

Introduction

Rome

- Letter to the Romans
- Rome was the most important area in those days - it had philosophy, education, etc. The Roman Empire was the leader of the world in those days.
- Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire... large metropolitan city
- Lots of people from different backgrounds... very liberal and immoral city
- History of Jews in the Roman Empire
 - Pompey the Great's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BC brought many Jews to Rome as prisoners of war and slaves
 - They were set free, but they stayed and continued to grow in number
 - By the time of St Paul's epistle, it's estimated there are 16,000 Jews in Rome
 - In 34 AD, All Jews were expelled from the city of Rome under Claudius Caesar
 - Acts 18:2
- The Catholic Church attributes the founding of Christianity in Rome to St Peter
 - From our perspective, it was not St Peter, but St Paul
 1. Initial exposure of Christianity to Rome was by Romans who were in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:10)
 2. Expelled Jews went out, were converted to Christianity, and then went back
 3. At the time of writing Romans, a Church had not been established yet
 - "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation" (Romans 15:20)
 - St Paul also describes his plans to visit Rome in Romans 15
 4. St Paul considered himself "Apostle to the Gentiles" whereas St Peter was "Apostle to the Jews"
 5. If St Peter had already established the Roman Church, then St Paul would have mentioned him! At least in the greeting!
 - In addition, they see St Peter as being the "head of the apostles"
 - They take these two ideas and use them to declare primacy of the See of Rome over all other churches!
 - Canon of Constantinople that we rejected (although we accepted the Council of Constantinople in general)

Author (St Paul)

- St Paul's Gospel and the most important of his epistles
- St Paul
 - The twelve disciples were all from Judea, uneducated, simple jobs, poor, lived with Christ, fled during the Cross, witnessed the Resurrection and Ascension, received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

- St Paul was neither from the 12 nor from the 70. He was not chosen by the Lord during His time on earth, but he was chosen by Him after the Ascension
- St Paul's father was a wealthy Jew in a wealthy city called Tarsus. In those days, the wealthy would buy Roman Citizenship in order to reap its benefits (e.g. not anyone can judge him in any court, he can request an audience with Caesar, etc.). St Paul was born wealthy, a Roman Citizen, and born in a religious Jewish household.
- He was educated in Greek - the language of the world (and education and philosophy) was Greek. Prior to his time were Plato, Aristotle, etc.
- Around 16 years old, they would be sent to be educated in the Temple in Jerusalem in order to live as good Jews. This is why St Paul says he is a "Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." He learned under Gamaliel.
- We don't know where St Paul was during the Crucifixion of the Lord.
- In his 20s, now being skilled in Greek and in Old Testament, was when the Jews and the Early Church began to clash. He started to join in this - the first mention of Saul of Tarsus is at the stoning of Stephen, that Saul was consenting to.
 - The sight must have been weird to him - this youth around his age, face shining, being stoned, praying that he sees heaven opened and Christ on the right side of the Father, and praying that their sin be forgiven... definitely this sight affected him.
- Saul had letters from the chief priests to go and capture the Christians. He knew the ways of the roads and so he headed to Damascus to capture the Christians.
- On the way, the first interaction between Saul and the Lord happened. The Lord appeared to him as light and said "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And told him "I am the One who you are persecuting."
- Saul went into Damascus, not able to see, and he feels his weakness in front of the Lord. He, who thought that he could erase the name of Jesus from history.
- Christ appeared to Ananias and told him to preach to Saul and the Lord comforted him by telling him that Saul is a chosen vessel.
- Saul was quick to accept the faith because he had studied the Jewish Law very well - He is waiting for the Messiah, He knows that Messiah is son of David and needs to die to save mankind. He has studied these ideas in his own faith. The religious Jew is very close to accepting Christ.
- His blindness was cured, and He was transformed from Saul to Paul. He spent about three years in the desert of Arabia and returned to Damascus to preach.
- He started by trying to preach to those in Damascus, which was not a good look for the Jews. They drove him out and he escaped to Jerusalem.
- The disciples were afraid of him in Jerusalem, and didn't believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and explained to them how the Lord had appeared to him and how he preached in Damascus. So he stayed with them a while, and preached in Jerusalem but the Hellenists wanted to kill him after a dispute.
- Then he went to Antioch and started the mission trips. In each city they preach the gospel, establish a church, ordain some priests, and return back to Antioch.
- "and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised." Galatians 2:9

- St Paul did three mission trips to spread the gospel in Europe. All of Europe became Christian because of his labor.
- Until around 50 AD there is still nothing written in the New Testament. He didn't start writing until after 20 years of his service and his preaching. He is writing with experience in the service, and experience with the different kinds of people (e.g. idol worshippers, Jews, Gentiles)
- Around 52 AD, St Paul starts writing to the Thessalonians (1 and 2 Thessalonians). After he preached to them in the 1st Missionary Journey, they started to be abused by the Jews. So during the 2nd Missionary Journey, he wrote them a letter to tell them to persevere and that the Lord is coming soon.
- During the 3rd Missionary Journey, St Paul sent four epistles: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians. Most epistles he sends after he visits, so they know him, they are considered his children, etc. But he hasn't visited Rome yet. So why write a letter to them?

Time and Place of Writing

Purpose

- The Purpose of the Epistle
 - All parts of Europe had Christianity preached to it since the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, there were Jews from every nation in Jerusalem (including from Rome, Greece, Turkey). They went back to their lands and started to spread the message (slowly). These are the Jewish Christians.
 - There were also people who met St Paul on his various mission trips in various cities, as they were visiting, and they would be baptized (either by Paul or another apostle), and then go back to Rome.
 - The Christians in Rome are a mixed multitude - Jewish Christians and Gentile (e.g. formerly pagan) Christians.
 - Since they don't have a head, each one would do what was in his mind. The Jewish Christian was still committed to the Sabbath, the Law, the Circumcision. The Gentile Christians knows he shouldn't sin or worship idols anymore... but he still doesn't really know what does the Law have to do with it, do I have to be circumcised, etc.
 - The Jewish Christians (including some of the priesthood) found that they would be made equal with those Gentiles that they used to despise, look down upon and consider to be a dog. So they had a new innovation - all Christians need to be Jewish first (by being circumcised, subject to the Law, etc.)
 - This idea brought confusion to all lands - they all have mixed multitudes. So when St Paul heard this talk, he went to the apostles and asked if they are preaching this or if they sent someone to preach it or if those are their words - no. So we need to stop and prevent this talk for the sake of those Gentile Christians.

- The Council of Jerusalem assembled and decided with Paul - Circumcision and the Law are not needed. Repentance is needed.
- How will this news reach the far places? No phone or internet... St Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans.
- The Epistle to the Romans was written to defend the claim that salvation is through Christ alone. Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Sacraments, etc.
 - Circumcision is needed? No
 - Law is needed? No
 - Sacrifices are needed? No
- This idea would unite the Church because the Gentile would know that he doesn't need to become Jewish, and the Jew would be equipped to put down the burden of the Law and become a Christian.

Themes & Key Words

- The Main Keyword of Romans is: Salvation
 - What is salvation? Saved from what? Saved how?
- The entirety of Christian teaching

Outline

- 1-11: What is Christianity
 - Chapter 1: Why do we need salvation? Sin, Corruption, Death - focusing on the sins of the Gentiles
 - Chapter 2: What about the Jew? The Jew took the Law, Prophets, Covenants, and not Jew fulfilled the whole Law.
 - Chapter 3: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God - but God sent His Son to be a propitiation by His blood and to justify the one who has faith.
 - Chapter 4: So where is righteous and just Abraham if you say there is no justification except by faith in Christ?
 - When was Abraham called righteous? When he was circumcised? When he heard the Law? (He didn't). Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
 - Abraham put his trust in the Lord and was made righteous by faith.
 - When we put our trust in the Lord we will be righteous like our father Abraham - Abraham is not the father of Jews, but the father of faith and those who have faith.
 - Chapter 5: Why is sin abounding in all men? Because man has an origin which is Adam; we all were in Adam. So there needs to be a new Adam who can fix the image of man again. Through Adam came death and through Christ came life.
 - Chapter 6: Christ saved humanity. He gave them life. So how do I take that life from Him? Baptism. Death to Life. And Baptism requires faith.
 - Chapter 7: As long as you live, you will find two powers - one that pulls you towards the old (be like men) and one that pulls you toward Christ (be like Christ)
 - Chapter 8: The one who can live by the Spirit and not by the flesh, resembling Christ and not Adam, by holiness and not by sin - he can be assured of his eternity. If God

is for us, who can be against us?

- Chapter 9-10-11: St Paul starts to discuss an idea that is permeating the Jews - “chosen people.” If they are a chosen people, then God cannot choose any others. Well, if you were chosen before and you weren’t “all that” then of course God will choose someone else. “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?”
- 12-16: How to Live as a Christian
 - “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” - “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
 - Love

Resources

- Fr Daoud Lamei

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