

Numbers in Scripture

Scripture is full of instances where numbers play a role in the meaning of a passage, idea, concept, etc.

Jewish culture used numbers a lot to indicate different types of things

- Before we get started!
 - This may come as a disappointment to some, but we're -not- going to dig too deep into numerology
 - Why not??
 - For centuries much time and effort has been spent looking for numerical patterns in scripture
 - For centuries, many errors have been made. Exaggerated emphasis can and has led to
 - Dangerous mystical ideas
 - Bad theology
 - Fringe eschatological approaches
 - Outright occultism believing that numbers hold a mystical power that can be tapped into for divination purposes
 - Everything good that God has made the devil tries to corrupt
- Deuteronomy 18:10-12 - forbidding of divination practices
 - Is noted that using numbers for divination or future telling is a practice that has its origins in
 - Babylonian paganism
 - Worshipped many gods and goddesses
 - Sacrilegious practices
 - Deeds based favor with the gods, even barbaric
 - Pythagorean mystery teachings
 - Mathematical marvel, yes. Solid theologian, not so much.

- Numbers themselves explained the true nature of the universe
 - Go Google Pythagoreanism
- Gnosticism
 - Salvation through the gaining of knowledge of a hidden divinity
 - Material world is evil, people are trapped in it, are saved through knowledge
 - Humans contain a divine spark that fell from the immaterial world into their bodies
 - Material world was created by a lesser divinity and the supreme god was hidden
 - Salvation came from gaining knowledge of the hidden divinity which could be achieved through mystical insight
 - Material world is flawed and evil
 - Path to salvation was through the gaining secret, divine knowledge
- Early church fathers, rightly, condemned any such divinatory practices
 - Yet still recognized that scripture does contain
 - Example: 4 great beasts
 - Daniel 7:3
 - Revelation 13:15-18
- "Gematria" - method of assigning a numerical value to each letter of a word, name, or expression to ascertain the hidden meaning of the word
 - Revelation 13:18
 - Bible neither confirms nor denies these hidden meanings
 - It's a slippery slope, relying much on human ingenuity, alternat spellings, subjective word groupings
 - Makes it very easy to contrive a meaning
 - Eisegetical

- Because of all that I chose to exclude references that seemed to go heavy into numerical meaning, or get overly preachy about the "vital role of numbers and numerology", instead focusing on others that have more of a "balanced" look on helping us to understand how the numbers can enhance the meaning of what God gave to the writers of scripture
- Ok, now with all that said, lets look at some specific numbers
 - 1 - Unity, One and Only God
 - God is one, we are one united in Him
 - 2 - Witness, Togetherness
 - 2 by 2 (disciples going out, animals on the ark), wherever 2 or more are gathered,
 - 3 - Perfection, Completeness, Emphasis
 - Holy Trinity
 - Jews repeated things 3 times for emphasis
 - 4 - Earth, Totality
 - Directions (NESW), seasons, corners
 - 5 - Grace
 - 5 types of offerings in Leviticus, Psalms divided into 5 sections, 5 books of the law
 - Tabernacle contained 5 curtains, pillars, sockets, bars, and the alter was 5x5 cubits
 - 6 - Humanity
 - Man created on the 6th day, labors for 6 days, slaves freed after 6 years
 - 7 - Perfection, Completeness
 - 7 days, 7th day is Sabbath, 7 all over the place
 - 8 - New Beginning
 - Jesus appeared 8 times after resurrection, 8 people on the ark, circumcision on the 8th day

- 10 - Earthly Government
 - 10 lost tribes, 10 commandments, 10% tithe
- 12 - Spiritual Authority
 - Tribes, apostles, Jacob's sons, loaves of bread in the temple each week
- 30 - Dedication to Calling
 - Aaronic priests dedicated at 30, Christ began His ministry at 30, David was 30 when he began to reign
- 40 - Trials, Suffering
 - 40 years in the desert, 40 years in Egypt, Mount Sinai for 40 days, Jonah preached in Nineveh 40 days, Ezekiel slept on his right side for 40 days, Jesus fasted 40 days
- 70 - Judgment
 - 70 priests for Moses in passing judgement, 70 years of exile
- 1000 - Multitude, Plenty
- Numbers in the book of Revelation
 - 2
 - Witnesses - 11:3-13
 - 3
 - Emphasis - Holy Holy Holy
 - 4
 - Four corners of the Earth - 7:1
 - Fourfold phrase "every tribe, language, people, nation"
 - 7
 - Churches, stars, lampstands, seals, trumpets, bowls, plagues
 - 12
 - Tribes - 7:4-8

- Woman with 12 stars - 12:1
- New Jerusalem - 21:9-22:9 - Gates, angels, tribes, foundations, names of apostles
- Multiples - 144 cubits, 12000 stadia, 144,000 servants
- 666
 - "Perfectly imperfect", never reaching perfection, demonic parody of the Holy Trinity
- 144,000
 - $12 \times 12 \times 1000$