
Creation & Census – Practical Thoughts from the Use of Numbers in the Bible

Chris Maynard 2015-03-24 Chris.Maynard@transforminginformation.com
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.



Abstract

Numbers can help the global Church, and individual churches, to understand themselves and to understand the world. That understanding can then help us to serve our Master Jesus Christ much better. But there are a lot of problems along the way. So this paper goes back to the Bible to see how securely we can tie in some of our basic practices to God's revelation, and what we can learn to help us in our day-to-day work on church and mission information.

In the first eleven chapters of Genesis we see how God uses numbers as he describes creation and our earliest history. The fundamental importance of numbers is explored, and their relationship to names, definitions and boundary conditions. We note for instance that the Bible starts from time zero and at a very early stage God provides us with names and simple definitions for the concepts "day" and "night". On the basis of those, God then begins counting forwards – a first day, a second day, etc. Further insights are shared as we travel past the naming of animals, Lamech's boasting, the dimensions of the ark and the table of nations to the tower of Babel, restraining ourselves from launching into the story of Abraham.

Then in Exodus and Numbers we consider the three major censuses of Israel while in the wilderness. We learn lessons from their initiation. In all of them God takes a keen interest in the details. We learn lessons from their purposes – some explicit and some inferred. We learn much from the processes, contrasting the process of the Exodus census with those in Numbers. And we look at outcomes.

Finally we speculate on how much more might be gained by looking at the rest of the Bible in the same manner.

Body of the Paper

Introduction

Numbers can help the global Church, and individual churches, to understand themselves and to understand the world that God has put them in. That understanding can then help us to serve our Master Jesus Christ much better. But I find a lot of problems along the way. Other people see a lot of problems too. And the problems they see are not always the ones that I see. So we have more problems than I thought! So this paper goes back to the Bible to see how securely we can tie in some of our basic practices to God's revelation, and what we can learn to help us in our day-to-day work on church and mission information.

This paper is about **numbers**. You can call them statistics and you can call them data. Numbers allow us to say, for instance, that there are more people living in Asia than in the rest of the world put together. This paper must also be about **names** and **definitions** because without them numbers have no meaning in our world. Names include **categories** and **groups**. We need these to enable us to say that there are more Christians in the rest of the world, than in Asia. A *definition* will tell us what we mean by *names* "Christian" and "Asia". In this case a definition of "Christian" will tell us if this "category" includes "Mormons" and "Jehovah's Witnesses" or not. And does "Asia" include "Russia" or not? A definition will tell us. Definitions give value to numbers, but in information work they also cause us many extra problems.

This paper must also be about **God** because I fundamentally believe that without his revelation we can know nothing about ourselves or about the world. And it must therefore refer to **the Bible**, because this is the main record of God's revelation to us human beings. The Bible shows us a lot about the way that the world works and about the ways that we can understand it.

I do not claim that what follows was discovered entirely from these Bible passages. My starting point is often my own experience or what I have learned from other human beings, and I have tried to be open to the Holy Spirit who can guide us into all truth.

What I seek is to **align** my thoughts and actions with what is revealed to us in the Bible, and it is in this spirit that I share this with you. The problems are complex and this paper is not a final answer. But I ask God that it will be useful.

Beginning to Count

The bible starts from **zero** – time zero that is. "In the beginning" are the very first words of Genesis. Immediately after that God creates matter (the earth) in space (the heavens). The **Spirit of God** is mentioned in verse 2 and then the **Word of God** comes in verse 3. So the three persons of the Trinity are involved right from "Day Zero".

Having spoken light into being with his **words**, God creates a separation and distinction between light and darkness. And immediately he chooses to **name** them as "day" and "night". Here we have the first **definition** in the Bible. God called the light "day" and he called the darkness "night". Such separations, distinctions and definitions are crucial to any useful numbering.

On the basis of that definition, God can then begin **counting** forwards – a first day, a second day, etc. Notice that he counts the change over between the two things he has named. The evening is the transition from day to night and morning is the transition from night to day. These two together and in sequence act as God's marker for each new **number**. "And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day." **It is often the boundaries that need our attention if we are to count things right.** In this case, it is the evening and the morning (two boundaries) that enable God to count the first

day. If he did not observe those, but rather (God forbid!) had gone to sleep one day and woken up the next, it would seem to him to be the same day.

This can become especially important when we are counting kinds of things that are very similar. If, for instance, we are to count churches or Christians we will do well to pay attention to the boundaries of the meaning of church or Christian. If we count people groups we will find serious difficulty with recognizing the boundaries between one people group and another.

The Fundamental Significance of Numbers

Within the few opening sentences of the Bible we have news of the beginning of the space-time continuum, of matter, energy and radiation in the form of light. And even as God tells us about these basic building blocks of our world, he uses numbers, names and definitions in his description. Are these tools **fundamental to the world God created**? Could the world exist without numbers? I don't know. But why are they here in the first chapter of Genesis? I believe we *must* at least say that numbers are **fundamental to God's revelation of the universe to us** and therefore to our understanding of the universe. So numbers *may be* fundamental to the existence of the universe, and *certainly are* fundamental to our ability to understand it. Let me propose it another way. I believe that we cannot understand the world, as God has shown us that he wants us to understand it, without numbers.

The following ten chapters will confirm this. There are more than one hundred numbers in Genesis 1 to 11. Names are also there in abundance, enough to say that **names and numbers are both very important to God.**

Definition and Desire

But before we leave the story of creation, let us note that God's definition of "night" as darkness and "day" as light is rather simple. Exactly when does day turn to night and is there something in between? Near the equator this may seem sufficient, but as we get nearer to the poles there is rather more twilight during "evening" and "morning". "Day" and "night" are not so clear-cut. Later, people have made more precise distinctions. Sunrise is generally considered to be when the first part of the sun breaks the horizon. The orthodox Jews consider night has begun when the first three stars are visible. And we now know in our "global" world that it is even more complex because when it is day in Jerusalem it may be night in Kuala Lumpur. However, we don't always have to be so precise. There is a point at which our **definition becomes good enough for our current purposes**. And God's definition in Genesis 1:5 is good enough to begin counting days. Is our definition good enough for our purposes?

Now in verse 28 God expresses his desire for the human beings that he has created. He said to us, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." Is this a blessing or a command to them? Maybe it is both, but it certainly expresses God's desire for the human race. And a significant part of **his desire is expressed in a mathematical way**, translated into English as "increase in number" or even as "multiply". Notice that he does not set a target number, but he is looking for fruit, for an increase or a multiplication and the implication of "fill the earth" is for a large number. This is the first time that God expresses this sort of desire, but it will certainly not be the last. God desires a large number of human beings.

Involving Us & Turning Numbers Upside Down

Moving on to chapter 2, in 2:19-20 God now includes Man in the naming process. He himself initiated that process by naming "day" and "night". He continued with naming "sky", "land" and "seas". Now he brings Adam into the process by getting him to **name the animals**. God often starts something himself, and then invites us to join in.

But quickly in verse 24 we get the first of many times when **God seems to turn numbers upside down**. In this case the scripture declares that two people can and do become one flesh. We have to grapple with the significance of these contradictions to the natural order of numbers. Jesus tells us that the widow's two small coins that she put into the temple treasury are more than the riches that others contributed, that the first shall be last, and that it is worth leaving 99 sheep to go after the 1 that is lost. Let us not become so proud to think that numbers can allow us no longer to rely upon God and his interpretation of events.

Threats and Boasting

In Genesis 4:15 God uses **a number as a threat**. "What you do to Cain will be multiplied back to you seven times." What do we learn from this? Seven seems a lot. Maybe that is why God uses a number. He wants to make it very clear to Cain's fellow men the severity of what will happen to them.

At this point, let us again observe that numbers do not stand alone. Before God numbered the days, he *explicitly* introduced the name "day". No doubt, if we just want to understand *numbers* in the abstract then we can treat a number as a number. We can learn to multiply and divide, add and subtract with numbers alone. But **as soon as we want to use numbers to understand the world, we need a name**. We cannot speak of 6 or 2 or 7 on their own. We must speak of 6 *days* or 2 *people* or 7 times *vengeance*. If we do not name what we are counting, we may create "more darkness than light".

Then by verse 4:24 we have the first example of a human being **using numbers to exaggerate and to boast** over God. "God can do seven? I can do seventy!" Oh the foolishness of men! How often does God do or say something and we find a way to abuse it. Presumably it is because of reactions like Lamech's that God later limits human vengeance to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Numbers can be so valuable for comparison. "This will cost us twice as much as that." "Church planters who learn the local language well are so many times more likely to plant successful churches." Or "Anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." But notice that **this sort of comparison can easily lead to boasting**. So Lamech cannot resist making his ridiculous boast "If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech is avenged seventy-seven times." And others can boast today with our numbers. "There are three times as many people in our church as in your church." "We can put a missionary in the field for one tenth of the cost of one of yours."

Dates and Years

In Genesis 5 we get the first human genealogy, and we learn that humans are already **counting years** and **measuring the length of human lives**. Maybe they took their example from God counting the days.

Then in chapter 6, God decides to **limit human life to a specific number** of years, and gives Noah **numbered dimensions** for the boat that he is to build and the **numbers of animals** to take on board. There is **a time to be very vague** – "be fruitful and multiply", and there is **a time to be very precise** – "my spirit will not remain in man more than 120 years". Probably if we are building a boat it is better to be precise.

At the turn of chapter 7 we are introduced to a new **classification** of animals, when God makes a **distinction** between clean and unclean, telling Noah to take on board more of the clean ones. Then we are given a **date** and **durations** for the various parts of the flood event. The date is given relative to Noah's birth. And it is notable that all human dates ever since have been expressed relative to another date – even to this day when our years are expressed relative to the supposed birth year of Jesus Christ.

In chapters 8 and 9 God again reveals his desire that humans and all the animals should **multiply on the earth** and be fruitful and **increase in number** on it.

The First Data Table

Then in Chapter 10 we have a record of the beginning of that process of increase and multiplication. Humans begin to spread out in family groups. This “table of nations” as it is sometimes called is indeed a sort of **annotated table of data**. It reminds me of William Carey’s “Survey of the Present state of the World” in section III of his “Enquiry”. It is also a **forerunner of maps** since the families or nations are often linked to **geographical areas**. Verse 5 talks of “maritime peoples” spreading out “into their territories”. Verses 10, 12, 19 and 30 all contain geographic details of places, cities or regions.

In chapter 11 we come to the tower of Babel. This is a sobering story where we learn that God does not want all of our human plans to succeed. And he is prepared to deliberately create confusion among us, if necessary, to prevent that from happening. This is a lesson for our projects that we might want to support with numbers. Just because we *can* do it, it doesn’t mean God *wants* us to do it. **Just because we *can* count something, it doesn’t mean God *wants* us to count it.** And in severe cases he is prepared to make things difficult specifically so that we *cannot* do it.

These first few chapters of the Bible give us a unique overview of world events before the story narrows down to Abram. And they have much to tell us about numbers.

The Census of Exodus – Counting is Serious

Let’s move on from Genesis. I think I have only scratched the surface of those important chapters but I promised to look at the great censuses recorded following the Exodus from Egypt. There are **many other numberings and list of names in the Bible** but here in the books of Exodus and Numbers are the first numberings of the people of Israel.

The first mention of a census is in Exodus 30:11-16. God speaks of the need to pay a ransom when Moses counts the Israelites, and suggests that a plague may result if this is not done. That suggests that **counting the people of God is a serious business**, not to be undertaken lightly. It is interesting that in later times (as with both the Roman census and the Jewish “temple tax” in Jesus’ day) a census has very often been linked to ways for rulers to get money from the people.

Definitions are Important (Again)

Up to this point in the narrative, there is no record of a command from God or a plan of Moses to actually take a census. Yet in this passage some interesting things come up *about* the census if it is going to happen. God describes carefully the weight of the ransom to be paid. “Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.” Not content with saying “a half shekel”, he refers specifically to a certain standard weight, held in the sanctuary, and then refers to what multiple of lesser weights that would be. Sometimes we may need similar **care in our definitions before we count**. Should we refer to an external standard? Should we define it in two different ways so that it cannot be mistaken? I will come back to a possible reason for God’s care in this specification – besides wanting his full quota of atonement money.

But while we are talking about definitions, let us note that in verse 14 we have a definition of who is to be counted (or at least of who is to pay the ransom money). **“Those twenty years old or more”** are to pay. So this census does not number the children, and specifies clearly a boundary condition with a threshold of twenty years. If we count Christians (or indeed people in general), do we want to count children? It is an important question. And the answer may depend on why we are counting.

A Headcount with a Crosscheck

This passage also tells us something of the mechanism of the census. In verse 13 we read: "Each one who crosses over to those already counted", and in verse 14, "all who cross over". The implication is that **this census will be done by physical headcount**. All the Israelites will stand on one side of those doing the counting, then each one in turn will cross over "to those already counted", giving their atonement money as they go.

The next mention of this first census is in Exodus 38:25-28 and we find that it has already taken place. This passage describes the value of the silver received and the total number of men counted. Notice that the figures match. This may have been part of God's intention that **there is a crosscheck available**. The heads were counted and then the silver was weighed. The number of shekels of silver should be half the number of people counted - and it was. What a relief! No plague then! Crosschecks can be very valuable to us - a different way of counting the same thing. Do the totals match? And if not, why not?

How Many Censuses in the Desert?

In Numbers 1 we have another record of a census. Some things lead people to think that this is the same census as the one mentioned in Exodus, mainly that the same total is recorded in both accounts (Exodus 38:26 and Numbers 1:46). However we have the date that God commanded it: "the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt" (Numbers 1:1). And from Exodus 38:27 we know that the silver from that census was used in the tabernacle, specifically to provide 100 "bases". And in Exodus 40:17 we read that "the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year." So the silver from the Exodus census provided essential parts for the tabernacle. Without them it would fall over. And the tabernacle was set up for the first time exactly one month before this first census of Numbers was ordered. Another reason to suppose this is a different census is the completely different process that God commands.

In Numbers 26 there is a further census, following the forty year wandering and the death of all those numbered in the first census. I intend to take both censuses together, since there are many similarities, so if you want to follow in your Bible you will need a finger in both places.

The Censuses of Numbers – God Commands Them

With the census of Exodus, we know that God ordered many of the details, but we are not told for sure whether it was he or Moses who initiated it. With both censuses in Numbers **God is very clearly the initiator**. Numbers 1:1-2 "The Lord ... said: 'Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.'" And in Numbers 26:1-2 "... the Lord said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, 'Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families.'" To me this is a very significant fact. God initiates a count of his people, and we are called upon to be imitators of God. Some may point out that this is under the old covenant. Yet Paul uses events from this very period in Israel's history to support actions in the spirit-led Church of Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 Paul writes about his collection for the saints in Jerusalem, "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: 'The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.'" Paul takes what I understand to be a supernatural event from this time in the wilderness (the gathering of manna), and uses it to commend a human-organized response to a situation in the Church of his day.

I also fail to find in these two censuses any record of the need to pay a redeeming half shekel for the lives of those who are counted. I know that absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, but I think it is worth noting and worth wondering at. Maybe his warning about redemption only applied to the Exodus census, or maybe it only applied to a census that used the head count method. **God is certainly not against counting. At times he commands it.**

Why a Census? One Explicit Reason and Some Speculations

Why does God command these two counts in Numbers? In my experience God seldom does things for only one reason. And it seems to me that there could be several plans behind these censuses. Firstly there is the clue about who is numbered. These are “all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army” (Numbers 1:3) and “all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel” (Numbers 26:2). This suggests that there is **a desire to know Israel’s fighting strength** and the relative strengths available from each of the different tribes. This doesn’t explain the omission of Levi, however, who are not forbidden to fight. Numbers 1:47-53 states clearly that Levi is excluded, and tells us something of their duties, but to my mind it does not make clear why they are not numbered in this census. However, in the later census we have a clearer statement in Numbers 26:62 “All the male Levites a month old or more numbered 23,000. They were not counted along with the other Israelites because they received no inheritance among them.” So this census (the final one at least) has something to do with inheritance. In fact just before the Levites are mentioned in chapter 26, we get an explicit statement of one purpose of the census. In verses 52 to 56 we read: The Lord said to Moses, “The land is to be allotted to them as **an inheritance based on the number of names**. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one; each is to receive its inheritance according to the number of those listed. Be sure that the land is distributed by lot. What each group inherits will be according to the names of its ancestral tribe. Each inheritance is to be distributed by lot among the larger and smaller groups.” Here is a very clear reason for counting the people. God wants to give them land. He wants it to be given at random (by lot), but he wants each tribe to have an area relative to their number. A larger tribe is to get a larger territory, a smaller tribe a smaller one. Well that seems fair. But let us reflect for a moment on the significance of this. If the lands are to be allocated by lot, then surely God is capable of arranging the apparently random lots so that the larger tribes get a larger chunk. Why does he put Moses and the people to all the trouble of a human census? He caused the manna to be evenly distributed by supernatural means. Why not with this inheritance of the land? Maybe it has something to do with **involving his people in the process**, and something to do with **teaching us a good use of numbering**.

Although this is not stated as a benefit, it seems that God may also have had future generations in mind at this point. Because these two major censuses provide a **firm basis for further genealogies**, including, much later, the genealogy of Jesus, son of David, son of Judah.

Alan Tippett says the second census was to demonstrate that **all those numbered in the former census had perished**, and maybe so (“Church Growth and the Word of God” p.15).

Now let’s turn to the process.

To Count or to List? To Number or to Name?

What does God specify about the process? Rather a lot of things.

First of all it is clear that this is a very different type of census from the one in Exodus. Here God insists that they must list “**every man by name** – one by one” (Numbers 1:2). Why is this? Jim Haney tells me that we number what is important to

us. It is a good point. We know if we have 4 children and 9 grandchildren. The Good Shepherd counts his sheep and the Father numbers the hairs on our head. If we value what we number, what does it say when we list something? It suggests to me that we value them even more. I *count* the money in my purse, but I *name* my children.

I wondered how big this record might be of all the men of Israel. So I looked at an online facsimile of the ancient scroll of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Caves, which was written in Hebrew before 100BC. I noted how many lines to a column of text and how many columns there were in the scroll and I made some assumptions. I thought you might get 3,000, maybe 3,500 names in a scroll the size of that Isaiah scroll which is said to be one of the largest found in the Dead Sea caves. So you might need between 170 and 200 scrolls of that size to write down all 600,000 names. **That is not a trivial exercise**, and they did it twice!

God specifies that the names be recorded **by clans and families**. See 1:2 and 26:2. I guess that in that culture, it was the only reasonable way to end up with **an ordered, searchable and verifiable list**. Not everyone may have known his birthdate, which we often use now as personal identification along with a family name and a given name. In a nomadic group, a postal address would not work. Not everyone may have been able to spell his own name consistently, I don't know. But from what I know of Israel *everyone* would know who their father was, and his father, and probably back to Jacob and beyond. This time they could not verify the final number by the weight of the redemption money, but they *could* verify any individual part of the count quite quickly by summoning the relevant clan or family and checking the relevant part of the record.

A Hierarchical Classification for a Large List

Finding your name in 200 scrolls might seem like looking for a needle in a haystack, but not if everyone is listed by clan and by family. "What tribe are you? Judah? One of the larger tribes, well you are in one of these 23 scrolls that we keep over here. Clan? Zerah! OK that means you will be in one of these 5." And so on moving down the family line you narrow down on a column of names that are the brothers and cousins and uncles that you recognise. This system provided a **natural hierarchy** and everyone immediately knew their place in that hierarchy. Hierarchical classifications are *so* useful when processing large amounts of data. You need to know how to find things. We encounter this problem well before we have to deal with 600,000 Israelites. Even a list of the 16,000 people groups in the world is far too many for us humans to be able to deal with, even if we have a good computer. We need to group them, classify them, and preferably put them into a hierarchy, which is why Patrick Johnstone laboured so long and hard to define Affinity Blocs and People Clusters. When you are gathering large amounts of data, be sure to think about how it will be classified.

For the first census in Numbers, God specified something else. He told Moses to get twelve men to help him with the census. Numbers 1:4 says, "one family head from each tribe is to help you". Then God goes on to select the men himself and name all twelve (verses 5-15). Some tasks are just too big for one of us to accomplish, and God knew that Moses did not have a great track record of delegation. But I wonder if there was not an additional motive at work here. Maybe God was seeking **to establish some depth of expertise** in Israel in the matter of writing and administration. We too need to consider how to bring other people into the process. It is notable that these were already men of significance in their tribe.

Samples and Indicators?

Let's go back to the purpose of these censuses – the only explicitly stated purpose, which is to determine how much land each tribe will get. "The land is to be allotted to them as an inheritance based on the number of names" (Numbers 26:53). Why does God then choose the count all the males over 20 who are able to serve in the army? I

myself might have insisted on counting everyone, men, women and children. This may not have been practical. It was probably much easier to count the able bodied men. And often counting a carefully defined subset will be as good as counting the whole. In this case they did not need to determine the overall size of the land required. That was fixed by the physical dimensions of Canaan. Indeed often we don't need an absolute number. What we need is a relative number. How big is Judah, *relative* to Benjamin? That is enough for allocation of the land. So in this case the fighting men can serve to represent the whole tribe. We sometimes use the word "indicator". The number of fighting men is an "indicator" of the size of the tribe. It is not the size of the tribe. The tribe will be more than twice as large. But it is a good indicator of its size. We need to think **what will be good enough, and what will be practical** in our area of study.

Could We Learn More?

So finally, looking back at what I have written, in one way I am not surprised that the Word of God has so much relevance to what we do in the twenty-first century. But it has surprised me so many times in the past, I should be used to it by now. Please let me know if you have found this useful. I wonder how many more insights are waiting for us if we look at the whole Bible through the lens of the work God has given us to do.

Books

I have attempted to find some books that cover this area, but without much success. If you type “numbers” and “bible” into Google or Amazon you get plenty of books about numerology but very little that might have a more practical application to our work. Here are the few books I have found that seem to touch on the subject. They are mostly by those in or influenced by the “Church Growth” movement, which is not surprising, since, by its nature, it must use numbers. If you find any significant passages in other writings, please let me know.

Barrett, David B., Johnson, Todd M. *World Christian Trends AD 30 – AD 2200*. William Carey Library 2001. Anything on the subject of Christian numbers that runs to over 900 large pages and 3 kilograms ought to have some biblical analysis. And it does, although not as much as I might hope for. Part 14 “Missiometrics”, subsection “Biblical Origins of Missiometrics” on pages 447 to 451 is the most relevant I could find. The first and last pages hardly refer to the bible, which leaves only the three central pages. These are a sort of word study on the numerical verbs of the bible. There are two tables: “*Twenty-three biblical imperatives outlining the science of missiometrics*” and “*A full listing of all 51 English biblical imperatives and 27 synonyms delineating 51 dimensions of the science of missiometrics*”. What I find here is a very useful springboard to further study but not, I think, a definitive basis for a “science”.

Dayton, E. & Fraser, A. D. *Planning Strategies for World Evangelisation*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990. This has some analysis in support of both “strategy” and “management”. Most notable is a page (p28) headed “Nehemiah was a manager”. These are of value but they do not really treat the use of numbers in the bible of itself.

Gibbs, Eddie, *I believe in Church Growth*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1981. I personally found a section on “Planning that is pleasing to God” pp392-399 to be very helpful and distinctively different from what I have found in other books. Subtitles are: “We plan in the knowledge that we serve a God who plans”, “We engage in planning in recognition that we are responsible co-workers with God”, “as co-workers with God, Christians are held accountable for their actions”, “We engage in planning on the understanding that in the final analysis we are utterly dependent on God’s providence”. Each of these is explored in scripture. However the rebuttal to “data gathering is unscriptural” on pages 33-134 is too brief.

Holzmann, Pete, *unpublished PowerPoint slides*. I eagerly await something weightier from Pete, who has been meditating on the bible and numbers for many years, and has begun to speak on the subject, most recently as the keynote speaker at ICCM Europe. I have interacted with him a little in the run up to producing this paper. However, I must say that I don’t have his endorsement from any of what I have written.

Kraft, Larry & Kraft, Stephanie, *Spying Out the Land: How to Understand Your City*. 1995. (Unpublished manuscript available through the OC Research Department.) This has a very useful section of more than 3,000 words on the “Biblical Basis for Information Gathering”. This draws substantially on the book of Numbers (census and spies), has examples from the lives of Joshua, Nehemiah, Jesus and Paul, and examines the crucial concept of “wisdom” in Proverbs and other places. My own thinking has been strongly influenced by the Krafts, and this is still the most comprehensive treatment of numbers and the Bible that I have found to date.

McGavran, Donald MC, *Understanding Church Growth*, Eerdmans 1970. There is a useful section on God’s passion for reaching large numbers of people - “a vast finding” pp40-48 and a bare half a page on page 83 at the start of the section on “Facts Needed” that briefly justifies the use of numbers by reference to Bible censuses and “Luke’s great emphasis on numbers”.

Tippett, Alan R., *Church Growth and the Word of God*, Eerdmans 1970. This deals at length with the Bible and the concept of Church Growth. But only one small section seems to deal explicitly with numbers. It is called “Numbering: Right or Wrong?” pp15-

17. It is largely a rebuttal to people who use the example of David's census to say that counting is wrong. He confidently tells us what David's sin really was, when to my mind the Bible retains a high degree of mystery about this.

Wingerd, Roy A. Jr., *The Dawn Research Handbook*, First Edition, Modified, Dawn Ministries 2001. There is a very good section called "What does the Bible say about Research" pp23-26. It covers "the Problem of Information and Knowledge", "The Wisdom of Being Informed", "Lessons in Research from the Old Testament", "Lessons from the New Testament" and "A Systematic Approach to Research". It draws on Numbers, Joshua, Nehemiah, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Gospels and Epistles. The last section is about the story of the 12 spies. It maps elements of the story to the elements of a modern research project. Succinct and thought-provoking.