

**Gen. 1:1** When God began to create heaven and earth—

**Gen. 2:1** The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. <sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. <sup>4</sup> Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.

We are in the middle of something right now, and that is Summer. We are also in the middle of this period of time in the Church between Easter and the beginning of Advent. We are in the in-between time. So, we can kind of do anything that we'd like, which leads me to today and the remainder of August. As of today and the three following Sundays, we are going to explore some *SECRETS OF THE BIBLE*. SECRET might not be the right word here, but I thought it would get your attention. We will not just be looking for odds and ends, whatever they are. But we are going to explore some things that I suspect you might not have known. And we are going to start with the beginning of the Bible, the first story in Genesis. And I believe you will leave today with some special knowledge you did not know before. So if we are ready, let's learn something special today.

I ask for you to take a good look at the screen right now, and I need to explain something for us. First of all, this IS in fact what the first verse of our Bible really looks like. It looks like this:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

( count the words and say them )

We don't have to know ancient Hebrew, but it does look exactly like this, because, this is the Bible before it was ever switched over into other languages like ours. We have learned an interesting thing that doesn't match what we have in English: The very first verse in the Bible, in its original language, has exactly 7 words. 7 words. Would it interest you to know that the second verse of the Bible in these same words has exactly 14 words? Well, it does. And it goes on from here. Just for the record, this exact story, and it is a unit, it ends with 3 sets of 7 words. More sevens!

In fact, all the way through this story, it does things with the number 7. Let's see the slides for this.

First verse of Genesis (in Hebrew):	7 words
Second verse (in Hebrew):	14 words
Mentioning of "God":	35 times
"heaven" (the sky):	21 times
"earth":	21 times
"hayya" (living thing in Hebrew)	7 times
"ci tov" ("it was good" in Hebrew)	7 times
Last paragraph (Day 7)	35 words
Last sentences: 3 x 7 words	21 words

Okay. We cannot see this in our English Bibles, because when you translate, it very often changes the number of words, along with how it sounds, etc. But these things are all here for us. And now for the really good part; if we were to sit and read together all of this first story ( which leaks over into what we call

chapter 2 ), if we were to read it all, what seems to be the climax of the story? We might not see this, but after 6 days of Creation, God decides to do something different. God takes a rest. But not only that, we are told that God does something to this rest day: we are told that God blesses it and that God makes it holy! What other day of Creation is blessed by God, and made Holy? The answer is no other day. There is only one that is blessed and made holy. It is the Sabbath.

If we didn't know any better could it be possible that the people who wrote this first story of the Bible for the world, could it be that they wanted to emphasize the crucial importance of this Seventh Day? They leave subliminal messages through the entire story. Seven, seven, seven, and seven. Multiples of seven! Why would they do such a thing? Well, there is a good explanation for this. When Solomon's Temple was destroyed and people were taken to Babylon into the Exile, they were not permitted to observe the Sabbath. It was taken away from them. So what do you do when something so important is taken away? Well maybe, you tell a sacred story about your God and the world God has made, and you point the entire story at what has been taken away. You do it defiantly, and you do it purposefully. And it looks like they did exactly that.

In our society today, the Sabbath is just another day. We have had discussions about this in our our church among our own leaders. There seem to be many things that are more important than the Sabbath. I think it might have happened in the past that when there was a 5 K run going through our

village, that our church would be blocked off. No worries. Other things are more important than church. Really? Let's take a quick poll here: How many of you think the 10 Commandments are a good thing? I think they are great. We should have them on a sign in front of our church and our homes. We could have them everywhere, on our own property, and no one could stop us. How many times do we find the 10 Commandments in our Bible? The answer is twice, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Here is a question: In the 10 Commandments, in each list, which commandment actually takes up the most room of the 10? Which one seems takes up the most space? In Exodus and Deuteronomy it is Commandment #4, to **KEEP** and to **REMEMBER** the Day of Sabbath.

Does anyone think things have gone downhill in our nation and world in the last 60 years? I do. In 1960 worship attendance in the US was above 60%. Today it is less than 20%. I wonder if there is a correlation. It has been said that if the people of God will keep the Sabbath, that act will help keep the people whole. So we will try to be faithful. But regardless of what happens to us and our society, we have a constant reminder, written into the very first story of our Bible. And it is written into the 10 Commandments, taking up the most space in the entire list. So, the choice is always ours. I hope that we can remind others of this. These words are not going to go away. I hope that we can hear them, and see them, and sometimes even count them. Let's keep the Seventh Day. AMEN.

