

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#02-08153

DECEMBER 30, 2008

THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF GOD — 153

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.” Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. (John 21.10-11 NASB)

I am fascinated by God’s use of numbers in Scripture. Those who have studied this matter have discovered the repetition of certain numbers in a variety of ways throughout Scripture. Suffice it to say that God speaks to us not only in words but in numbers, and often the words themselves represent numbers with very specific meanings. The Hebrew and Greek languages use their Arabic characters to also represent their numbers, a system or technique called **gematria**. For example, in the Hebrew, *aleph* equals 1, *beth* equals 2, *gimel* equals 3, and, in the Greek, *alpha* equals 1, *beta* equals 2, *gamma* equals 3. Totaling the numeric values represented by the characters in a word or even an expression or sentence yields another numeric value. These values can then be compared to other similar expressions to see if there is any correlation. It is amazing how often similar words or expressions have the exact same numeric value. For example, the words or expressions Calvary, lambs, moon, the Rock, the foundation, and lampstand have numeric values of 301.

Bonnie Gaunt has written many books on the numeric biblical code and has uncovered some fascinating correlations between numeric values that are beyond coincidence. Consider what she wrote in her book *The Bible’s Awesome Number Code*, Adventures Unlimited Press, 2000, page 55.

“It was on a lonely hill outside the walls of Jerusalem that this Heavenly One, who came to earth to be born, to suffer, and to die as a man, hung on a cruel cross that afternoon. The hill was Calvary. Its Greek name was *Kranion*, whose numeric value is 301. At 3:01 in the afternoon, as he looked heavenward and said “*It is finished*,” the moon began to eclipse. It was 3:01 Greenwich time that the eclipse began. God makes no mistakes with His timing, nor does He rely on coincidences. The word “moon” in the New Testament is *σεληνη*, and its Gematria is 301. Yes, He who had formed the moon and put it into its orbit around the earth, now had given up His human life at 3:01, on a hill called Calvary (301) precisely when the moon (301) began to eclipse. It was the exact hour when the priests were killing the lambs for Passover. Lambs has a numeric value of 301.”

In addition to a numeric value having a specific meaning, it may also refer to a very specific period of time. For example, the number 7 and multiples of 7 (e.g., 49, 70, 490) often refer to days or years. Thus, we have Daniel’s seventy weeks or 490 years.

The more one studies what is called the number code of Scripture, the more one realizes that the word of God could only have come from a source outside the realm of man. Consequently, I have often stated that God is the mathematical Genius of the Universe.

Now, let us look at the number 153 as recorded by John.

Before offering my view of the number 153 in light of Jesus’ last miracle as recorded in John, let us consider some thoughts as presented by E.W. Bullinger in his book *Number In Scripture*, Kregel, 1967. He makes the point that due to its oddity in Scripture, this number has caught the attention of biblical scholars down through the centuries, and he summarizes some of these views, some of which have more merit than others. One thing he notes is that the number 153 is a factor of 9 times 17. The number **9** can signify **the fruit of the spirit** and the number **17** can signify **victory**. On page 275 of his book, he

explains that the expression “**sons of God**” occurs 7 times and by gematria is 153, and the expression “**joint-heirs**” (Romans 8.17) is 1071, which is a factor of 7 times 153. The expression “**the creation of God**” by gematria is 1224, which is a factor of 8 times 153. Within the miracle of the 153 fish, the word for “**fishes**” is by gematria 1224, which is a factor of 8 times 153, and the word for “**the net**” is 1224, again the factor of 8 times 153. Then on page 276, he writes: “Quite a new thought has recently been given by Lieut.-Col, F. Roberts, who finds that amongst the multitudes who received direct blessing from Christ there are recorded exactly 153 individual cases.”

To add to this, keep in mind that the numbers **7** and **8**, which appear as factors in the above numeric values, refer to **completeness** or **spiritual perfection**, and **new birth** or **new beginning**, respectively.

There is an obvious thread that is woven through all the above meanings that is best summed up in the expression “**the sons of God,**” which speaks of those who will be counted worthy to reign with Christ in His coming kingdom. Some people believe that 153 fish refers to the salvation of the lost since a net was cast, but this cannot be the meaning. The casting of the net is something beyond initial salvation. It is a gathering of the called and chosen of Christ, the elect company that will rise from among the dead in the first or out-resurrection and be transfigured along with the chosen and faithful in Christ that are alive when Christ snatches away His conquerors to meet Him in air. In that day, the Son of God Himself will cast the net to gather together His prized possession that will reign on earth and among the celestials as **a kingdom and priests** for 1,000 years (Revelation 5.10; 20.6). They are the **joint heirs** with Christ, the many **sons brought to glory** (Hebrews 2.10), **the sons of God**, or **the sons of the resurrection** (Luke 20.36).

But there is more, for within the text of John 20.19-21.17, I believe there is a hint that the number 153 is representative of all that will experience the tabernacles at the coming of the Lord. It may even give a hint of the timing of events. According to Leviticus 23.33-43, we know that the first day of the month of **Tishri** is the beginning of the **fall feasts**, starting with the **Feast of Trumpets** (day 1), followed by the **Day of Atonement** (day 10), followed by the **Feast of Booths** or **Tabernacles** (days 15-21), and concluding with **the great day**, the **eighth day** (day 22). By comparing this to John’s text, we discover that after His resurrection on the first day of the week, the Lord privately appeared to His disciples and breathed on them so that they received the Holy Spirit, which empowered them to go forth with the good news of His kingdom. Then eight days later, Jesus appeared to them again in the same fashion in order to convince Thomas. Actually, it could be said that Jesus taught Thomas. But what is significant in this encounter is that Jesus proclaimed: “**Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.**” Carrying the story forward, we discover **seven disciples** fishing because they did not know what else to do. Then, Jesus gathered 153 fish in a net and **fed His disciples**, and then sent them forth, especially Peter who was commanded to tend the lambs and to shepherd and tend the sheep.

Perhaps this is the pattern of what will transpire some year in the month of Tishri as the Lord appears to His people and sends them forth to the nations to establish His kingdom on earth. On the first day of the month, He will resurrect His chosen and faithful ones just as He, the Faithful One, was resurrected. On the first day of tabernacles, He will appear to His chosen and faithful ones to breathe the full measure of the Holy Spirit on them. In John 7, Jesus went up to the feast midweek and taught in the temple. If Jesus breathes the full measure of the Spirit into His disciples on the first day of tabernacles, perhaps He will appear again to His body, which at this point will be the fullness of the dwelling of God in spirit, the temple of God, to teach them, that is, to write His laws on their hearts (Hebrews 8.10). Thomas had to see, but all will need to know. Then, on the eighth day or the last day, the great day of the feast (John 7.37), He will appear once again to His chosen and faithful to bestow His blessing on all of them, for they had trusted Him, **walking by faith, not by sight** (2 Corinthians 5.7). In that day, **from their innermost being will flow rivers of living water**, which speaks of the full measure of the spirit of God flowing forth from their lives since they will be spiritual in the full sense (John 7.38). The world will begin to see *the* Christ in His body of conquering believers, the manifested sons of God, the new creation in Christ. They will enter into the feast of the Lambkin for 1,000 years, and, as they do, they will feed the multitude of the nations. Glory will begin to fill the whole earth. Do you see the glory in the number 153? It speaks mightily of the sons of God who will be manifested soon. Praise God!