

Biblical Synecdoche

pronounced: "sin – neck – tah – key."

I would like to have an alternate word than synecdoche, but I don't know of one. The dictionary defines this word as, "a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole". We have many modern day examples, such as "give me a hand". But when we say, "give me a hand", we want the rest of the body to help too! Or if we ask, "how many hired hands does the farmer have?" We mean how many workers does he have. Or, "that is a nice set of wheels", we mean the car itself looks great, not just the wheels. We say the part, but it stands for the whole.

Now let us look at some biblical examples.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Matt. 6:11

Surely the meaning is, we want God to provide for all the needs of the day, not just bread. As if, "God could you just provide for the bread, then I'll do all the rest". Obviously, that is not what we mean.

"And all who believed were together and had all things in common."

Acts 2:44

"And all who believe", means more than those who mentally believed in Jesus. "Believe" is used for the whole act of conversion. They felt guilty (Acts 2:37), they repented (2:38), they were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (2:38). Then, *"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."* (Acts 2:41-42). Two verses later this same group is described by the phrase, "and all who believed" (2:44). The part (believe) stands for the whole (felt guilty, repented, baptized, devoted to the apostles teaching, fellowship, Lord's Supper, and prayer). Just like when you say, "give me a hand", you really mean you want the whole person to help you, including their feet, legs, arms, eyes, head, etc. not just their hand. For those who teach "faith only", is like teaching people to give a "hand only" (not helping with the rest of the body, which would be useless without the head telling the hand what to do). Jesus' younger brother James, will say "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). Giving a person "a hand", without the rest of the body attached to it is also dead. The part stands for the whole. It is not by faith only, and it is not by "a hand" only. Dan Peters