from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me." (Ps. 55: 17-18)

• And in Dan. 6: 10 it is written: "Although Daniel knew that the document [*King Darius' decree to throw into the lions' den anyone who did not worship him*] had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously."

This does not mean that it was a command from God to pray three times a day.

If we read the Old Testament, especially the commandments given by the Lord to Moses, we can see that sacrifice was made twice a day (morning and evening, with burnt offerings and grain offerings; Ex. 29: 38-39; and burning incense on the golden altar: Ex. 30:7-8). Considering prayer here as a metaphor for 'burning incense' and the sacrifice of praise as a metaphor for 'burnt offering' (Heb. 13: 15), this signifies setting aside a portion of the day to be in God's presence and remember Him.

Therefore, we can deduce that men like David and Daniel, God-fearing men guided by the Holy Spirit, had the habit of praying three times a day out of love for the Lord, but not because it was imposed by anyone. The habit was adopted by the Jews after the exile of Israel in Babylon. The doctrine of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes influenced the Jewish people to such an extent that even the apostles ended up following the strict schedule of prayers in the temple, as the rule had already been incorporated by the entire nation and even by the followers of Christ, such as the centurion Cornelius.

The apostle Paul went even further when he wrote: “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.” (Eph. 6: 18-20). He was defending his doctrine that salvation brought by Jesus Christ was achieved through faith and not through works of the Law; that is, now, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there was no longer a specific time to pray; on the contrary, prayer was offered all the time, for he had become a true instrument of power in God’s hands, as David and Daniel had been in the past, obeying God out of love and, therefore, free from the rules of men.