

SYBOLS, NUMBER, & TYPES

“The Numerical Principle”

Introduction

Even a cursory read of the Bible will show that numbers matter to God.

Job 14:16 “For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin?”¹

Ps 90:12 “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Ps 147:4 “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.”

Matt 10:30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

The Lord counts the stars, numbers our days and steps, and even has the hairs of our heads numbered! He is concerned with numbers.

Many a disparaging comment has been made about churches playing “the numbers” game. Some have taken such an aversion to this that they consider it unspiritual to count members in the church or commitments for Christ at an evangelistic crusade. This stands in stark contrast to the testimony of Scripture.

Acts 1:15

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:4

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

1 Peter 3:20

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Certainly, God is concerned with the amount of people who are saved. But even the way He numbers them (about 120, eight souls saved) in Scripture belies His intent to give it symbolic significance. The One who counts the stars certainly knew exactly how many disciples there were and how many were saved. And yet, He records it as “about . . .” because then He is able to place a number in the account that has symbolism attached to it.

¹ All Scriptures are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

I. Amplification

1. The Manner in which Numbers Appear in Scripture

Numbers in Scripture are either named directly or implied in the account.

Gen 15:9

And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

a. Named

The named number in the verse is three. The heifer, she goat, and ram were all three years old.

b. Implied

The implied number in the verse is five. Five animals were being offered.

Gen 15:10

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

What is the implied number in verse 10? Eight, three of the animals were cut in two and the birds remained whole. Four is also an implied number because even though five animals were offered, they were laid out in pieces four to a side.

2. Types of Numbers

a. Ordinal

Ordinal numbers are numbers that indicate a position in a series or order.

Gen 1:13 “And the evening and the morning were the third day.”

Ordinal numbers, by definition, stand in relation to the ordinal line they are a part of. Thus, we understand the third day not simply as the number three, but that which comes after the second day and before the fourth. In relation to the seven days of the week, we also understand the third day to be in the middle of the week.

b. Cardinal

A cardinal number is a number that is used to specify a quantity.

Matt 14:21

And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

c. Basic and Compound

- i. The basic understanding of a number is gleaned from its direct use in Scripture.

Ex 34:28

And he was there with the LORD **forty days and forty nights**; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the **ten commandments**.

Moses fasted for forty days. Forty is a number of testing and trial (forty years in the wilderness, forty days of temptation, forty days on the mountain). Ten is the number of law – Ten Commandments.

- ii. The compound understanding of a number is gleaned from:
 - Its constituent components and their basic meanings
40 = 10 x 4, God's commands imposed on the world (trial).
10 = 2 x 5, God's testimony proclaimed in grace.
 - The operator used to arrive at the total number
 - Addition (+) = union or connection
 - Multiplication (x) = product or intensity
 - Subtraction (-) = depreciation, less than
 - Division (/) = opposition or distribution

- 3. The Hebrew Concept of Numbers – (Rhythmic vs. Numeric)²
 - a. Greeks – geometric thought forms

$$4 = \begin{array}{|c|} \hline 2 \\ \hline \end{array} \quad 2 \times 2 = 4$$

$$8 = \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \begin{array}{|c|} \hline 2 \\ \hline \end{array} \\ \hline \end{array} \quad 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8 \text{ cubes}$$

- b. Babylonians – algebraic thought forms

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline \\ \hline \end{array} = a^2 \quad \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \\ \hline \end{array} = a^3$$

- c. Hebrews – dynamic thought forms

- i. No expressions for geometric forms
 - *rabhua* – “four-cornered”, not square but a quadruple quantity of corners.
 - *mehughah* – “compass”, not circle but an artisan's tool.

² I owe these insights to Thorleif Bowman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, © 1960, p. 163-166.

- ii. Dynamic concepts of quantity
 - *min* – away from, Saul was a head taller than any of the others (1 Sam 9:2), i.e. his head moved higher away from other people’s.
 - *me’at* – small, become less.
 - *rabhabh* – to become many, to become thick.

The Hebraic concept of many is not geometric or numeric but dynamic – how it moves from one state to another or how it compares with a different state.

- iii. Rhythmic and qualitative numbers
 - Two

In Indo-European languages, the concept of “two” is tied etymologically with “you”. In other words, the idea of two is wedded to the understanding of me and you.

The Hebrew concept of two (shenayim) is not that of quantity (two), but of repeated action (twice). Thus Hebrews form the concept of numerical quantity from repeated action. The words for “times” in Hebrew reflect this. Pa’am is pace or step; reghel is foot or tread.

- Repetitious buildup
 night-day night-day night-day night-day night-day night-day

7

*Something done once is an event or a unity.
 Something done twice isn’t two but a duplicate (number of witness).
 Something done thrice is a triplicate (Trinity).*

- Quality not quantity

The form and syntax of the Hebrew numbers 2 to 10 are in origin abstract substantives meaning two-ness, three-ness, four-ness, etc. Thus, the number is primarily a qualitative whole, not a quantitative tabulation of constituent and individual parts. As Thorleif Boman says, “from there it was but a step further to the conception of holy numbers.”

II. Demonstration

A. One³

- God
 Deut 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is **one** LORD:”
- Unity
 John 17:21

³ Along with *Interpreting the Scriptures*, E. W. Bullinger’s *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* was used as a resource for the symbolic significance of numbers in Scripture.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

- Priority
Matt 6:33
But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

B. Two

- Witness
Deut 19:15
One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: **at the mouth of two witnesses**, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

Rev 11:3

And I will give power unto **my two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

- Division
Gen 1:6-8
6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it **divide the waters from the waters**.
7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were **the second day**.

C. Three

- Godhead
Matt 28:19
Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

2 Cor 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

- Divine completeness
Num 6:23-27
23 Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,
24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
25 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

27 And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.
LORD three times (bless three times).

- ❑ Perfect testimony

Matt 18:16

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

D. Four

- ❑ Creation

3 + 1, unity and Trinity. “Let us make,” Gen 1:26

- ❑ World

Gen 1:14, 19 *Four Seasons*

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Matt 24:31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Four winds = four directions of the compass.

Rev 5:9 *Four divisions of people*

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every **kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;**

E. Five

Five is the impact of God upon the world or creation (1 + 4), thus grace. We see this in the following:

- ❑ Five columns leaving Egypt.

Ex 13:18

But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up **harnessed** out of the land of Egypt.

Brown-Driver-Briggs' definition-

chamush -- in battle array, **arrayed for battle by fives**, armed

- ❑ Five offerings – Lev 1-5.
- ❑ David's five stones – 1 Sam 17:40.
- ❑ Five ascension ministries.

- Five pieces of furniture before the Ark: brass altar, laver, lampstand, table, gold altar.

F. Six

- Number of imperfection ($7 - 1$).
- Number of man.

Gen 1:27, 31

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were **the sixth day**.

Rev 13:18

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the **number of a man**; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

G. Seven

Seven is the combination of the divine with creation ($4 + 3$). It is the number of perfection and completeness.

Gen 2:1-3

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Job 5:19

He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

Nature and music give testimony to the perfection of seven. There are seven notes on the scale and seven colors in the rainbow – and they correlate!

- C - red
- D - orange
- E - yellow
- F - green
- G - blue
- A - indigo
- B - violet

The word “seven” is used 287 times in the Old Testament ($7 \times 41 = 287$). “Seventh” is used 98 times ($7 \times 14 = 98$). Seven-fold is used seven times. And “seventy” is used 56 times ($7 \times 8 = 56$).⁴

⁴ Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God*, “The Mathematical Signature of God in the Words of Scripture”, Word Publishing, Nashville, TN, © 1998, p. 303. The entire chapter is worth reading in regard to the subject of number in Scripture.

H. Eight

Eight is the number of a new beginning and resurrection. The eighth day is the start of a new week. The empty tomb was discovered on the first day of the week (Matt 28:1). Circumcision was done on the eighth day (Luke 12:3). The eighth day was the day the leper was cleansed and he was returned to the community (Lev 14:10).

Matt 28:1

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Lev 12:3 “And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”

Lev 14:10

And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil.

I. Nine

Nine is perfection and fullness in divine things (3 x 3).

Gen 17:1-2

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

1 Cor 12:8-10

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

Gal 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

III. Exercise – Luke 10:1

Luke 10:1

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

1. Named Numbers

- Seventy

Seventy is the number of imminent increase or representative of a multitude.

Gen 46:27

And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

Ex 1:5

And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

The children of Israel went down to Egypt as seventy, but they came up out of Egypt a multitude!

Ex 24:1

And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.

The seventy elders represented the multitude of Israel.

□ Two

Two is the number of witness or testimony.

Deut 19:15

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

2. Implied Number

□ Three

Three is the number of the Godhead, Divine completeness and perfect witness.

2 Cor 13:1

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

Jesus, as the Divine representative of the Godhead, was the third witness bringing confirmation of the word. The language “whither he himself would come” tells us that Jesus was the third witness.

□ Four

Four is the number of the world. This number is implied by the language “two and two.” Though the seventy were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the universal ministry of Jesus Christ is shown in the language “into every city and place.”

3. Numerical Interpretation

Jesus sent out the seventy disciples to indicate the multitude of believers and to signal an imminent increase. He sent them in twos because they were to bear witness and give testimony of Him. He Himself would come and confirm and complete their testimony as the third witness. The Scripture notes that He sent them two and two, indicating that the Gospel would be preached to the world “in every city and every place.”