

Bible Interpretation in Light of First Century Publishing Technology
Part 1 of 1

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INTRODUCTION

1. Invention & Use of Writing Desks

They came into use around AD _____, but they became popular around AD _____.

2. What Was the Posture for Reading and Writing without Writing Desks?

Some sat on the floor cross-legged. Others sat on benches slightly propping their feet up.

Scribes stretched their robes tightly over the knees while seated to make a writing surface.

3. Scribal Procedures that Resulted from writing material being expensive

A. How expensive? The price of a papyrus scroll sufficient to hold the Gospel of Mark

B. Scribal procedures: All upper case letters, no spaces, no punctuation, no hyphens

Let's find a passage and transcribe it with punctuation and spacing (Eph ____:____)

4. Two Types of Books Existed Side-by-Side for a While: The Scroll and the Codex (📖)

5. Scrolls

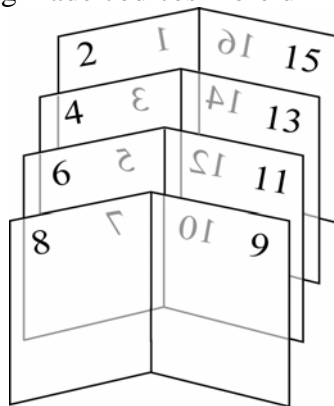
- A. Scrolls only allowed the use of one side of the writing material for text.
The opisthograph (written on both sides) scroll of Revelation 5:1 was rare
- B. Page height was limited by the need for a writing surface on the lap
- C. Scroll length was limited by the need to keep the scroll from rolling onto the floor
Authors kept book-length down to what would fit on a 35' scroll.
Luke (the longest NT book) was about 32' (Volume 1 of Luke-Acts)
Acts (the second longest NT book) was about 30' (Volume 2 of Luke-Acts)
With book division issues, about a dozen scrolls would hold the NT
- D. Time required for scrolling back and forth

6. The Codex

A. When Did the Church Adopt the Codex?

1. No evidence exists that codices existed until late first century (After Ephesians)
2. Starting in the second century, the Church popularized codices; centuries passed before secular codices became common. What accounts for the difference?

Binding made codices more difficult and seem more expensive than scrolls



B. Why Did the Church Adopt the Codex?

Economy; The fact that the Church distributed the NT widely meant that increased efficiency in writing-surface usage offset the increased binding costs

C. Benefits of the Codex

Codices allow random access, whereas scrolls only allow sequential access

Codices store more easily and are easier for traveling

In combination with the writing desk, new technology enabled creating entire Bibles within one binding

C. (*Potential*) Detriments of the Codex

During the almost 2000 years that have elapsed since the Church began using the codex, we have strayed from reading the Bible in the way it was intended

Consider how we read a recipe for *crab cioppino* (a crab stew from Italians in S.F.)

2 tablespoons olive oil ✓
 1 large onion, chopped
 3 cloves garlic, crushed or to taste ✓
 2 (28 ounce) cans diced tomatoes with juice ✓
 1/2 cup dry white wine
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley ✓
 1/2 teaspoon dried basil ✓
 2 teaspoons salt ✓
 1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper ✓
 1 bay leaf ✓
 1 pound scallops
 24 littleneck clams
 1 1/2 pounds crab legs
 1 pound unpeeled, large fresh shrimp

Do we read the Bible the same way as we read this recipe?

Consider Galatians

What was the ethnicity of the readers? (Jews, Gentiles, some of each)

Where did Paul first meet the Galatians? (What kind of building?)

How did these facts affect his message?

Is Galatians a self-contained message? (How much is implicit?)

Consider Ephesians

What was the ethnicity of the readers? (Jews, Gentiles, some of each)

Is Ephesians a self-contained message? (How much is implicit?)

Relating *you were dead* (2:1) to *by grace you were saved through faith* (2:8)

Interpreting *grace was given to each of us & the measure of Christ's gift* (4:7)

Interpreting *the lower parts of the earth* (Eph 4:9)

Interpreting *the pastors and teachers* (4:11) and *the apostles and prophets* (2:20)

Interpreting *the created new man* in Ephesians 2:15 and 4:24

Interpreting *you* and *we* throughout Ephesians

CONCLUSION