

Numbering Our Days

Learning a Heart of Wisdom

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Many of you will remember the sermon that I gave three years ago today (believe it or not) that I titled, "Why Count Fifty Days?" And in that Pentecost sermon I went into the *whys* of the fact that God has us count every year either fifty days, or seven weeks to this Feast of Pentecost.

Now I do not *expect* you to remember that sermon. Maybe you remember that I gave it, maybe you remember somewhat of what it was, but I want to quickly review that sermon so that we get a running start into my main message for today.

The following scripture contains the instructions for the Feast of Firstfruits, actually the Feast of Weeks it is called here.

Leviticus 23:15-16 And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

In these two verses we get the picture, very succinctly, that we are suppose to count to this holy day. You either count seven weeks and keep the next day (as it says very specifically the day after the seventh Sabbath), or you count fifty days. Either way will bring you to the same day—today, a Sunday, the day after the weekly Sabbath. That is pretty clear.

Now, this is unique among the holy days. The other six holy days, and the Passover as a festival, are all given dates to be kept on. It is the 14th *day* of the first month, or the 15th day, or the 21st day, etc. You are given dates to mark on the calendar.

But, this day of Pentecost is different in that there is no date given here. You have to count it from a particular day—not dates. You have to count it from a day—a weekly Sabbath day.

Now in the Days of Unleavened Bread the Sabbath can fall on four different dates. It is just the way that the Hebrew calendar works out. And so that means that the Day of Pentecost can also occur on four different dates. However, it always occurs on the same day of the week, which is a Sunday.

Now some of the Jews usually keep Sivan 6 every year because they count it from a fixed date. And so they would always come to a fixed date, which this year happened to be last Wednesday (I think)—Sivan 6 on the Hebrew Calendar. They always keep it that day.

Because counting Pentecost, rather than using a fixed date, is such a significant departure from the norm, and being that God gives us dates for six holy days, then this should make us curious as to *why*? Usually when God does something that is a departure from the norm, it is done for a specific reason so that we can get a lesson out of it.

This was the idea behind the whole sermon three years ago.

Now we will read Acts 2:1—another of the main scriptures we turn to on this holy day. I am not going to go into this in great detail, but I want to pick up what it says right here:

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

In the New Testament they had ceased calling it (among the Greeks) the Feast of Weeks, and were calling it Pentecost.

Pentecost means "fiftieth," in Greek. And the word "day" is understood that this is that day. They get that directly from Leviticus 23:15 and 16 where we just read that God tells us to count fifty days. So, they called it the Fiftieth Day. It is very clear.

This holy day is the fiftieth in the count. That makes the number 50 significant.

Three years ago, we looked at the dimensions of the Tabernacle, and some of the things of the Tabernacle, had fifties and multiples of fifties in them. We also saw that the Jubilee was counted exactly the same way as Pentecost. It is another cycle of fifty. I made a few analogies to those things.

But the big thing that I went into in that sermon we found by combining Numbers 1:1-3 and Psalm 90:10. First we will go to Numbers, and then we will go to Psalm 90.

Numbers 1:1-3 NOW the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, "from twenty years old and above—all who *are able to* go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

What I would like to take from this is that they started counting people when they were twenty.

Now, Psalm 90. (You might want to stick something in Psalm 90 because we are going to be in Psalm 90 for most of the sermon today.)

Psalm 90:10 The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

What I picked out in that sermon is that a person was considered an adult at twenty years of age. He was accountable. And Moses said that most people lived to be about 70 years old. And if any lived longer, the extra years are not really anything to boast about. They are by reason of strength that we are able to make it a bit longer.

That is not to say that it is fixed at 70 years, because we know many who live longer. But it comes out to be about the average length of a life. The very simple math on this—70 minus 20—gives us 50 adult years. This is basically the average amount of time a person has as an adult.

What I showed there in the sermon was that the fifty years was analogous to our time of conversion. And that means, then, that the fifty days toward Pentecost also are analogous to our time of conversion. If we think about it, most of us—not all of us—there are exceptions, of course—but especially those of us who have grown up in the church of God, we come to the decision to be baptized somewhere around age 20. Sometimes it is after we graduate from high school at age 18, or maybe we might wait until we graduate from college at 22. But, it is somewhere near age 20. That is where it seems to be.

Let us remember that God started these instructions with the children of Israel. And they lived in the covenant. They were born into the covenant. But, they became only accountable at age 20. And then they were accountable for these approximate 50 years.

It works the same way under the New Covenant. But it is slightly different. We are not born into the New Covenant. We are baptized into the New Covenant. And, we become accountable immediately upon baptism.

But it is the same amount of time of accountability, basically—the fifty years. And so the fifty years, then, is analogous to the fifty days.

If we think about the fifty days, where do they begin? They begin right about the time of the Passover—the time of redemption. It is somewhat analogous to baptism because that is the time when God calls us out of the world, gives us understanding, and we become accountable. (We also renew this covenant every year at Passover.) They also begin in the midst of the days of Unleavened Bread, which is the time when we are supposed to be getting rid of the old man and putting on the new.

This intervening period, then, beginning with Passover (redemption) and Unleavened bread (putting out sin, and putting on righteousness) culminates in Pentecost fifty days away, the harvest of the firstfruits.

That whole period between redemption and the beginning of putting away sin, and putting on righteousness, all the way to our ultimate redemption—ultimate harvest as firstfruits—is the period of our conversion. You might say, it is our time of sanctification, or our day of salvation.

Let us go to II Corinthians 6, verses 1 through 2 and just see this. Paul makes a plea here for us to take this period of sanctification seriously:

II Corinthians 6:1-2 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says [quoting Isaiah]: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in [a] the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Today is our day of salvation. God has allotted us this time—maybe 50 years for some of us, shorter for some, and maybe longer for others. It just depends on the way that God wants to work with us. But, God has allotted us this time, as Paul says, "to come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"—to a perfect man. This is the time we have to prove ourselves, to show God our growth, to put on His Son's image, to overcome, and grow and produce fruit, and develop character—to become sanctified, holy, set apart for the things that God has in store for us.

Realizing our time is limited, the main point of that original sermon was, "We need to be using our time wisely"—prioritizing properly as Paul exhorts us in a few places. Let us go to a few of those.

First to Ephesians 5. You will recognize this one right away. Paul writes:

Ephesians 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly. . .

If you know anything about the roots of the English word "circumspectly," it means "looking all around." When you walk, you should be aware of what is

happening around you. That is what he is trying to give you the image of here—somebody walking his Christian life. Paul is telling us to be aware of what is going on around you. Be aware of the timing of things. Be aware of your own state. Be aware of the state of those around you, primarily spiritually. Be aware of people who are in need. Be aware of etc. Walk circumspectly, looking around you.

Ephesians 5:15-16 . . . not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time [buying it back, making the most of it], because the days are evil.

I think that this is much more poignant to us because the days *are* evil. They have a gloss of being normal. Because we are living in them—we are living through them—we are not as aware as maybe we should be of how things are changing. It is the "boiling the frog" scenario. Things are getting worse. And if we are not walking circumspectly, aware of all the things that are happening, we might think that they are going on as usual. But, they are not. And so, it is paramount to us that we should be redeeming the time—using the time to the best of our ability.

Another one that is maybe more poignant to us is back in Romans 13. Paul puts a bit more oomph into this one:

Romans 13:11-14 And do this [Notice this! Do this! Do not let it lag.], knowing the time [especially now], that now it is high time to awake out of sleep [And for those of us who are Laodicean, it is high time!]; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed [And that can be true at any time, but especially now, it is near!]. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

That is a lot to do. That is a lot to be circumspect about. But, it is high time that we do it.

Now the sermon today will be an amplification of the one that we have reviewed. It is going to take one of the principles one step further. It is the

principle that I actually did not get to specifically in my review. But, I did touch on it a bit right here at the end of the review.

This step is a vital one for producing the firstfruits—us—God's sons and daughters. We need to be doing this. It is a simple step. It is not hard. But, it is one that we do not give enough credence to. In a way it is something that has gone out of favor in our society. It should not go out of favor among us in the church of God.

Please turn back to Psalm 90, and we are going to read the whole psalm because I want to get the complete context of what Moses is trying to say here. This happens to be one of my favorite psalms. It is the only psalm that is directly attributed to Moses. There are other psalms that are thought to be his, but there is no title on them that gives a name. For instance, Psalm 91 is often considered to be a psalm of Moses also. But, since there is no title on it we do not know for sure.

It is also interesting that Psalm 90 begins Book IV of the Psalms. Book IV, if you know anything about the themes of each one of the books of Psalms, is aimed right at us, and right at our time today.

Book V tends to be an exaltation of God and Christ, seemingly aimed at the Millennium. But, Book IV is the time of the end. And so, this introduction, Psalm 90, sets the stage for the rest of Book IV. When you know these things it makes a great deal more sense.

Psalm 90:1-17 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night. You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep.

In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our

secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

In a way it is not a very happy psalm. It starts out real well, though, by showing what God is. I hope that in my reading of this that you saw the theme come out clearly. Man's time is short. Especially in comparison to that of God. God is eternal. God lives forever. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He had no beginning. He will have no end.

He *is* (in every sense of the word).

That is one of His names. The God that was, the God that is, and the God that will be—the I AM. It is one of the best ways to think of Him. Although it is a concept that expands our mind almost to the point of breaking; to think of some Being that lasts, and lasts, and lasts; to also think of some Being who never was not.

It is something that we finite people cannot really grasp at all.

But verse 12 is the principle that we are supposed to take out of this and build upon. It is verse 12 that puts this in context and gives us something to do. It helps us to make this workable for us—practical for us. If we did not have something to do, we might be overwhelmed, which the rest of the psalm seems to show. How overwhelming it could be to think of the short

amount time that we do have, compared to the vastness of God, and compared to what He wants from us, what He expects from us.

So, I want to go through this Psalm 90 in its sections to pick out these themes a little bit, and get all of this in context.

Psalm 90:1-3 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men."

What Moses does here by introducing this psalm this way is to establish immediately God's eternity, and His Sovereignty. Both of these elements are here. He wants us to know that these things are never a question. God is. God always has been. God always will be. He controls everything. Deal with it.

These are the givens. These are the stipulations. This is how everything has to work.

Once we understand these things, then we can get on with life. These are the things we have to start out with believing and knowing to the depth of our being are true. This is the table that has been set; now we must eat from it.

Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

God sees time much differently than we do because He is eternal. He blinks. And to Him that might be one hundred years in that way that Moses is explaining it here.

Obviously God does not have gaps like that where He would blink and miss one hundred years. That is not what I was saying. But, in proportion to His length of days that is what it is like. He does not see something like a man's death to be something that cannot be overcome—whether he has to lay in his grave one year, or a hundred years, a thousand years or several thousand years. How long has Seth been waiting for the resurrection of the dead? Just

about 5,000 years. (Abel has waited almost 6,000!) But to God, if we use this, 5 or 6 days at best!

It does not matter that his bones might be completely disintegrated. God will raise him up when it is right. It will be as if no time has passed. God is not constrained by time. Not like us for sure.

We rue the fact that we waste a day doing something. A day is important to us.

But to God thousands of years can mean little. Of course, He is working things out. But He has so much time to work with!

Psalm 90:5 You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep;
...

They are like a sleep. Think of it this way: When you go to sleep how much time passes until you are aware of anything? Maybe 8 hours? Do you remember anything that happened during that time?

And then, when you wake up, and start going about your daily routine, do you remember your dreams?

How soon do your dreams fade? Sometimes it is just a few minutes and you cannot remember what you dreamed about. This is kind of what Moses is getting at.

Sometimes these years are like a sleep. They fade in memory. They do not fade in God's memory. He knows everything that is going on.

The way that God is compared to us, that is how our days are. They are like a sleep. They pass so quickly, and there is very little to mark them.

Psalm 90:5-6 . . . In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.

I believe that Jesus used this very same metaphor. We are just like something that flourishes for a short time. Like my grass out in my yard. It flourished for a very short time while it had rain, and in just a short time it dried up, and ready to be mowed down. Actually, it has hardly grown.

Oh, there is another analogy for you: How much do we actually grow during our lifetime before we are ready to be mowed down?

Psalm 90:7-11 For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

Here he sets out connections between sin and God's anger. The result is death. What it comes out to in the end is a very short lifetime.

The Amplified Bible's footnote on this passage suggests that Moses is reflecting on God's curse on Israel. After he sent the spies in and ten of them came back with a poor report saying, "We cannot defeat these people, they are giants." And, of course, Caleb and Joshua came back with a good report, and said, "We can take them! Let us go!" And, they nearly got stoned! The result of all that was Joshua and Caleb got a free pass, but everybody else 20 years and above had to die in the wilderness.

What they are saying is that these things in verses 7 through 11 regarding God's wrath is this curse. Their time (the Israelite's) was set. At best, any of the Israelite adults 20 years and over had only 38 years to live. The curse was for 40 years, and this occurred in the second year of their wanderings. So, at best they only had 38 years to go, and they all knew it. Whether they accepted that or not, is one thing. But, Moses started this Psalm 90 out saying, "God is Eternal. God is Sovereign. God has our destiny in control."

And then we get to verses 7 through 11, and if it is indeed speaking about that curse placed on Israel, Moses is saying that we only have 38 more years to go (or whatever it was when he actually wrote the psalm), and this is the deadline. We do not get any more.

Moses is trying to take what they were going through (all Israel except Joshua and Caleb), and applying it universally. "Yes, God has given us a finite amount of time in the wilderness, and it has brought this home to us, that we only have so much time because we are under this curse. God's wrath sits on us heavily. What can anyone do about it? Nothing. God has set a time limit. We finish our years like a sigh."

It is a poetic way of saying, "Oh what could have been!"

Had they only chosen to listen to Joshua and Caleb, what could have been! What could their lives have become? What could they have enjoyed in the Promised Land that now they would not be able to do? All these "might-have-beens," is what one thinks about when the execution date is known.

And so we get down to verse 12, and it is, in a way, both a conclusion to Moses' thinking, as well as a ray of hope. Also, it is a stir to action.

He says:

Psalm 90:12 So teach us. . .

"O God who is over us with a sword, who has limited our days because of our sin."

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, . . .

"to realize the time, to see how many days we have left"

Why?

Psalm 90:12 . . . that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

We will get back to this because it is the answer to the problem.

Psalm 90:13-17 Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

Now if you understand the scenario here of being under the curse in the wilderness, these verses really come alive. And I do not want it to be strictly limited to that time—it has to apply to us, too, for we know that our time is limited to those 50 some odd years of conversion. Moses is imploring God to return to Israel.

It is as if God has turned His back on Israel in His anger, and Moses is saying, "God, please turn around. How long will it be until Your anger cools enough so that You can come visit us again? And favor us with Your presence? How long will You be distanced and remote from us? Please return! Even though this sentence hangs over us, we still need You. We need You to give us mercy!"

He knew that God was not going to relent in terms of the end date. He did not even relent for Moses. Moses had to die instead of going into the land. He could see it afar off, but that was it.

But, the mercy was in the fact that God was going to come back, and be with them.

The sentence was sure, but at least during this time, the 38 years or so that they had remaining, they could make the most of it.

He says, "Return to us Your favor."

Balance the grief in terms of this sentence with an equal amount of joy that we might have during this time. Let us enjoy the time that we have remaining while under this curse.

Psalm 90:15 Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil.

"Help us," he says, "help us to make the best of this time. Let us be glad."

Psalm 90:16 Let Your work appear to Your servants. . .

What was "the Work" at that time? To bring them into the Promised Land. But, notice what he says: "Let Your work appear to us." But, what does he say about the children?

Psalm 90:16 . . . and Your glory to their children.

Who was going to go into the Promised Land? Their children. They would be the ones to see the glory of the Promised Land.

The adults, however, because of the curse that was on them, would only see it afar off at best.

Psalm 90:17 And let the beauty [some think this word should be "favor"] of the LORD our God be upon us. . .

"The favor of the Lord be upon us"—give us grace! Give us help! Give us the gifts that we need,

Psalm 90:17 . . . and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

Meaning, let our work be successful. Make it permanent.

See how this psalm goes from constancy in God to the ephemeral nature of man to man's sinfulness and why he is under this curse. Then the answer in

verse 12—hope! Even though we live under this curse, there are good things that can come from it. And that God will make the best of it. And our work will be established.

Now to verse 12—this is the keystone of the whole thing. We need to take this verse apart because it provides the reasons why there is hope.

It provides a way for us, though man is under this curse, to break free from it, to make the most of their time, to become the firstfruits.

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

If you would look in Young's Literal Translation you would find that He has it this way:

Psalm 90:12 (YLT) To number our days aright let us know, and we bring the heart to wisdom.

I will not comment on that very much because I just want you to see how the Hebrew is translated—quite literally—to see how Moses composed this.

Let me say it again: "To number our days aright let us know, [speaking to God], and we bring the heart to wisdom."

The first thing that we have to see in this verse is that Moses instructs us that numbering our days is something that must be revealed to us. He is speaking to God when he says, "Let us know. . ." "Teach us. . ." as it is translated here in the New King James.

It is not something that we can get on our own, or do on our own, or discover on our own to teach us to number our days. A human being—a natural, human, carnal person—does not inherently know how to number his days.

You all know Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." There can be no wisdom in that! Remember, we started this psalm out with the constancy of God, and His sovereignty—the eternity of God. If you hate that Being, that is the utmost in foolishness and stupidity. You cannot get

wisdom that way by holding off the One who can give that wisdom at arm's length. It cannot happen that way.

I do want to go to Psalm 119:65 to back up this point about it being something that God has to show us.

Psalm 119:65-68 You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes.

Before God gave him a trial and brought him up short, and turned him around, he says here that he went astray. He was a carnal man who went his own way. But, when God brought him up short and taught him His statutes and commandments, and good judgments, and knowledge, then he was able to plot his course aright.

So, God must work with us to give us the proper perspective on life.

The second point that we can get out of Psalm 90:12 is, what is it to number our days?

The word number is simply "count," like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. That is not hard. Using the analogy in this psalm, what if God cursed you and you could only have two one-hundred count bags of M&M candies for the rest of your life? And, you knew (God told you) that you were only going to live for 10 more years. So, you have 200 M&Ms to last you for 10 years. Would you not put those M&Ms in a safe place, and count them, to make sure that you could divide them all up evenly over the next 10 years?

Now it would be foolish to eat up all 200 M&Ms right away, especially if you knew that 9 years from now you would have a hankering for M&Ms that you just could not get rid of. So, if you are smart, you would take 20 M&Ms for this year, 20 M&Ms for the next year, 20 M&Ms for the third year, and so on, until you had 10 packs of 20 M&Ms for each year. You put them in the deep freeze. Then, on January 1 of each year you would go get your 20 M&Ms.

Stupid illustration. But, it makes the point.

If you had a fixed amount of time to do anything, or to discover anything, or to accomplish anything, you would take the time to plot out what it is that you needed to do, so that it got done.

That is all that he is saying there. Count it out!

Putting it together with the first point, Moses is saying that God has to train us to have a godly perspective on our remaining time! We have only got so much time, and we have only got so much to work with, and so we must divide it out properly, so that we have what we need to finish up the job.

But, it goes beyond this. It goes beyond silly M&M illustrations.

It also means to reckon, or to appoint, which is a very interesting way of looking at it.

In terms of to reckon, we have a modern term that we use more often, "to compute." It is used in the same way that the word "reckon" was used. It means to consider all the constituent parts of a thing, and how they make up the whole.

Now, think of another illustration.

You want to build a house. You buy a build-your-own-house kit—you write off for it, and you get this kit. It is supposed to have everything that you need to build your house.

Now you have this big stack of lumber, bags of fasteners, duct work, shingles—this, that, and the other things.

Well, do not you have to reckon that you are going to use every one of these pieces if they came with the kit? If the manufacturer gave you what you needed to build your house, do you not think that you would need every bit of those things to make a whole, complete house? Sure! Of course!

If you left off the beam that has to go across the 24 foot span in your living room—"Aw! We do not need that! We will just splice 2 by 4s together—that would be three of them, and we will splice them together real tight—and we will make this 24 foot space with these itty, bitty toothpicks of 2 by 4s!" You need the beam because you need the strength, or it is going to cave in. You cannot hold up that span with spliced together 2 by 4s!

You have to consider all the constituent parts so that the whole comes together properly. You cannot leave anything out because if you do, you are going to have the "house that Jack built." Something is going to be crooked (at the very least)! Something is not going to work right, and so you might as well not even start.

You have to consider everything—all the parts—to make up the whole. That means that you have to know the goal. And then you have to understand what you need to get to the goal, and that you consider each one of the steps that it is going to take to make it there.

This is also part of numbering our days. Seeing the end, and figuring out what it is going to take to get there—each step, each part that goes into it.

In this case, in terms of number, meaning to reckon, Moses is saying that God needs to teach us how to consider and utilize all the various aspects of our lives in becoming wise. And if we do not consider everything, and we do not make everything apply to the pursuit of wisdom, then we may not make it to the true wisdom.

God, remember, is sovereign. He is in control. He is putting us through these paces to get to the goal. And if we do not consider all the places that He is taking us to get us to the goal, and apply them to growing in wisdom, we are not going to reach the point that He wants us to get to.

Now, consider the idea that to "number" means "to appoint." "Teach us to 'appoint' our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

This is an interesting one. It means to dedicate, or to set apart something for a specific use. It is very much like "to make holy," or "to ordain."

For instance: Let us say that you were a general of an army, and you have come upon a castle, and you need to storm this castle. It is vital to your overall strategy; you have got to take this castle. But, this castle is very strong. It is formidable. It has never been taken before. But, you have a strategy.

You have a catapult. And you know that if you put big, heavy rocks in this catapult (whoosh!), and you aim them all at one spot, you can make a hole in the castle wall.

But, the hole in the castle wall is only going to be only so wide. And the defenders of the castle will be able to concentrate all their men at this part of the castle wall that has been broke into. And so that means that whoever goes through that gap in the wall is going to get it. But, the army needs to go through the gap! Because, you need to take this castle, and it is the only way in.

So, you load your catapult, and cast your stones for however long it takes—a couple of days—and you go to your infantry, and say, "All right. We need 1,000 men to go through this gap. Who is going to do it? Every volunteer, please step forward." And the whole army takes a step backward. And so you say, "All right. If that is the way it is going to be, we will number you. Everyone stand in your ranks. Sergeants! Go through and take every tenth man, and send him to me! This is our suicide squad! Those are the ones going through the gap."

What has the general of the army just done? He has numbered the men, appointing every tenth man to a particularly difficult task, assaulting this enemy position. And it means certain death for these 1,000 men. But, they have been—appointed, dedicated, set apart—for this one thing: Breach the wall, and take the castle.

Let us raise this to a divine level and put it back into what Moses is saying here.

We are appointing, dedicating our days to His control. He is the general. We have chosen, picked out, numbered our days to the pursuit of wisdom. And the pursuit of wisdom is under the control of God.

This is not unfamiliar to the Bible.

Jonah 1:17 NOW the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Which word is "numbered" there (above)? It is the word "prepared." It is a cognate word to the one there in Psalm 90:12. This was a fish that God had numbered, picked out, designated, devoted to this one act with Jonah. He set this fish aside for this particular purpose.

Jonah 4:6-8 And the LORD God *prepared* a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day God *prepared* a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God *prepared* a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Now put this all back into Psalm 90:12. When we devote our days to pursuing wisdom, we are basically doing what God did to Jonah. We are setting them apart for a task. We are basically saying, "God, do with them what is best for me in pursuing wisdom."

So, we can say that our days are assigned—pre-assigned—to this task of pursuing wisdom, and God is the one controlling them, because we give them over to Him for this.

But, God has to teach us. See, as carnal human beings we would not give our time over to God to allow Him to sovereignly put us through the paces so that we could learn the wisdom that we need.

So, God has to teach us—put us in the right perspective—to get us to properly appoint our days to the right tasks. Otherwise, we will not come to wisdom. We have to give Him control.

The third thing that we can bring out of Psalm 90:12 is that the goal is to bring the heart to wisdom. And as the literal translation says, it is up to us in a great part to do this. And we bring the heart to wisdom.

Obviously, God has a great deal of say in this, and He is going to be directing us. But, I think that what Moses is trying to emphasize is our part in all this. God teaches us what we need to know, but there are things that we must do to bring our heart to wisdom.

We cannot just say, "Okay God. These days are Yours. I am going to lie here until You give me wisdom." This will not accomplish much! We have to cooperate with Him in bringing our heart to wisdom. God is not going to have a bunch of automatons in His Kingdom. He wants us to use our initiative in the time that we have remaining to pursue wisdom.

When I say, pursue, I am thinking along the lines of predator pursuing prey.

Do you think that a predator just lopes along, looking around, hoping to find something? Or does he have a specific thing in mind, and finds it, and stalks his prey? He may not seem to be going very fast, but he is intent and focused upon his prey. And then when the prey gets to a certain point, he lunges for it, and goes for it with all he has; but the entire time his entire being is focused on the goal of bringing the prey down.

There is no lolly-gagging with predators. This is life and death for them.

And so the same idea comes through here (Psalm 90:12). Maybe not quite with the same force, but the idea is that there should be a focus in the pursuit of wisdom. There is a constant urge and level of energy that is in this lifelong task of ours to pursue wisdom.

Moses is speaking of a process, here. It is not something that is going to be given with the snap of the fingers. It is a process of learning and growing and becoming. These things take time. Moses speaks of years, here, that have to be devoted—not just days, because days, here, stand for years. Days stand for all the time that we have left.

And so we have to dedicate ourselves to this time, to this pursuit. And we have got to have the energy to follow through.

Wisdom comes as the result of having a godly perspective on the day of our salvation, considering, and utilizing all the parts of our lives in a godly way, dedicating ourselves, our energies, and our time to God's goal for us.

And that goal is putting on the image of Jesus Christ—being one of those firstfruits that will be raised in the first resurrection when Christ returns, being one of Jesus Christ's younger brothers or sisters. That is the goal. What then, is wisdom?

The Hebrew word is *chokmah* or *h okmah*. It is defined as, "wisdom; experience; skill; shrewdness; or prudence." But, most of the time, when it is translated, it is "wisdom".

Wisdom goes beyond knowledge and understanding. It is the practical result of knowledge and understanding. One can be carnally wise, humanly wise, and even street-wise if you will. The Hebrew word could encompass that use.

But, as we saw in the psalm that we sang earlier, "It is to God but foolishness." It is not wisdom. Godly wisdom begins with godly knowledge coupled with godly understanding. The result, then, is godly thought, then godly speech, choices, and actions. These things are godly wisdom.

Wisdom is what we do with what God teaches us. In a way, we could say that godly wisdom is godly living! If we are living the way of God, we are being wise. This is the thing that is so out of favor in our society.

How many people grow up to be wise? I do not think that very many do. It is not on their list at all. Why should they become wise when they can be smart? Or they could be skilled at throwing a ball into a hoop? Or they could be the best maker of homes? Or they could be the best mousetrap maker that ever was?

God says that our goal, though, is to be wise—to have a heart of wisdom. And the way that we do this is godly knowledge with godly understanding and then taking all this and being wise by doing what He has taught us.

It is really very simple. It is very hard to do—because we have lived so long in this world where godly knowledge and godly understanding are put down. They are not at the forefront. And so we have to be wrenched into coming into the knowledge of the truth. God has to really work to get us to study—to get us to learn His way, and get us to stop thinking in that old way, and start thinking in His way so that we can understand what He is revealing to us.

And then, there is an even bigger hurdle when it comes to actually putting these things into practice!

That is why we have to devote our days to this pursuit of wisdom. It is not going to happen if we just go about it haphazardly. "Teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

He is saying, "God, teach us to have the proper dedication in the time that we have remaining so that we turn out the way You want us to be."

And if we do not do that, we do not become firstfruits. We will end up somewhere else.

And this day of Pentecost might become lost on us. We might miss the fulfillment of it altogether. It takes a great deal of dedication—of appointing our selves and our time for this specific task. It has to be in the forefront of our minds 24/7/365. This is our life!

Where does godly wisdom come from? I have already answered the question, but I think it is good that we see some scriptural backing for this.

Job asked the question just like I did:

Job 28:20-26 "From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living [How true that is!], and concealed from the birds of the air.

Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a report about it with our ears.' God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens, to establish a weight for the wind, and apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, and a path for the thunderbolt, . . .

He is saying (as another place also says) that "god made the earth, and everything in it with wisdom." Why is that? Because wisdom is the way that God lives.

And so Job is saying here that God put His whole Being into the creation, and fashioned it for life, to support life, to encourage life. And ultimately bring about eternal life in His children.

He made everything wisely so that it all blended in with His purposes. And it was not just hanging the planets around the sun, but down even to the smallest microbe, and even smaller things. Everything is perfectly done because God used wisdom to make it that way.

Job 28:27-28 Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'

Now Job's wording, here, makes it sound as if God perceived wisdom, and searched it out, and then He tested it, and declared it suitable, good, and useful for us. He probably really did not do that. But, Job is giving us something concrete to compare this with.

God determined that His way of life was the best way of life for man.

And so, He made everything according to wisdom. And then He said to man—to Adam (that is the Hebrew word that is used here). Maybe He said this directly to Adam, or maybe He just meant it as "This is My pronouncement for all mankind." But either way, He said, "The fear of the Lord is wisdom."

What did He mean by that? In a nutshell, wisdom is a proper, reverent understanding of God, and our place before Him. From this proper understanding of God, and knowing where we are before Him, giving Him His due in everything, comes humility, obedience, godliness, service, discretion, faithfulness, mercy. Everything that God is flows from this idea of the fear of God. We are now putting things in their proper order—God is first, and we are way down here. And because of who He is, and what He has done for us, this is how we should be, how we should act, how we should converse, how we should think, how we should plan, and what we should do every day of our lives. It all flows from this fear of the Lord.

If we get things in their proper perspective then we will order our days aright, because we know what is up and what is down. We are walking circumspectly. We know the time limits. We know the goal. We have everything in its proper order. And we can live within it according to wisdom by what God has revealed to us.

And part of this, mentioned in verse 28, is departing from evil. That is where understanding begins. We get the bad stuff out of our lives then we have room for the good stuff. Then, we start marching toward the purposes and the wisdom that God has ordained to be our lot in life, and the goal of our lives.

Proverbs 2 in my Bible is titled, "The Value of Wisdom."

I am not going to make much comment on this because I just want you to see what Solomon put in here on the value of living wisely.

Proverbs 2:1-4 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures. . .

Notice the activity here! It is not just sitting down and waiting for it to happen. It is not just even asking God for it. But rather, it is applying oneself. It is digging. It is searching, and seeking. It is crying out!

Proverbs 2:5 . . . then you will understand the fear of the LORD. . .

Then you will come to a proper understanding of the worth of things. Then you will come to understand how great God is, and how our lives have to be dedicated to this pursuit.

Proverbs 2:5b-12 . . . and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity *and* every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.

Proverbs 2:20-22 So you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.

We could go on.

Proverbs 3:13-16 Happy is the man *who* finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand. . .

Notice! The curse is lifted! If we follow godly wisdom death is not a barrier. Length of days forever in that forward direction is one of the goals—it is one of the rewards.

Proverbs 3:16 . . . in her left hand riches and honor.

All the things that we deny ourselves in this life, if we put our minds and hearts toward pursuing wisdom, will be given to us as Jesus says, a hundred fold. And even then, they will not mean to us what wisdom will mean.

Proverbs 3:17-18 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.

You see, in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve chose the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and died. Had they chosen the Tree of Life, what they would have been doing is telling God that they were dedicating their life to a life of wisdom.

And then all of the rewards would have come to them, as Solomon mentions here, plus eternal life, which we heard about yesterday. This quality of life, this way of wisdom, is the essence of eternal life. It is equated here with the Tree of Life.

Let us finish now in II Timothy 3. I want to bring this home to us. Paul writes to the young evangelist, and to us:

II Timothy 3:14-15 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We have brought this up into the New Testament, into our lives. Paul says to continue in the things that you have learned. Continue to build upon what you know. Continue to study the Bible to learn more. Continue to follow the example of good and righteous men and women who have gone before us and have taught by example and word all the way, he says, to salvation.

If we pursue godly wisdom, that will be the goal.