

"NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE"

By Mike Burnham

Numbers play a large part in our society and in most other societies. Every wage earner, as well as others, have a social security number. The armed forces have their numbers. Every insurance policy, sick and accident, or hospital policy, has its number. Cars and trucks are identified and traced, both by the numbers on the license plate, and by the serial number of the motors. Football and baseball players have their numbers. We have zip code numbers, area code numbers, etc. More mathematics have been created since 1900 than in all the other centuries of history. Numbers have become a part of our life.

One out of every five scriptures in the Bible contains a number. Numerical structure is found every-where in the scriptures. What is meant by "numerical structure"? There are five divisions of Moses' whole work, and this five-fold division has a meaning intimately connected with the subjects of the books themselves. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, has for its content what is described by the number "one"; Exodus, number two; Leviticus, with number three; Numbers, with four; and Deuteronomy, with five.

For instance, four stands as the number of the world, and the symbol for "weakness" (which may come out in failure): and so the book of numbers will be found to be characterized by these thoughts, the testing and failure of Israel in the wilderness, a type of our own path in the world.

The Jews called the book of Psalms the "Pentateuch of David." in the

Hebrew it is divided into five parts. Psalm 107, which begins the fifth part, we see Israel redeemed out of the land of exile and restored to the land of their fathers. In Deuteronomy Israel stands on the threshold of the land of promise, redeemed out of the land of Egypt.

The 73rd psalm, the Psalm of the sanctuary (v-17), begins the third part and corresponds with the book of Leviticus. The books are divided thus: the first part includes the first 41 Psalms, which is in turn divided into three parts (1-8; 9-15; 16-41). The second part includes Psalms 42 thru 72 and shows God's deliverance. The third part includes Psalms 73 thru 89 and is about the holiness of god. The fourth includes Psalms 90 thru 106 and is in turn divided into two portions of eleven and six respectively. It begins with a psalm of Moses about the generation dying in the wilderness under the wrath of God (v-3-9). The fifth part begins with Psalm 107 and ends with 150.

In Psalm 119 there are 22 divisions headed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and each division consists of eight verses each. 22 is the number indicating "light" and eight is the number for the "new birth." The new birth added to light gives us the number 30 which is the number for dedication and service, Jesus began his ministry when he was thirty (Luke 3:23). Psalm 119 follows Psalm 118 which views the Jews prophetically as receiving Christ vv-15,22,26. From all this we can see that numbers are in harmony with the spiritual meaning. If this thought is true through-out scripture than we have a whole new area of study and blessing.

As we study, we will find that there are certain rules and laws governing Bible arithmetic. These are: 1. All the simple numbers from 1 to 40 have a spiritual meaning attached to them. Above 40 only a certain group of numbers will have a special spiritual meaning applied to them. 2.

Numbers compounded of these numbers, for instance, by doubling or tripling, generally carry the same spiritual meaning only intensified. 3. Numbers compounded by adding two simple numbers together, usually carry the two meanings, of such numbers, expressed together, bringing out a deeper spiritual truth. 4. Where a compound number is divisible by several factors, it will usually be found that its spiritual truth, if any, is hidden behind its simplest factors, that is, those which are incapable of further division. 5. The first use of a number in scripture almost invariably gives the clue to its spiritual meaning. 6. A spiritual truth does not appear to be evidenced in respect of every place where a number appears. 7. Numbers are used to convey spiritual truths in at least three ways: (a) by the actual use of a number. (b) by the number of times a special word or phrase is used by the Holy Spirit. (c) by the numerical value of a word or phrase.

Creation is a perpetual object-lesson of things which the word of God alone reveals to us. For instance, how is it that everywhere through creation "death is the food of life"? Everywhere man looks death is before him as a warning of penalty and dread. But it's not only a lesson of judgment, for "out of death, life" is the law of sacrifice. Jesus is the bread of life. He died that we might have life and anyone eating that bread shall live forever, john 6:51.

The Bible says that "God is light." Science tells us that light is a trinity of color, bathing all nature with varied brilliance, according as each object reflects partially what it receives. The world's light is from heaven, not self-developed; and practically from the sun. And what is the sun? It is essentially what the earth is; but this light clothes with its glory, separable from it, but not separate. And God manifest in the flesh, says the Christian, that is Christ, the "sun of righteousness."

Numbers also follow the same pattern of creation. Seven notes in music give us the capacity for an almost infinite variety and harmony of song. The eighth note is but the octave---a first repeated in a higher key. Seven is the number of perfection in scripture as well as in music, and we cannot go beyond perfection, although there may be here, too, a lower and a higher scale. The number eight speaks of a new beginning, it is a spiritual octave.

"One" it is the one number that is indivisible, independent of all other numbers. It is the source of all other numbers. So, it is with God. He is the great first cause. He is independent of all and he is the source of all. Everything stands in need of him. One marks the beginning. As God is one God, and he is first, none before him, we begin with God, Gen. 1:1; Isa. 43:10,11. One speaks of unity. It comes from the word "unit." see John 10:30; 17:21-22; 1 John 5:7. In connection with this number there are in the Hebrew two words for "one". "echad" meaning a compound or collective unity, such as, one crowd, one flock, one group, etc., and "yacheed", meaning absolute unity or uniqueness. While echad is used many times in the scriptures, yacheed is used only 12 times, and seems always to refer in type to Jesus, the only one, for instance, Genesis 22:2 thine only son (the only begotten of the father); Psalm 22:20 my darling (literal meaning "my only one"); Zechariah 12:10 his only one (their only hope). Yacheed is never used of Jehovah, the triune god. Echad is used in Deuteronomy 6:4 showing that God is a composite unity. In Revelation 22:13 Jesus describes himself as the first and the last and in 2:4 he said the church had left their first love. First speaks of priority, supremacy, beginning, source, sovereignty, and creator. Jesus is the first, the supreme sovereign creator, the source of all life, the beginning of all things, and he must be first in our lives and the love he sheds abroad in our hearts through the holy spirit must take priority over all else, for it is through God's love that unity prevails and all that is good falls into place. There is such a thing as being so wrapped up in duty and

doctrines that love is left behind. In Genesis we see the divine supremacy and sovereignty of God. He revealed himself to the patriarchs as "God almighty" or "el-shaddai", Exo. 6:3. We see his sovereignty in calling Abraham, in choosing Isaac and not Ishmael; Jacob and not Esau. This first book is the "one" book. It contains all the other books in embryo. Here is the beginning of life, the beginning of prophecy, 3:15. The woman's seed foretold, the serpent revealed, and salvation provided, the beginning of nations, etc. There is no division in number one, no difference, Eph. 2:13-15; Gal. 3:28. This word is used 1898 times in the word of God. "one" or "first" speaks of unity, supremacy, sovereignty, source or beginning, independence, and creator.

"Two"

Two is the number of union and division or difference. In Gen. 2:23,24 we have difference, a man and a woman, joined together in union or becoming one, in purpose, love, and commitment. In 1 Tim. 2:5 Jesus is the only mediator between two who are divided, God and man, and he brings them together in union. A mediator is not for one party, but two who are divided, Gal. 3:19,20. The second thing recorded in connection with creation was the introduction of a second thing, light, and immediately there was a difference and division, for God divided the light from the darkness. Division is the characteristic of the second day, Gen. 1:6, God divided the waters from the waters. The second section of the book of Genesis 3:1-4:26 introduces a second being, the old serpent the devil, introducing discord, sin and death. Something completely different than what was in the beginning. Under difference and division falls contrast, opposition, oppression, conflict and enmity. The second book of the five books of Moses opens with, "the oppression of the enemy", and in opposition to the enemy is seen the deliverer and redeemer, Exodus 3:8, just as in the second section of the

book of Genesis is seen the deliverer and redeemer in opposition or at enmity against the enemy, the serpent, Gen. 3:15. The second person of the godhead is the deliverer, redeemer. The Old Testament is divided into three divisions called the "law", the "prophets", and the "psalms". The second division, the prophets, contains the record of Israel's enmity to God and of God's controversy with Israel. In the second book of the second division, Judges, we see the rebellion and departure from God and the oppression of the enemy, and also the deliverer or deliverers raised up by God to deliver his people. In the third division, the psalms, the second book in the Hebrew is Job. Here, again, we have the enemy, Satan, in all his power opposing and oppressing a child of God and God delivering that child. The same significance of the number two is seen in the New Testament. Wherever there are two epistles, the second has some special reference to the enemy. In 2 Cor. 4:3,4; 11:13-15; and the deliverer, 5:18. 2 Thess. 2:3,4,9; and the deliverer, 2:8. 2 Tim. 2:26; 4:3,4 the ruin of the church, and the deliverer, 4:18. 2 Pet. 2:1-3 the coming apostasy of the church and the deliverer, 2:9. 2 John 7-11. There are many references made to pairs that teach us by contrast. There are two foundations, two sons, two places, heaven and hell, the strait gate and the wide gate, the narrow way and the broad way, the man with the beam in his eye and the man with the mote, the way which leads to life and the way that leads to death and destruction, the good tree and the corrupt tree, two debtors, the tares and the wheat, the pharisee and the publican, the rich man and Lazarus, there are two masters. Here the number two is connected with a divided service and devotion, which Jesus says is impossible, a double-minded person is one who is divided within himself. Light and darkness, righteous and unrighteous. Where there are two persons, as Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, the first always comes under a curse while the second is delivered. All mankind is of the first born under Adam and are under the curse, when a person is born the second time he is delivered from the curse, Gal. 3:10,13. Also connected with two is the idea of "separation." Luke 17:34-36; Exodus 8:23 the word "division" expresses separation, and the

Lord separated the children of Israel from the Egyptians by blood, the price of redemption; 2 Cor. 6:14-18. Two also expresses "strength/help, witnessing, and confirmation, Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. Two witnesses confirmed the truth, and their testimony which otherwise would have been weak was made strong. Matt. 18:16 in conjunction with Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10-11, Rev. 11:3. Eccl. 4:9-12 two is used 808 times. "two" speaks of division or difference, (which implies enmity, opposition, oppression, or separation), witness/confirmation, deliverance, and strength or help.

"three"

Three expresses divine completeness and perfection. Though God is one being, in that being are three persons, the father, the son and the Holy Ghost, and the three persons make God divinely complete and perfect within himself. He therefore does not need anyone outside himself. He has complete and perfect fellowship within himself. His love is complete and perfect within himself, for he has active love for another, reciprocating love, and agreement in love for another. God's relation to eternity is given in the three-fold (complete and perfect) expression: "who is" (present), "who was" (past), and "who is to come" (future), the three divisions of time. Rev. 4:8. Three is the first of the four perfect numbers, 3=divine perfection; 7=spiritual perfection; 10=ordinal perfection; 12=governmental perfection.