

# Lesson #4: Ponder God's Patterns

## *Seven Lessons of Revelation*

Leviticus 8:33-36; Revelation 5:1-14

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Years ago, my wife Diane passed her state board examination and became a registered nurse after graduating with an associate degree. Recently, Diane reentered college to pursue a bachelor degree in nursing. Immediately, she was instructed to purchase the book *Forgotten Algebra*. Apparently, she will encounter some mathematical concepts that she won't be able to grasp or apply unless she remembers her algebra. She must prepare in order to learn.

Similarly, we must prepare in order to learn spiritually. We can be spiritually unprepared to receive what is being taught. The Bible tells us that Jesus spoke in parables because the hearts of his listeners weren't right. He was guarded and ambiguous. They had to listen, grow in their understanding, and continue to seek knowledge from Jesus in order to recognize what was really being unveiled.

The book of Revelation demands a similar approach. Its truth is veiled. Symbolism is used to cloak matters. The book, authored in forced exile, was written in such a manner that only believers who hunger to know its truth will begin to understand its message. They must read, ponder, ask questions and look at patterns. Patterns are given to point to truths.

In the book of Revelation, there is one prominent pattern. There are a few other patterns, but there is one that is preeminent. I followed that pattern when I decided to preach on seven lessons from Revelation. Obviously, there are more truths, but I chose to share seven because all throughout the book of Revelation, there is a *scheme of sevens*. Everybody say, “Hmmm.”

Where do we encounter the number *seven* in life? Hmmm! Well, there are seven days in a week. Hmmm! The seventh day is the Sabbath when God rested. Hmmm! In fact, our year is broken up into 52 weeks, 52 sevens. Guess how many times the number *seven* appears in Revelation? Exactly fifty-two times! Everybody? Hmmm!

Take the sermon insert from the bulletin and look at all the *sevens*. There are *seven churches* John writes, *seven spirits* of God, *seven lamp stands* Christ walks among, *seven stars* in Christ’s hand, *seven lamps* before God’s throne, *seven seals on the scroll* of our redemption; there are *seven horns* and *seven eyes* on the lamb that takes the scroll, there are voices of *seven thunders*, there are *seven trumpets* sounding in sequence *upon opening the seventh seal*, there is a *red dragon with seven heads and seven crowns*, there are *seven angels with seven plagues* pouring out *seven bowls of wrath* at the sound of the *seventh trumpet*, there is a *beast with seven heads which are seven hills or seven kings*. Did you know there are seven beatitudes as well?

The book opens with the beatitude:

***Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and (blessed are) those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.***  
(Revelation 1:3, NIV)

For clarity the NIV translators add the words in the parenthesis. They added an additional “blessed,” but just one blessing is written for those who read, hear and take to heart what is written. Six more beatitudes are sprinkled throughout the book:

***Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on*** (Revelation 14:13, NIV)

***Behold I come like a thief. Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.*** (Revelation 16:15, NIV)

I identify with the negative counterpart to that blessing. Several times over the years, I've woken up in a cold sweat after dreaming its Sunday morning, people are coming, worship is to begin and I'm still in my bathrobe or half-dressed with my church clothes at home. That happened once to David Cho, pastor of the largest church in the world. For years, he led a 5:00 a.m. prayer meeting. One morning his mother-in-law called and asked, "Where are you at? It is 5 a.m. The prayer meeting is starting and you are not here." Cho whisked out of bed, brushed his teeth, combed his hair, grabbed his coat and Bible, and ran. When he walked into the pulpit, the crowd erupted. He looked down and found he was still in pajamas. I think his embarrassment won't come close to what we'll experience if when Jesus appears, we're acting in rebellion, resentment or self-serving unbelief. How much better to be found forgiving and faithful!

There are four more blessings:

***Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb***  
(Revelation 19:9, NIV)

***Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection*** (Revelation 20:6, NIV)

***Blessed is he who keeps the words of prophecy in this book*** (Revelation 22:7, NIV)

***Blessed are those who wash their robes...*** (Revelation 22:14, NIV)

Seven blessings are promised in a book full with sevens. Why does God make the number seven so prominent? What does God want us to learn and do?

In Leviticus, when Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests, they had to live at the threshold, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days. Waiting these seven days was so sacred, that Moses told Aaron that his life and those of his sons depended upon it. They had to stay at the entrance there seven days, the Scripture says, ***“So that they would not die.”*** Their lives depended upon them observing God’s time frame.

Do you recall when God led Israel into the Promised Land they first conquered Jericho? Do you remember that they conquered the city by marching around it once-a-day for seven days, and then marching around it seven times on the seventh day? Seven was God’s strategy!

In Revelation, it is not the number of sevens that command our attention, but their prominence. The book has twenty-two chapters. The first three focus on Christ and his message to seven churches and their seven angels. In chapter four we are introduced to the throne of God and its surroundings, and in chapter five we learn what takes place. The one on the throne holds the scroll of our redemption. From Revelation 5 to the end of chapter 16, everything is about opening the seven seals so the scroll can be read and we can be free.

Just like in the battle of Jericho, when the seventh day arrives and there’s another seven, in heaven we encounter seven angels with seven trumpets signaling seven more events when the seventh seal is opened. At the sound of the seventh trumpet, there are seven more angels with seven bowls of wrath to pour out. Two chapters of Revelation describe the opening of six seals locking the scroll, but eight chapters describe all that takes place when the seventh seal is opened. The number seven is continually elevated for our attention.

Just as God has ordered our life to be lived in a rhythm of sevens, he has also ordered our redemption to unfold in sevens. With every seven day God says, ***“I’m in charge of time and I’m in***

charge of all that takes place in time. I'm bringing redemption" Every week is a testimony to who created you, and it is a sign of Christ's return and final victory.

God says, "Even when a great wall prevents you from entering a land I promise you, I can bring it down. I'm in charge of all things and the time for all things." Do some of you remember the Berlin Wall coming down? I didn't think I would see that in my lifetime? God says, "Even when a cross is erected in Jerusalem in defiance of me, I'm in charge." God is telling you, "Even when everything goes wrong for you, I love you and I'm in charge. I'm in charge of time and the events in time!"

We are to act and walk in God's timing. It is not just important to ask what is right, or what is the will of God? It is important to ask, "What is the right time, or more importantly, what is your timing, God?"

When many people read Revelation, they see pain. When I read it, I see relief. When they read it, they see judgment. When I read it, I see mercy. I see a God who in the proper time, in a time set in his love, crushes evil to completely free us. Revelation is a book of mercy. It's a book about a God who loves humanity, and in crushing the evil that grips humanity, works with a perfect timing to maximize the redemption of his creation.

In God's time, nothing is wasted. It is perfect time. Trust his time. Notice the pattern and realize how loved and blessed you are to have God acting for the redemption of this world. Don't give up! Don't give in! Don't give out! Get up and get going! Trust God's time! It is perfect for you! He is not late with you. He is not neglecting us! He is working perfectly for our highest good! Note how God has ordered your time, and learn this great lesson of Revelation: **because God loves you, time is in your favor! Amen.**