

Law — Prophets — Psalms

by Bill Crews

Luke 24:44: “And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in **the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me**” (emphasis mine-BC). Thus spoke Christ to the apostles after His resurrection and before His ascension.

Ever since I was a boy, I have known that the Jews, who were once God’s chosen people and custodians of the Old Testament Scriptures (Rom. 3:1-2), divided the books of the Old Testament into three categories or classifications — the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (or writings). And I have known that, although they had the same 39 books that we have, they combined some of the books and came up with a smaller total of 24 books. But the details I did not know for a long time. Perhaps some of our readers are still that way and would like to have those details. What books did the Jews combine? What was their total after these combinations? What books did they put in the various three categories?

First and Second Samuel were combined into one book. The same was true of *First and Second Kings* and of *First and Second Chronicles*. *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, which overlap, were also combined into one book, and then the twelve “minor prophets” were put into one book called “the Book of the Twelve.” This would reduce the number of 39 by 15 for a total number of 24. The three categories, with the particular books in each, are:

- (1) **Law** — five books: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*.
- (2) **Prophets** — eight books: *Joshua, Judges, Samuel* and *Kings* are called “Early Prophets,” and *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel*, and *the Book of the Twelve* are called “Later Prophets.”
- (3) **Writings** — eleven books: *Psalms, Proverbs* and *Job* are called “Poetical”; *Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes* and *Esther* are called “Rolls”; and *Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah*, and *Chronicles* are called “Books.”

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