

EARLY BELIEVERS IN ROME

Lesson One; Romans 1:1–17

The Gospel in Rome

Who brought the gospel to Rome?

Not Peter or Paul.

Barnabas was first according to *Clementine Homilies*

“Visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes.” (Acts 2:10)

Jewish Community in Rome

Jews:

- Jews: Jewish by birth
- Proselytes: Jewish by legal conversion

Gentiles:

- Idolaters: Under Roman law, illegal not to worship gods
- God-fearers: Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel

Judaism was a legal religion under Roman law

Archaeological evidence indicates tens of thousands of Jews in first-century Rome.

The great section of Rome which is on the other side of the Tiber River ... was occupied and inhabited by the Jews. They were mostly Roman citizens, emancipated slaves who were brought to Italy as captives [by Pompey in 63 BCE]. They were freed by those who had bought them for slaves, without ever having been forced to change their heritage or national observances ... They had synagogues, and they attended them regularly, especially on the holy Sabbath days ... They regularly contributed sacred sums of money from their first fruits and sent them to Jerusalem by the hands of those who were to conduct the sacrifices. (Philo, Embassy to Gaius 155–156)

“Many from among the Jews had believed. But they still held in conscience the law after faith; they kept the observance of foods ...” (John Damascene)

There were Jews living in Rome in the times of the apostles, and those Jews who had believed passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the law ... they accepted faith in Christ, although according to a Jewish rite ... Those who led the Romans to faith had mixed it up with the law because they were Jews. (Ambrosiaster)

Expulsion under Claudius 49 CE

Emperor Claudius complains to the senate about the growth of foreign superstitions leading to the neglect of the religious observances of their forefathers. (Tacitus, Annals 11.15)

Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome. (Seutonius, Divus Claudius 25.4)

Cf. Acts 18:1–2

Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth

Jerusalem Counsel (49 CE)

Acts 15

Debate: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1)

God-fearers accepted as disciples

Paul's Ministry in Corinth and Ephesus

Encounter with Priscilla and Aquila

Working with Andronicus and Junias

Ephesus Years

The Death of Claudius 54 CE

- Agrippina poisons Claudius
- Agrippina's son Nero made Emperor
- Jews return to Rome after 5 year absence
 - Andronicus and Junias
 - Priscilla and Aquila

Paul's Concerns in Rome

The God-fearing Gentiles in Rome

Rome not one of Paul's congregations

Seat of Empire

Paul a Roman Citizen

Legislation from Jerusalem Counsel and Proselytes

Jewish – Gentile relations

Paul's Plans to travel to Rome after embassy to

Jerusalem

Occasion for the Epistle

Paul Forced out of Ephesus (Acts 19)

Paul “purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome’” (Acts 19:21). He said, “I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (Romans 1:15).

Organizes Embassy to Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-32)

Winter in Corinth (Acts 20:3)

Home of Gaius Titius Justs (Romans 16:23)

Phoebe's Journey (Romans 16:1)

Romans 1:1–17 ESV Messianic Amplified Version

An Epistle from Paul

[*This is an epistle from*] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God [*the good news about the kingdom*],

² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [*i.e. physically, a man from the family David*]

⁴ and was declared [*by God*] to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness [*i.e. God's Spirit*] by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

⁵ through whom we [*who are writing this letter, my colleagues and I*] have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all [*all*] the nations [*not just the Jewish people*]

⁶ including you who are [*in Rome and are*] called [*by God*] to belong to Jesus Christ,

Address

⁷ [*This is an epistle*] to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints [*i.e. holy ones*]: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Longs to Visit Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you [*Jewish believers, believing proselytes, and God-fearing Gentiles*], because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you

¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift [*in the form of a teaching, insight, or revelation*] to strengthen you--

¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Desire to Teach His Gospel in Rome

¹³ I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended [*to travel to Italy and Rome*] to come to you (but thus far have been prevented [*by circumstances*]), in order that I may reap some harvest among you [*in the form of new disciples and merit for advancing the gospel*] as well as among the rest of the Gentiles [*both in Rome and outside Rome*].

Obligation to Jews and Gentiles

¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians [*who do not speak Greek*], both to the wise [*who fear and worship the God of Israel*] and to the foolish [*who worship idols*].

¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel [*about the kingdom and the inclusion of the Gentiles*] to you also who are in Rome.

Paul's Gospel

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel [*despite the unpopularity of my message about the inclusion of the Gentiles*], for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [*and all men*].

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written [in Habakkuk 2:4], "The righteous shall live [eternally] by [merit of] faith."

Cf. Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38

Habakkuk came and based all 613 commandments on one principle, as it said, "The righteous shall live by his faith" (b.Makkot 24a)