

Canonization of the Bible

Do we have the complete Bible? Are 66 Books the correct number of books? As we go through this subject we will see that God is very number conscious. Did God inspire 66 books to be the number in the Bible, or has Satan cunningly led man to do this?

The number SEVEN is quite conspicuous throughout the Bible.
The Sabbath is the seventh day.

The Levitical system of the Old Testament was built on a cycle of sevens.

Jericho fell after seven priests, with seven trumpets for seven days marched around the wall and blew their trumpets seven times on the seventh day.

Naaman dipped in the Jordan seven times.

The Bible begins with seven days of creation and ends with a book of sevens.

Seven days in a week

Every 7th day is the Sabbath day.

Every 7th year is a Sabbatical year.

Every 7th Sabbatical year (7x7) was followed by a Jubilee Year.

Seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost.

Seven Days of Unleavened Bread

Seven Days of the Feast of Tabernacles

Seventh Month has three feasts and four Holy Days

Seven notes in music.

Seven colors in a rainbow.

The book of REVELATIONS SEEMS TO BE BUILT AROUND THE NUMBER SEVEN.

Chapters 1-3	Seven Letters to Seven Churches
4-11	Seven Seals and Seven Trumpets
15-16	Seven Vials
1	Seven Candlesticks
	Seven Stars
	Seven Angels
	Seven Spirits
5	Seven horns, Seven Eyes
4	Seven Lamps
10	Seven Thunders
12	Dragon with Seven heads & Seven Crowns
13	Beast with Seven Heads
17	Seven Mountains and Seven Kings

We can see that the number seven has some significance over and above its numerical value. It is thought to stand for, COMPLETENESS, FULLNESS AND TOTALITY.

A few examples of other numbers:

Number THREE - COMPLETENESS

Three Woes

Three Baptisms

Three Resurrections

Three Days and Three Nights

Number TWELVE; ORGANIZATION BEGINNINGS:

Twelve Tribes, Twelve Apostles, Twelve Gates

In this article we will also discuss the numbers 22 and 49 as has having special significance.

As we can plainly see, God is aware of numbers, and they do mean something to Him. Since He gave us His Book, His Word, the Bible, then doesn't it strike you as odd that there are 66 books in this bible? Why would God place the number of man on His Holy Word?

We will see that man again has been deceived and that the number 66 proves nothing to us. But that the number of books that God actually inspired does prove something to us.

Now I am not saying that there are some books that do not belong in the Bible, but how they are counted and placed in their order. is the key. We will see we do have the complete Bible and that it is the inspired Word of God. Can we PROVE it?

A major proof is in the prophecies and how they have been fulfilled throughout history and in our present day. The fact that God always does what He says He will do is found in fulfilled prophecy and in our personal lives when we ask for things He has promised in His Word.

Let's answer the question as to how many books there are in the Bible and why does the Roman Catholic Church insist on eleven additional books then the sixty then we have.

THE ORACLES WERE COMMITTED TO THE JEWS

In Romans 3:1-2 the Apostle Paul tells us the oracles of God were committed unto the Jews. But what are the oracles of God? Heb. 5:12 and 1 Peter 4:11 show us that the oracles refer to the scriptures. The term oracle was a common expression used among the Jews for the Canonical Scriptures. There was never any doubt in

thetime of Christ about the contents of the Divine Oracles, nor did anyone consider the Old Testament to be deficient. The statements from Christ and the Apostles always presuppose that the Jews had the Scriptures. They never had to define what the scriptures were. Christ said in John 5:39 "Search the scriptures", Christ didn't have to explain what scriptures to search. Matt.22:29 "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Luke 24:27 and Matt. 22:29 also tell us that they knew what the scriptures were. Acts 17:2 tells us that Paul went into the synagogue three Sabbaths and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The words "holy Scriptures" in 2 Tim. 3:15 in some translations is rendered the sacred

scriptures, and this is proper because in the New Testament times the Old Testament books were referred to as the Temple Scriptures.

In Duet.31:24-25 we see that the Law was committed by Moses to the priests and the elders. They were it's custodians. This law was kept in the temple, so the preservation of the Divine Canon came to be a priestly responsibility.

When Hilkiah the High Priest came upon the neglected scrolls of God's Law, recognizing the importance of his find, he had this copy taken to the king. King Josiah read it and also read it to the people. The story of this is in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34.

Later, after the Babylonian captivity, when Ezra and Nehemiah re-established the Jewish people in Jerusalem, Ezra the priest, also placed the authorized scrolls in the temple. The priests were again

put in charge of the scrolls. These standard copies remained intact until the buildings were destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. All the synagogues in the first century maintained the same canon of scripture. All scrolls agreed with the Divine Canon deposited in the temple archives.

It has been said that everything that God gives man, man soon corrupts, distorts or even destroys. Man also always wants to improve on God. This holds true in regard to the disposition of God's written Word.

No one or no author would consider putting his ending chapters in the middle of the book, this would not make sound instruction. But this is what the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians tried, feeling they could better the Biblical order of what God had given. That's what they've done to the Word of God, they have placed the last books in the middle and the middle ones at the end.

God designed the books of the Bible to be read in a purposeful sequence. But just about the entire world, inspired by manuscripts that originated in Egypt, and not even written in the original Hebrew, has accepted an arrangement of Bible books, which completely negates the order intended by God.

The only people who have faithfully resisted all attempts to re-arrange the books of the Old Testament have been the Jews. From the time of Ezra, down to our present time, Jewish authorities have never officially changed any part of the original arrangement. The Jews have been faithful in their responsibility of keeping the oracles.

The Tripartite

The Old Testament is divided into three divisions, known as the tripartite. The first division is the Law, which is the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis through Deuteronomy. The second division is the Prophets, both the major and the minor. The third division is the Writings, sometimes referred to as the Psalms. Christ Himself set His seal of approval on the Jewish method of dividing the books into these three divisions. Luke 24:44 "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must

be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." When Christ referred to the Psalms, He was referring to eleven books, and not just the book of Psalms.

Notice verse 45 that Christ called these three divisions the "scriptures". He here informed the entire world that the complete O.T. was the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms or Writings. So we see that the Jews did indeed have in their midst the Holy Scriptures or the "oracles of God", as Paul said. (Rom.3:1-2)

How the books were Originally Counted

The Old Testament books found in the King James version presently number 39. There is enough evidence to show that when the canon was first completed that the number was only 22 books. Josephus states: "We have not a countless number of books, but only 22 containing the history of every age which are justly accredited as Divine". Josephus, a priest, said that the Old Testament contained only 22 books. Now don't think for a moment that Josephus is speaking about less material than we now have. In the King James Version, we have the exact contents of the original canon known by Josephus, but not the original numbering. The only difference is in the manner in which the books are numbered. For example, we always count the minor prophets (the books from Hosea to Malachi) as 12 books, but the ancient Hebrews always counted them as ONE BOOK. The books of Chronicles and the other historical books were not divided into two, as is presently done. It is by the re-dividing various books that we have arrived at the present number of 39 O.T. books. Now there is nothing wrong with this in itself as long as they are left in their proper order, and in the division assigned to them by God. The problem comes when men begin to displace the various books, removing them from their proper context. This is what has been done. There were only 22 books to the original O.T. which can be traced back 200 years before Christ.

The first division, the Law, contain the first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

The second division, the Prophets, contain first, Joshua/Judges which were counted as one book because they describe the period when Israel had no kings and Judges is considered to be a continuation of Joshua.

The four books of Samuel and Kings are counted as one book, and was called, "The Book of the Kingdoms". Next came Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and the twelve minor prophets Hosea to Malachi. The twelve minor prophets were all counted as one book.

The third division, the Writings or Psalms, were as follows: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah (counted as one book). And Chronicles.

This totals to 22 books which had been put together and completed in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. We will get into this a little more later, but first let's examine the number 22 and it's significance.

The Number 22 and it's Significance

The Jews saw in this number a symbol of the complete revelation of God. There are 22 books in the original O.T., and there are 22 letters in the Hebrew Alphabet, the language God used to write the Old Testament.

With this Hebrew alphabet, the Jews regarded the 22 books as a type of alphabetic acrostic. In Hebrew alphabetic acrostics, each letter of the alphabet is used at the beginning of a sentence or group of sentences. In the bible where acrostics are used, the first letter of a sentence begins with the first letter of the alphabet, Aleph and the second sentence begins with the next letter of the alphabet, and so on until the end of the alphabet. In complete Hebrew acrostics, there are always twenty-two sentences, or multiples of twenty-two, each beginning with successive letters of the alphabet.

Psalms 119 is an example of an inspired acrostic. It is divided into twenty-two sections, each having eight verses. The first eight verses of this psalm all begin with the first Hebrew letter aleph. The second set of eight verses uses the second letter beth, and so on. God is speaking here of His perfect and complete law, so a perfect and complete acrostic is used.

Psalms 111 and 112 have complete acrostics also. These psalms show us that God will redeem and protect His people who are diligently obeying and holding fast to His commandments.

Lamentations uses complete acrostics. In chapters 1, 2 and 4, the verses begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In Chapter 3, the verses of each stanza begin with the successive letters and the verses within each stanza begin with the same letter. This book is emphasizing God's complete destruction and punishment upon His people Israel and the Laodicean church era.

In Proverbs 31:10-31, complete acrostics are used giving a complete and perfect description of a virtuous woman.

There are also examples of broken acrostics, when one or more letter is missing. Psalms 9 and 10 are an example. Seven letters are purposely omitted. This psalm shows the broken and chaotic conditions on the earth during the time of the great tribulation.

We can see by these examples that God has a purpose in mind when acrostics are used in the bible. When perfection or completion is emphasized, then a complete and perfect acrostic is used. When irregularity, chaos or destruction is emphasized then a broken or incomplete acrostic is used.

Another thing to realize is that this use of Hebrew acrostics cannot be properly done when translated into the English language.

The early Jews saw what this acrostic symbol meant in regard to the books of the Canon. It was completed in the days of Ezra and since that time, nothing in the Hebrew tongue has been inspired, because symbolically, all the Hebrew letters have been used up.

Again we can clearly see that God is very number conscious and has purpose and design in them.

This number of 22 books was accepted by the Jews up until about the second century. They then changed the numbering to 24, why? Did the Jews in the time of Christ say there were 24? No, the testimony of Josephus, a top Jewish scholar of that day said that Judaism accepted the 22 books as justly Divine. If a change had taken place in the numbering, he would have mentioned it. Josephus always

maintained that the Jews were stable in their acceptance of sacred works.

Then why the change? The Jews say it was for mere convenience, but with the birth of the New Testament Scriptures and their acceptance by the majority of the Roman world by the second century, their reasoning is suspicious. The New Testament books added to the original 22 Old Testament books totalled to the significant number forty-nine, which the Jews recognize as absolute completion. The Jews re-numbered the books to 24, dividing up of some to bring the number to 24. This would add up the books of the Bible to the number fifty-one, which had no significance. Even though there was some reshuffling of the numbers or books throughout time, the Jew always faithfully retained the tripartite divisions. There was never any thought of transferring a book from the third division to the second and so on. The Jew have always retained the consistency of the traditional tripartite order of the Scriptures.

The Number Forty-Nine and its Significance

The twenty-two numbering in the Old Testament becomes more significant with the adding of the 27 books of the New Testament which makes a total of forty-nine. This is seven times seven, completion times completion. Notice the accent on completion: The seventh day of the week completes the week; the seventh week after Passover completes the Pentecost weeks; the seventh month completes God's festival year; the seventh year completes the cycle for the land rest and the release from debts; the seventh sabbatical year completes the forty-nine year period to the Jubilee. This forty-nine-year period contains the whole of God's symbolic sevens, of days, of weeks, of months and of years and leads directly to the final Jubilee.

The number forty-nine or seven times seven is used to show absolute completion.

The Present Numbering of Sixty-Six

The Egyptian Septuagint of the Bible arranges the books so as to destroy the Tripartite Division, except for the first division of the first five books. The Catholic Church accepted this version as the proper version of the scriptures in the fourth century. It was decreed as that which God intended for the Old Testament. Now influenced by the Catholic adherence to the Egyptian made Septuagint of the Old Testament Greek, almost all later translations in our western world have ignored or disregarded the tripartite divisions and the order of books as maintained by the Jews.

The number of man is 6 or 666 (Rev. 13:18), and right in the middle is 66. The Catholics also recognized this. At the council of Trent the Catholics accepted eleven of the fourteen apocryphal books as canonical. This made their canon to be not sixty-six but seventy-seven, a much better sounding number. But the Protestants refused to give up the number they had originally inherited from Rome and stayed with the number sixty-six.

The Bible is not a human book, but when you number it man's way, then God forces man's number on it.

The number 22 and 49 is no accident, it is clearly there by design to show that the revelation of God is complete with those forty-nine books.

The Canonization

The most important person in the Old Testament, relative to the canonization, is accepted to be Ezra. He is looked upon as the man responsible for the final formation of the Old Testament, with the exception of the adding of a few facts by others to the genealogical tables in Chronicles.

Right after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews led by Zerubbabel, Joshua and others, returned to Judaea and Jerusalem. The people were eager to return to God's festivals and worship. They set about rebuilding the temple, which had been destroyed. (Ezra 3) Then the story continues to tell about the problems they had with the Samaritans and the building of the temple.

The reading and the understanding of the Scriptures and the Law was a very important part of the Temple services. But this had been neglected among the first exiles that returned from Babylon. God used Ezra to restore the Law. Ezra was a descendant of the line of Aaron. His forefathers had been high priests in Jerusalem. Ezra himself was a "scribe", a ready scribe of the law of Moses, "...a scribe of the law of the God of heaven" (Ezra 7:11:12). The Bible says that Ezra "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). Ezra knew the laws of God and God directed him to go to Jerusalem to beautify the Temple, and to re-establish its services in proper order. Ezra returned to Judaea with the authority from the Persian government to do this. Priests, Levites and servants of the temple went with him. Soon after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, it was time for the Feast of Tabernacles. Here for the first time, we have detailed mention of the Law, the Holy Scriptures. In Neh. 8:1-8 it says that Ezra read from the book of the Law of Moses and the Levites caused the people to understand the law. Here the law was once again being restored to its proper place and made known to the people. Here is Ezra beginning the final canonization of the Old Testament.

Inspired by God, Ezra and Nehemiah along with the Great Assembly, arranged the books in their tripartite divisions and positioned them into their original twenty-two books. From that time the Jews have maintained the true canon with the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

Ezra was probably the one who edited the O.T. and added final touches. For example at the end of Deuteronomy, we find this: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab...but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34:5,6). Ezra brought up to date the fact of Moses death and burial. Moses could not have done this. Ezra also added other small points to the writings of Moses to bring them up to date.

The Old Testament was canonized by others prior to Ezra. Moses canonized the Law. He wrote out the law and delivered all of it into the custody of the priesthood for safe-keeping and for teaching the people.

Solomon searched the books of the wise men of old and wrote many proverbs. Ecc.12:9 "...he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in

order many proverbs". Some of the proverbs written didn't originate with Solomon, although some did. In many cases he catalogued the wisdom of ancient men such as Abraham, and Job. Solomon said he wrote certain sections of Proverbs so people might "understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise and their dark sayings." (Prov.1:6) (emp. mine)

King Hezekiah had a hand in some of the Canonization as did Isaiah, Jeremiah and others, but Ezra did the final and most important canonizing of the Old Testament. The Jews called Ezra the "second Moses". Moses gave the first part of God's revelation and Ezra, in type, gave the final and complete Old Testament.

Ezra canonized the complete O.T. and he determined the books in the Hebrew Scripture to be twenty-two in number to be in agreement with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. With all the letters used up it wasn't possible to reckon the fourteen books of the Apocrypha as being part of the O.T. The Apocrypha was written in Greek, so this disqualified it from being part of the O.T. revelation.

As we have seen Christ and the Apostles put a stamp of approval on these twenty-two books of the O.T. (Luke 24:44-45). Christ had the authority to reject and do away with this arrangement of the Scriptures, but He didn't. He plainly said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled". (Matt. 5:17-18)

Summary

We have the entire Old Testament as canonized by Ezra and inspired by God. Satan has deceived mankind to re-number them and put in disorder the O.T. books. There are twenty-two books, in three major divisions, called Tripartite Divisions. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

With the twenty-two O.T. books and the twenty-seven N.T. books, making forty-nine in all (seven times seven) we have the perfect and complete number. The number forty-nine is no accident nor coincidence. It is clearly there by design from God to show that the revelation of God is complete with those forty-nine books. See how God has written completeness and perfection on his Word.

To be continued with the N.T. Canonization

Wilbur Malone