

CLEMENT TO THE CORINTHIANS Lesson Two (1 Clement 5-8)

Clement had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, their teaching was still ringing in his ears. (Irenaeus)

1 Clement 5: Peter and Paul

Greatest and most righteous pillars. The early believers referred to James, Peter, and John as “the pillars” in the living Temple. Galatians 2:9. Clement seems to have extended the appellation to Paul as well. Cf. *Exodus Rabbah* 15:7.

Because of unrighteous jealousy. Clement hints that Peter was betrayed by informers during the Neronian persecution (64 CE). Likewise, Paul may have been betrayed by the same informers, perhaps disenfranchised Christians.

Having testified. The Greek word *martureo* (μαρτυρέω) means “to testify.” The English word “martyr” is based on the Greek word because under Roman persecution, the believers testified to their faith by dying for the name of Yeshua. According to tradition, Peter was crucified in Circus Neronis along with other victims of the Neronian persecution.

Place of glory. Gan Eden, i.e. Paradise, the place where the souls of the righteous await the resurrection. Same as “holy place” in 5:7 below.

Seven times he wore chains. A reference to Paul’s frequent arrests and imprisonments, perhaps alluding to Proverbs 24:16.

In the East and the West. Paul taught the gospel from Syria and Judea in the East to Rome as far as Spain in the West.

Extreme limit of the West. Tradition says that, after his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul travelled as far as Spain, the extreme western limit of the Roman Empire, i.e. the Straits of Gibraltar. Cf. Romans 15:24–28.

He testified before rulers. Eusebius dates Paul’s death to 67 CE, the year that Nero was out of the city. Paul would have stood trial before the magistrates such as the Praetorian Prefect Tigellinus. Cf. 2 Timothy 4.

1 Clement 6: The Neronian Persecution

A great multitude of the elect. Nero blamed the Christians for starting the great fire of Rome (64 CE). The authorities made sweeping arrests and put a large multitude of Christians to gruesome deaths in the circus. Clement ascribes the persecution to “jealousy,” implying the collusion of informants from within the believing community (or perhaps the Jewish community) of Rome. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.

Many indignities and tortures. “Mockery and every sort of insult was added to their deaths. Dressed in the skins of wild animals, they were torn apart by dogs and died. They were nailed to crosses or doomed to the flames and burnt alive to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired” (Tacitus).

Women were persecuted like Danaids. In Greco-Roman mythology, the forty-nine Danaid sisters were daughters of a man named Danaus. He married off his daughters by getting the suitors to run the length of a race-course with his daughters standing at the finishing line. Each was chosen by the order in which the suitors finished the race. Clement may mean to imply that Nero gave the winners of the chariot races and other competitions at Circus Neronis their choice of Christian girls to rape, prior to the girls’ martyrdoms. The Danaid mythology also has the gods damning the forty-nine Danaid sisters to endlessly fill a leaking bath in Hades. Nero may have forced the Christian women to dramatize the mythological scene to allude to the futile efforts of fire fighters attempting to extinguish the fire of Rome (for which he blamed the believers).

And Dirce. In Greco-Roman mythology, the nymph Dirce’s hair was tied to the horns of an angry bull which mauled her and dragged her to her death. Nero subjected the Christian women to similar dramatic deaths as part of the spectacle at Circus Neronis.

Completed the course of faith. I.e., they died for their faith in Yeshua.

Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Genesis 2:23. The passage from Genesis continues, “They shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Our Master Yeshua explained the passage: “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). Clement may be tactfully referring to tensions in Roman households where one spouse has drifted into “atheism” or “Jewish ways,” i.e. become a Christian. (See Seutonius, Cassius Dio).

Overthrown great cities and uprooted great nations.

Clement reticently alludes to the catastrophic Jewish revolt that ended in the decimation of Judea, the fall of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple, shortly after the events of the Neronian persecution described above.

1 Clement 7: Call to Repentance

We are in the same arena, and the same contest awaits us.

A reference to the ongoing policy of Roman persecution against the superstition of the Christians.

Empty and futile thoughts. The hostility and arguments that triggered the unrest in the Corinthian congregation.

The rule of our tradition. To lay down one's life for the gospel.

What is good ... pleasing ... acceptable. Cf. Philippians 4:8
Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Phi 4:8 ESV)

Fix our eyes on the blood of Christ. Cf. Hebrews 12:12

The grace of repentance. The forgiveness of sins in the merit of the suffering of Yeshua of Nazareth.

An opportunity of repentance. In each generation, God gives human beings the opportunity to turn to him.

Noah preached repentance. Noah did not abandon the world to its fate. According to apostolic tradition, Noah was a "preacher of repentance" (2 Peter 2:5) who tried to convince his generation to turn from their sinful ways. Simon Peter taught that "the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark" (1 Peter 3:20). For a whole one hundred and twenty years Noah planted cedars and cut them down (for the construction of the ark). When they asked him, "Why are you doing this?", he replied, "The Master of the universe has warned me that He will bring a flood on the world." They replied, "If a flood does come, it will only come on you and your father's household" (*Genesis Rabbah* 30:7). "Noah took fifty-two years to make the ark so that they would repent of their ways. But they did not repent" (*Pirkei deRebbi Eliezer* 23).

Repenting of their sins, made atonement to God. The story of Noah is read on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Repentance brings atonement. The Ninevites were alienated from God because they were idolaters without knowledge of God.

1 Clement 8: Efficaciousness of Repentance

Ministers of the grace of God. I.e. the prophets.

Repentance with an oath. Ezekiel 33:11, cf. Hebrews 6:16-17, 7:21.

Repent O house of Israel, of your iniquity. *Say to the children of My people, Though your sins reach from earth to heaven, and though they be redder than scarlet, and blacker than sackcloth, yet if ye turn to Me with your whole heart, and say, Father! I will listen to you, as to a holy people. (1 Clement 8:3, source unknown.)*

Wash and be clean ... Isaiah 1:16-20 presents the paradigmatic recipe for repentance. In apostolic teaching, the words "wash and be clean" must allude to immersion for repentance into the name of Yeshua.

A sword shall devour you. An allusion to the first Jewish revolt and the fall of Jerusalem.

An act of almighty will. The death and resurrection of Yeshua.