

No.  
199.

*"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS  
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE  
RIGHT HAND OF GOD."* COL. 3. 1.

SCRIPTURE NUMERATION.

PART II.

*An Address (revised) at*

Campbell Road, Bow, E.,

26th February, 1913.

by

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PART II.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward

Bow, E., 26th Feb., 1913.

OUTLINE:-

1. Reading of Passages full of Numbers, with Passing Thoughts.
2. Numbers Stamped on Nature.
3. Inferences Concerning the Wisdom and Glory of our God.
4. Suggested Homework.

Passages read:- Gen. 8. 1-14. 1 Sam. 17. 4.  
Ezra 2. Rev. 21. 9-17.

You will remember, dear friends, that last time, by the grace of God we saw that Scripture was altogether precious, and all-important, that there are many numbers in Scripture, and that nothing is without signification, teaching and blessing. We saw that various methods of study might be adopted. We might, for example, consider the direct statements as to numbers, or the words formed from numbers, or we might count the chronology and see what events were separated by 40 years or 490 years, or any other special period. It is precisely true that in various ways we may seek to understand God's teaching through figures. Moreover we had brought before us at the outset a twofold caution, first, against fancifulness; secondly, against unspirituality. We must not read into Scripture what is not there. There is **QUITE** enough which **IS** there to be brought out, without our putting something in, which will only confuse and decrease the preciousness. And in all our studies we need to beware lest unspirituality should intrude. Satan takes advantage of everything; if we do not study he certainly takes advantage; if we do study he seems to take advantage. If there is a stress laid upon godly doctrine, Satan will seek to take an advantage, to make an opinion that belief is more important than right activity. If, on the other hand, we lay a stress upon godly practice, Satan will strive to draw us aside to thinking that belief is not such a serious matter. Onesidedness is often the bane of Christian experience. We need to

be all-round believers, - those who have a godly activity in every way at the same time. Growing up unto Christ in all things is His will. I do not mean that while we are sitting down at a meeting, we can be serving the Lord in daily work, or preaching the Gospel; but it is deeply important, and let it be repeated, that we should be growing in grace and growing up to Christ in ALL things, so that we can enjoy hearing the simple gospel over again, in its wondrous simplicity, concerning Christ dying for ungodly ones, but can ALSO enjoy the deepest studies and comparison of Scripture with Scrip-  
 ture, - so that we can enjoy sitting down to <sup>read and</sup> meditate, and equally enjoy getting up to say a few words, if called to do so, to a soul that God brings across our path. Beloved friends, we need to have this spirituality that will affect the whole of our lives. Godliness is not merely by crises and spasmodic progress, it is a WALKING with God. With this thought in our mind that we must beware lest our study become, or be made, unspiritual, we continue this evening "Scripture Numeration".

I have already taken a few passages full of numbers; now I want to add passing thoughts on them. First, you will recollect we looked at Genesis, and there we found very definite numbers concerning the days with regard to the flood. It is no accident that God gives us details. He shows Himself as a God of order, and the whole scene lives before us more, to say nothing of the equally important fact that by those numbers we have insight into a primitive way of reckoning weeks and years, which is deeply important, when men are seeking to explain away the Early Scriptures, and, for example, make the life of Methuselah only 969 months. It is deeply important that we should see how God has fore-armed His people against ALL the wiles of the evil one. Then, again, we had numbers with regard to Goliath of Gath. Goliath is a type of Antichrist - his boasting, his security, his measurements and materials are all suggestive with respect to that mighty king who will yet erect his head and defy the Lord God of Israel. Then we looked at the book of Ezra. Now in that second chapter

of Ezra there SEEMS no arrangement of numbers. It is deeply important to notice the ABSENCE of arrangement sometimes. God has stamped method on many things, but not a visible method on all. How thankful we are to Him for this. If God made it a fixed rule to save a certain percentage of every family, how concerned we should be, or if to deliver a certain percentage of each city, how terrible the thought would seem. One delights to notice the "irregularity" of numbers in Ezra, for one sees the work of God's Holy Spirit, and the responsibility of God's dear people when they are stirred up to go forward, and one notices how in various places there are a large number of one city brought into blessing, because evidently some from that city were enthusiastic and were used of God to stir up others who belonged to the same city that they might go back to their own old place once more. Incidentally I may mention the striking way in which the passage speaks of the men of a certain CITY, when they had been away from it for many years, - most of them had never seen it. This mode of speaking is peculiarly interesting.. and spiritually suggestive to show how God keeps His purposes. Hence Israel have always reckoned in a similar way, but the spiritual lesson is lost. If you go round East London you will see the synagogue of the men of such and such a city, - only it is such and such a city in RUSSIA. Not so in Ezra 2. Those who were in Babylon did not view themselves as the men of this city or that city in Babylon, but rather as the men of this city or that city near Jerusalem, and God says the captives were BROUGHT BACK TO THEIR CITIES.

In Revelation we have numbers stamped very definitely. The book is full of them - not simply because it is a book that contains some similes, - it is more literal than most of us think, not simply because it is a book methodically arranged, but because God would show us that there is a wondrous method in all His workings. It was no accident that there were twelve tribes; it was no accident that Christ chose twelve apostles. The measurement "twelve" keeps on coming in the 21st chapter of Revelation. We have the literal twelve thrice over, the twelve squared, and the twelve thousand thrice over. It is a chapter of twelves, and we shall find the

spiritual teaching of twelve later on in our studies. Ah, dear friends, God clearly marks CERTAIN numbers in CERTAIN passages. How can we possibly think it is unimportant to notice this. It is our duty and privilege alike to seek to find out WHY God stamps the number six on Antichrist, and why God stamps the twice six, the twelve, on the heavenly Jerusalem; why God stamps the six on Antichrist, and why God stamps the seven on His seals, trumpets, thunders and vials, connected with wrath.

We pass next to consider that number is stamped upon NATURE. I suppose that every child of God is at some time in his or her life amazed at nature. I was thinking only to-day, in another connection, distinct from the subject before us to-night, that if God's works in nature are so wonderful, so varied, so beautiful, should we not expect a Bible of extraordinary character? If the Scripture is by the same Author as nature, and we know it is, and we see such wonderful workings in nature, do we not expect wonderful workings in Scripture? Is it strange to us that there are structures innumerable, that there are hidden lessons beyond reckoning? Is it "peculiar" in our opinion that we have never solved the depth of the Scripture? By no means. If we are at all walking with God, we expect such a wonderful book. May I go a step further? If the same God who has made nature so beautiful and glorious, has quickened us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, do we not realise the work in ourselves must be a WONDERFUL work with WONDERFULLY manifest and spiritually powerful results?

We come back to nature. That nature is orderly, all must agree. God has not simply put things together in a haphazard style. I believe that we do find disorder SOMETIMES in nature, because God has permitted that sin has interfered with the order that would have existed if sin had NOT come into the world, - but in His infinite mercy God has not permitted an absolute confusion; there is more order in nature than disorder, as if to tell us that GOD is greater than sin, and that God will have the victory, and carry out His purposes. We look round, in connection with nature, first upon

the heavens which declare the glory of God and the firmament which showeth His handywork. We find there a wondrous arrangement and order. God has indeed planned everything so that the sun, moon and stars keep their appointed spheres. True there are suggestions of judgment with regard to sun, <sup>and</sup> moon, and, in some ways, the starry heavens bring before us that God has permitted punishment on sin to disarrange, for God allows that meteors should appear as stars in the midst of the stars and as they come shooting down that they should bring before us illustrations of that passage "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," and illustrations of other solemn passages in the Scripture which tell of the awful consequences of sin for those wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. But in general there is an order stamped upon the heavenly revelation of God, the heavenly aspect of nature. We find ONE sun with respect to this world, and ONE moon. The spiritual teaching of those units is deeply important. I am so thankful that the earth has not two moons, and when we come to the lessons afterwards I am sure you will agree. On the other hand the stars cannot be counted. Men are increasing their knowledge and so increasing the numbers of them. Perhaps some of us realise, by grace, that the number of the "stars" in another sense is increasing, but that to all, except our God, that number remains unknown, - the number of the heavenly people of the Lord. For we are very thankful there is only one moon, and for the relationship of sun and moon, - there is spiritual teaching in all these things. Furthermore, the arrangement of time is linked with the sun and the moon. The number twelve connects the sun and the moon - as we think of the twelve months of the year. True there is a certain seeming inexactness with regard to solar, lunar and prophetic years. I mean they do not fit exactly; but let us recollect these are PARTS of His ways. How small a portion of Him is known! There are underlying links which WE have not yet reached. We only deal with the surface; we only deal with the A. B. C. of the knowledge of our God in nature.

Numbers are stamped upon ourselves. Man is often spoken

of by man as being threefold - body, soul and spirit. Scripture gives no warrant for this; man is twofold - body and soul. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, and he is body, soul and spirit. Oh, you say, but do we not read of the ungodly having spirit? Yes, in one sense, and so we have the term "Flesh and spirit" OR "body and soul", - either term will describe the ungodly, but not the three terms together. Those who are unsaved need to receive a new creation, something fresh, - "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" - ere they can be included in that wondrous verse "I pray God your whole spirit AND soul AND body be preserved blameless". Man has a twofoldness in other ways - we think of the two arms, two legs, the two eyes, the two ears. One often realises by pain and its sensation, how much we are twofold - one side may be in pain and the other exempt from it. There is a twofoldness stamped upon man, a reminder to him of that twofoldness, that he has not only a body but also a soul, which will exist for ever away from God unless he is saved by grace. Then other numbers come before us. Some we can count, as the fives of our fingers, - The number five and the number ten having a spiritual suggestiveness. Others we cannot count, but the very hairs of our head are all numbered. When we come to varied forms of animal life there is again marked upon them a certain number; nor can we forget the way in which Scripture has stamped seventy upon the life of man, and the momentousness of seven years in his experience physically. The physical change of a seven years is very real. Everything is Divinely marked out with numbers. In vegetable life there is the same Divine precision. Plant life sometimes looks to us a pouring out of confused miracles; but, beloved friends, there is a Divine order beneath it. The leaves do not come in a haphazard way; there is often a manifest arrangement in the form of the leaf, a numbering with respect to it. Then, as to what part of the stem is the appointed place from which the leaf springs, in different trees there is a diversity, but there is a real order with many, if not all of them, so that one leaf comes with respect to other

parts in a certain fixed ratio and relationship. Everything is Divinely arranged in tree life. Number is stamped upon the other works of God. I can only just fringe this subject with you this evening. When we think of God's gracious formations in crystals to teach lessons, (for everything is full of lessons to His people), we realise that crystals have a numerical shape if I might so sum it up. And hidden beauties tell of His greater glory. Then again, the elements which exist in this world, dividing themselves up into two classes, have certain numerical arrangements which can be appreciated by those who have spent their time in considering the wonderful works of God in nature, though oftentimes, alas, men think more of the nature than the Worker behind them.

We pass next to a few inferences concerning the wisdom and glory of our God. Surely God's wisdom is here seen that He has marked upon nature as upon Scripture the same characteristics, that men may be without excuse. Indeed, the very wonderfulness of nature is an argument against infidelity, which leaves men in an awful position of wilful wickedness when they deny God. Nature is NOT a heap of wonderful things just thrown together. It is so systematically arranged that there must be more than an "it" behind it. The order has not come by chance. The infidel should be laid low. God's wisdom has made infidelity <sup>more</sup> ~~all~~ terribly foolish, it is wicked as well. Further, I believe that God has shown forth His wisdom and glory in this connection TO TEACH US. We look upon nature, and we see numbers there; we look in Scripture, and find numbers there. We want to learn something more of the greatness of our God, and God is pleased not to hide all His wondrous structures. He COULD have a perfect arrangement, and yet show us nothing of it. In some things He does this - there is a perfect arrangement, but we seem to see the upside down of the pattern. God COULD have done that with everything, but He has, in His wondrous mercy, unveiled to us a number of these things to teach us more what reverence is, and how great He is. Ah, oh, dear friends,

this leads to another inference, - if so great and wondrous a God, who is so wise and so wondrous, if He deigns to SAVE us, oh what gratitude should fill our hearts, and what devotion there should be. How we praise with uprightness of heart as we see the great grace that has been bestowed upon us by a God Who SEEMS too great to stoop down to a poor, lost sinner. The death of Christ is marvellous. Furthermore, God's wondrous numberings bring before our hearts an orderliness and a TRUE system. In the believing life much depends upon ORDER, - we should not be careless in little things; by a regularity much more can be done for the Lord than by irregularity. God teaches us, His dear people, to be systematic~~ally~~ in the enjoying of the Holy Spirit. Nature is a lesson to a child of God, and Scripture Numeration will be a lesson in the same way.

One word about suggested homework. If the Lord will we shall be approaching soon the number one. May I ask you to look up some passages in Scripture where the number one comes before us? You will find it helpful. Perhaps you will be able to make a little concordance for yourself of some of the numbers, to carry about with you in a little book. I do not mean to extract ALL the verses where "one" is mentioned, or where "two" is the figure brought before us, but to pick out those that specially impress you, and jot them down. We shall see every number has a meaning, and that God has arranged all for His own honour. May He be honoured, as the result beyond all other results, for this should ever be our prayerful longing, in Christ Jesus.

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