



Churches Of God Outreach Ministries
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"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

1-800-611-8080 / www.cgom.org
PO Box 54621, Tulsa, OK 74155-0621

Mini Study

Do Numbers Count?

"Seven times a day do I praise Thee, Because of Thy righteous ordinances" (Psalm 119:164)

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Jehovah your God... (Exodus 20:8)

The phrase 'seven times' is used over thirty times in the Scriptures; it applied to the priestly duties and to prophetic statements. The number 'forty' crops up frequently, as does 'a thousand.' There's 'seven' appears 467 times, 93 of which are in the New Testament. Other mysterious numbers appearing are '666' and there is the idea that man's 'day' is "6000 years." Is there any significance to numbers in the Bible? Are they literal or symbolic? (We recommend "Number in Scripture" by E. W. Bullinger for an in-depth study of the significance of numbers.)

- most numbers used in the Scriptures are numeric values to be taken at face value, the twelve tribes, for example. The numbers slain in battle or the size of armies may be just rounded, just as in modern reportage.
- some usage is clearly not literal: 'the cattle on a thousand hills are mine' doesn't limit God's inheritance, nor does 'a thousand shall fall at your side' limit Israel's prowess in battle
- then there are the obviously symbolic numbers: eg 666, over which Bible students squabble as to the meaning
- what of the 144,000? Is seven always literal or does it sometimes have symbolic meaning? And what of that thousand years - the 'millennium? Or forty - sometimes literal, sometimes symbolic?
- also questionable: the 6000 years assigned to man's self-rule. It is nowhere in the Bible explicitly stated as such, but derives from the analogy of the God-appointed seven-day week. Just as God 'worked' for six days and rested on the seventh, so man is left largely to his own devices for six 'thousand-year days' (2 Pet 3:8 - *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*) which will be followed by one such day of 'rest' under the reign of Messiah
- this idea has focused minute scrutiny on prospective dates - all, so far, wrong - for the return of Jesus, and is based on Archbishop Ussher's date for creation as 4004BC. It fuels the view that we are now in the 'end time', with millions of Christians expectantly awaiting the 'rapture'
- we are now, based on Ussher's date, a decade past the expiry of the six thousand years. One explanation for the discrepancy is that Jesus has 'delayed his coming' based on Jesus' parable in Luke 12:40ff.. Or, the calculation, notoriously difficult, of six thousand years may be in error
- it is also possible that the 6000 years is analogy, symbolic. It informs us that our human tenure of Planet Earth is temporary. We have made such chaos that God must, ultimately, intervene to save us from self-inflicted annihilation, and to Himself take over the reins of government for a literal or symbolic thousand years

The fact is that we are hell-bent on destroying our planet, with mankind failing to learn from previous catastrophic mistakes. Multiple factors point to our imminent destruction. Jesus warned: 'And you, then, be ready; for in the hour you think not, the Son of Man comes' (Luke 12:40). Are you ready for that awesome event?

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