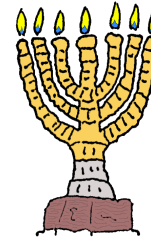


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TIDBITS AND MUSINGS

December 2007, On Matthew 1

*I am watching over my
Word to perform it.*
OMK MINISTRIES, INC.

Dear Co-worker:

One of the Bible's enigmas is in the first chapter of the New Testament. Why does Matthew, the tax man who knew his numbers, deliberately alter Christ's genealogy to make it conform to a neat set of three 14s? Various reasons are given, one being that the excluded kings were a bad lot, but others say some with worse sins were included. The fact is, Matthew knew what he was doing, and the question before us is, why did he construct the three sets?

The answer lies in verses 1 and 17, in the three personages Matthew uses to head up his genealogy, i. e., Abraham, David, and Christ. Matthew likes numbers and they play a critical role in the message he provides. He groups the genealogy to conform to three sets of fourteen because *he has a message for the church of greater import than Christ's ancestry!* Matthew relies on the importance of the meaning of numbers in ancient cultures to provide for the church the introduction of the New Testament and link the Old Testament to the New!

Let's accept that *two* means witness, or a sure thing (Gen 41:32, Deut 4:13, 17:6, Matt 18:16, and Rev 11:3), that *seven* depicts the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:1-8, 21:22-34, 26:17-33) whereby God is going to produce a special people for Himself for eternal fellowship, and therefore the number *14* (2 x 7) portrays a special period of witnessing to the covenant. What is of particular interest in the passages mentioned here is that we count on them to depart from the usual acceptance by scholars the meaning for seven, namely, "complete," or "fulfillment." We maintain Scripture defines seven as *oath*, or *covenant*, by Abraham's encounter with Abimelech as related in Genesis 21:22-34.

The *three* sets of 14 (three = God number), headed by the three personages, are meant to inform us of three distinct periods existing in history that accomplish the Father's purposes in redeeming mankind. It is fairly well agreed that Abraham was born between 2200 and 2100 BC so that, generally speaking, we can assume there were about 2100 years from the birth of Abraham to the birth of Christ, or 2100 years from God's presentation to Abraham of the covenant to Christ's ministry. Matthew states this comprised 42 generations, therefore we see that one generation equals 50 years. This makes sense in that the Bible says a Jubilee (a very important period stipulated for Israel that could represent a generation) is 50 years (or, as some say, 49).

The forerunner of the first period (*one set of 14*) was Abraham, and the one attribute about him that outshines all others was his *faith*. He can be accused of lacking other noble qualities, but his commitment to sacrifice his son Isaac, in whom the promises of the covenant were to be fulfilled, puts him at the top of the list. Matthew states there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David. This would be around 700 years, according to Matthew, but his numbers don't fit the historical record since David appears on the scene around 1000 BC. (2100 minus 700 = 1400) This shows again that Matthew is more concerned at this point about a higher message than the historical facts. In addition, the period following Abraham was one exacting faith in the Lord's promises that he was going to use Israel to bring about a special kingdom.

The forerunner of the second period, the next *two sets of 14s*, was David (David to the exile and the exile to Christ), and the outshining quality about David was his passion to commune with the Lord. The psalms, his honoring God-placed authority, and letting the Lord work out many details in his life rather than personally initiating the action attest to his penchant to wait on God to carry out His promises. In light of these attributes, we can conclude David renders the quality of *hope*. Also, the years following David were for the people of Israel those of hope, a waiting upon God to fulfill His Word about a promised King (Ez 34:23-24).

We now see a progression taking place: one set of 14 representing *faith* and two sets of 14s illustrating *hope*. Taking the progression a step further and extrapolating, then three sets of 14s should stand for *love*. This well fits the outstanding feature of the Lord Jesus for He is the epitome of love and the forerunner of the third period. Matthew introduces the church to that which Paul says are the three aspects of the Christian life in every believer (1 Cor 13:13). And since *three sets of 14s* represent love, this supports Paul's assertion that the greatest of the three is love. The church's primary responsibility, then, is *love*.

An interesting implication of Matthew's introduction is the time frame of the third set. We deduced that the first three sets of 14s equaled a period of 2100 years. Therefore, it seems sensible to conclude that the period covered in the last set, from Christ's first coming to His reappearing is also 2100 (50 x 3 x 14) years. If this is correct, we can also conclude that Jesus is returning some time in this century or soon after. However, if a Jubilee is only 49 years, He will return 42 years earlier. This also makes sense in that Christ's first coming was in the center of two 42 generation periods, the middle of the Old and New Testament eras.

Another arresting fact is that 42 plus 42 make 84 generations in which God brings forth the Christ and builds His church. Eighty-four is the product of seven and twelve, the two *covenant* numbers. God has made a promise and He is carrying it out; whether it's called testament or covenant, God is performing to see that His Word is being fulfilled. I find it fascinating that what the former tax man wrote inspired by the Lord to introduce the New Testament to His people in a singular manner, via numbers, we of western civilization have to figure out.

MAY THE LORD BLESS AND PROSPER YOU IN ALL WAYS FOR SPREADING THE KNOWLEDGE OF AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S HOLY WORD AT THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

In His grace,

Orneal Kooyers