

THE DANGER OF MISUSING BIBLE NUMBERS

Introduction

- 1) **Numbers** are an important part of God's revelation from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22
 - a) Numbers are a part of everyday existence in this world (count, measure, label)
- 2) Numbers inform, teach, and symbolize in the Bible (Ex. 1:5; Matt. 18:21-22; Ezek. 48:30-34)
- 3) There is danger in misunderstanding and/or misusing Bible numbers (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16)
 - a) Bible study and understanding must include making proper distinctions – OT/NT, essential/non-essential, command/custom, universal/local church, etc.

I) **Literal and Figurative Numbers**

- A) Distinguishing between literal and figurative numbers is important
 - 1) One can miss principles of truth (2 Pet. 3:8)
 - a) Not a secret formula for calculating "God-time," but the principle that time, long or short, has no effect on God keeping His promises (v. 9)
 - 2) One might conclude that the Bible supports man's erroneous theories (Isa. 11:12)
 - a) "Four corners of earth" symbolizes every area of earth, not a "flat earth" (cf. Isa. 40:22)
- B) Some make *literal numbers figurative*
 - 1) Six literal creation days (Gen. 1) explained away as figurative or semi-poetic (see Ex. 20:9,11)
 - a) Done to accommodate the amount of years needed in the evolutionary theories of men
- C) Some make *figurative numbers literal*
 - 1) Two examples in the *book of Revelation* (written in symbolic language 1:1)
 - a) **144,000** (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5); Jehovah's Witnesses teach this is the literal number of those who will be in heaven; but could only literally be virgin Jewish men!
 - b) **1000-year reign** (Rev. 20:1-7); Premillennialists have Jesus on literal throne in literal Jerusalem for literal 1000 years; but is a symbolic length of time for victorious reign of martyred saints with Christ (who is already reigning both before and after the "1000 years")

II) **Numbers Associated with False Doctrines**

- A) **Oneness** Pentecostals (United Pentecostal Church) teach that Jesus is **only person** in the Godhead; that Jesus reveals himself in form of Son, Father, and Holy Spirit (Jn. 10:30; Col. 2:9)
 - 1) John 10:30 oneness in purpose, not person (see v. 36; 11:41; more than one person 2 Jn. 9)
- B) Some insist that a church must use only "**one cup**" (container) for the Lord's Supper
 - 1) The phrase "one cup" is not used in Scripture, but inferred from singular form of "cup"
 - a) Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-29
 - 2) Need to distinguish between the *container* and the *contents*, and the use of metonymy
 - a) Metonymy = use of name of one thing for that of another closely associated with it
 - b) *Examples*: "Suits" = business executives with suits; "plate" – food on plate; Luke 19:9
 - 3) When using the word "cup" Jesus is referring to the "fruit of the vine"
 - a) Matt. 26:27-28 – "**cup**" "drink" "it" "this" = "**fruit of the vine**" "drink" "it" "this" (v. 29)
 - 4) It is claimed that the literal "cup" represents the "new covenant," adding a **third** element to the Lord's Supper along with the bread (body) and fruit of the vine (blood) (misreading of Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25)
 - a) But, only two actions – eating and drinking (1 Cor. 11:26); drinking cup or fruit of vine?
 - b) 1 Corinthians 10:16 – "the cup of blessing" = "communion of the blood of Christ," **not** the "communion of the new covenant"
 - 5) The "one container" doctrine adds to God's word and makes a law that Jesus did not make

Conclusion

Be careful to study and understand the will of God, not adding to or taking away. Hear God's word!