

Biblical teaching rather than our own views, that the current State of Israel, though a remarkable fulfilment of Bible prophecy, is not what God intends for His Land, and that the future Jerusalem-based Kingdom will bring benefits to all people who will accept it.

Saddam the survivor

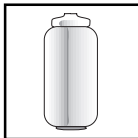
The tenth anniversary of the end of the Gulf War has led to comment. An article in *The Times* passed on by a reader refers to the speed with which the allied forces overwhelmed the Iraq forces in the land campaign which ended the war, but con-

cludes: "Ten years on, much has changed. The Western leaders who lined up against Saddam have left the scene. Sanctions are crumbling. The no-fly zones have virtually no international support. In Iraq, a resurgent Saddam remains in power and is, according to the US and Britain, once more a significant threat to regional security".

The current US President is the son of the President at the time of the Gulf War. Israel is on its fifth prime minister since the one in office at that time, the succession being Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Binyamin Netanyahu,

Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. Yet Saddam Hussein continues. Shortly after he invaded Kuwait, Mrs Thatcher was removed as prime minister by her party. According to a reader, she recently commented that if she had remained in power she would have ensured that Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Given her reputation as the 'Iron Lady', this may have been so, but the fact is she was not in power to do so. The One Who rules in the kingdom of men was no doubt at work, and Saddam Hussein surely remains in power for a purpose.

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The scrolls and the Book

5. The Book

John Carder

THE EARLIEST copies of the 'classical' works of the ancient Greek and Roman authors were almost all found in Egypt. They were found on papyrus scrolls, made from the pith of the reeds that grew so plentifully along the Nile. Though fragile, papyrus scrolls could survive in the dry conditions away from the river.

Until the twentieth century it was generally thought that papyrus could not survive outside Egypt and that there was no other writing material, apart from clay tablets, until the second century B.C. when animal hides were used in what is now Turkey at Pergamum, from which the term 'parchment' is derived.

In fact, remains of a number of texts on papyrus have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. They include several copies of the Septuagint, the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, and of other works. Although most of the existing scrolls are on parchment, papyrus

scrolls do seem to have played a major role in the invention of books as we know them today.

The earliest papyrus rolls found in Egypt were long strips with general dimensions and internal layout similar to the Dead Sea parchment scrolls. There was perhaps a stage when, instead of being rolled, the long strips were folded between columns like the bellows of an accordion.

There is definite evidence of the existence of papyrus in separate sheets. The first example was found in Egypt and published in 1899. It was a single sheet containing the first and last chapters of the Gospel of John. Clearly it was the outer sheet of a folded quire of which the inner sheets, now lost, contained the rest of the Gospel. A 'quire' in the strict sense means four sheets folded together in the middle to make eight leaves, that is sixteen pages. But in common usage these days 'quire' is applied to any number of sheets folded together, or a number of such

Dimensions of some famous codices of the Greek Bible

Codex	Pages	Page Sizes	
		cm	inches
Sinaiticus	728	38 x 34.5	15 x 13+
Vaticanus	820	27 x 25	10+ x 10
Alexandrinus	820	32 x 27	12+ x 10+

The names given to the codices, with the Latin ending '-icus' or '-us', relate to where they were first located, Sinaiticus, for example, being found in the St. Catherine library at the foot of the mount in the Sinai desert. The names are also given to other copies of similar type found later and elsewhere.

quires bound together as a book, the oldest forms being called a 'codex' (plural 'codices').

The early Christian papyri found in Egypt were as follows:

On a single sheet of papyrus:

- The shorter Epistles, such as Philemon, 2 John and 3 John.

Various length quires bound together as codices:

- All the Epistles of Paul
- Ezekiel, Daniel and Esther together
- All four Gospels and Acts.

The types of papyrus codices varied, including:

- In one case, many sheets of papyrus laid one upon another and folded in the middle, giving a very thick book, an inconvenient style that was not copied in papyrus
- At the other extreme, quires of only two sheets bound together for the Gospels and Acts
- Quires of eight to twelve leaves bound together to give codices of any length.

That last type became the most commonly used, and was also followed when vellum (calves skins) were used instead of papyrus. These developments seem to be either a Christian invention or one that was largely taken over by them. One of Constantine's first acts when he established his new capital Constantinople on the site of ancient Byzantium in A.D. 330 was to order fifty copies of the Greek Bible to be written on vellum.

Writing styles

Surviving Bible texts on papyrus are generally in rather small letters separately formed, the Greek thus imitating the Hebrew. With the change to vellum codices there was a change in writing style, with all letters being as large capitals known as Uncials. Both Old and New Testaments in Greek, found by Tischendorf in 1844 in the St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai, were written in Uncials.

The Sinaiticus is incomplete, but it is estimated that originally it had 720 leaves, or 1,440 large pages on vellum—a handsome but very big volume. Each page had four columns of text with wide margins. Its dimensions, compared with other famous Uncial codices of about the same date, are shown in the table.

The early codices often included a variable number of what are now known as Apocryphal books. The vellum codex was the standard form for the Bible until the introduction of paper and printing at the end of the Middle Ages. Before that, in the 800s A.D., a new form of writing replaced the Uncials. It used small letters linked together, somewhat like our modern handwriting, called Minuscule or Cursive, and made possible smaller volumes which were more convenient to handle.

Known surviving Uncial (big letter) codices of the New Testament total about 200, though all but sixty are mere fragments, but there are over 4,000 surviving Cursive copies.

The great vellum Uncial copies of the New Testament were made little more than 250 years after the originals were composed. By comparison, there are fewer than fifty surviving manuscript copies of most of the works of the pagan authors, and for some, less than ten copies. Their distance in time is also greater than for the Biblical manuscripts, varying from 500 to 1,600 years after the authors' death.

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Biblical chronology reassessed and the seventh vial

Ralph Green

THERE HAVE been several attempts in the past to assess the progress of human history in relation to the plan and purpose of God, using Biblical records as much as possible. This article follows mainly the work of Brethren John Thomas and W. H. Carter, but with a few changes which are explained below. A suggestion is also made as to how the thousand years of Revelation 20 can be fitted into the seven thousand years that appear to have been the basic time-span of God's wonderful plan of redemption for this world. The main changes have to do with the age of Terah when Abraham was born and the relationship between the 400 years of Genesis 15:13 and the 430 years of Galatians 3:17.

Later we examine the vial periods of Revelation 16 and the position Christ and the saints will occupy during the seventh vial and beyond.

Terah's age at Abraham's birth

Terah's age when Abraham was born is stated to have been seventy years (Gen. 11:26). Brother W. H. Carter suggests that it was Haran who was born when Terah was this age, and that Abraham was not born till Terah was 131 (or 130), since Abraham is stated to have been seventy-five, not 135, when he left the city Haran on the death of Terah at the age of 205 (Gen. 11:31,32; 12:4; Acts 7:4).¹ Brother Thomas says that the death of Terah, and the removal of Abraham into the land of Acts 7:4, occurred when Abraham left the land of the Philistines for Mount Moriah (Gen. 21:34; 22:2), and that Terah was indeed seventy when Abraham was born.² In the chronological chart opposite Brother Thomas's view is followed.

Genesis 15:13 and Galatians 3:17

The time the Israelites were in Egypt is given in the chart as 195 years. The line of descent from Levi was Kohath, Amram, Aaron and Nadab (Ex. 6:16-23). Kohath is included in those going down into Egypt with Jacob (Gen. 46:11), with three generations therefore being born in Egypt. 195 years is not unreasonable for three generations, averaging sixty-five years each.

The object of this calculation is to harmonise the periods of 400 and 430 years given in Genesis 15:13 and Galatians 3:17 respectively. The 400 years is understood to have commenced at the time the Abrahamic covenant was made, as recorded in Genesis 15, and to have ended when Abraham's descendants left Egypt to return to the land of Canaan.

In Galatians 3:16-19 Paul distinguishes between "the law", meaning the Law of Moses, which was given about two months after the Exodus (Ex. 19:1), and the Abrahamic promises. In verse 16 he writes of promises in the plural. Promises were given on a number of occasions. The age of Abraham when the promises were first given is not stated.

Genesis 12:4 states that Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran to go to the land of Canaan in compliance with God's command. Chapter 12 commences, "the LORD *had said* unto Abram", so the comprehensive promises detailed in the first three verses were evidently given when Abraham was living in Ur of the Chaldeans. To fit the 430 years of Galatians 3:17, it is

1. *Times and Seasons*, 1961, pp. 219-23.

2. *Chronikon Hebraikon*, 1939, p. 13.