

THE CHURCH AT ROME (PART 2)

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We have seen that Christianity had its beginning in Rome prior to any visit there by the apostle Paul. The church had existed there for “many years” by 54-56 A.D., when Paul stated his desire to journey there (Acts 19:21; Rom 1:10-17; 15:22-24). At that point, the brethren there did not possess any of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:11), indicating that no apostle had yet visited there, as those gifts were only given by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:18). Therefore, the Roman Catholic tradition that the church at Rome was started by the apostle Peter is not supported by scripture. The church most likely began there by Christians who had been converted in other locations (see Rom 16:1-15). But important work would be done there by the apostle Paul and many other brethren within the First Century A.D.

Paul’s work in Rome

After Paul was taken prisoner in Jerusalem, Jesus told him that he would bear witness of Christ at Rome (Acts 23:11). But he was held in custody for two years by the Romans in Caesarea first (Acts 24:27). Around 60 A.D., Paul (along with Luke and Aristarchus, Acts 27:2) finally reached Rome. Brethren met Paul when he arrived in Italy at Puteoli and Paul stayed there with them for seven days (Acts 28:13-14). The brethren from Rome itself came all the way to Appii Forum and The Three Taverns to meet Paul and accompany him to Rome (Acts 28:14-15). Paul began preaching to the Jews at Rome (Acts 28:16-23), and “*some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not*” (Acts 28:24). In Rome, “*Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him*” (Acts 28:30-31). Paul wrote the Philippians that the things that had happened to him (i.e. his bonds) had “*fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel*” (Php 1:12). One of Paul’s converts in Rome was Onesimus, the runaway slave of

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Philemon from Colossae, whom Paul sent back to his master (Phm 10-19; Col 4:7-9). Many were now preaching Christ in Rome, though some did so for envy of Paul supposing to add affliction to Paul's bonds (Php 1:13-18). As a result of all of this, the gospel had reached the palace itself and "all other places" (Php 1:13). Greetings from the brethren in Rome included saints of Caesar's household (Php 4:21-22).

Christianity had permeated even the palace of Caesar!

Other workers in Rome

Timothy joined Paul in Rome (Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1), as did Tychicus of Asia (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9), Epaphras of Colossae (Col 1:3-8; 4:7-9,12-13; Phm 23), Justus (Col 4:10), Demas (Col 4:14; Phm 24), and John Mark (Col 4:10; Phm 24). Luke was always there (Acts 27:1ff; Col 4:14; Phm 24). These were Paul's "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God" in Rome (Col 4:11).

Epaphroditus came to Rome from Philippi to bring physical provisions to him (Php 2:25-30; 4:10-18). Aristarchus of Thessalonica was a fellow-prisoner of Paul's in Rome (Acts 27:2; Col 4:10; Phm 24). Another five or so years after he was set free from prison in Rome, Paul was back in prison in Rome, this time facing execution (2 Tim 4:6-8). Onesiphorus, a brother from Ephesus, was in Rome and helped Paul, being unashamed of Paul's chain (2 Tim 1:16-18). When Paul first appeared before the government in Rome, no one stood with him but all forsook him (2 Tim 4:16). Only Luke was with Paul (2 Tim 4:11). By this time, Aquila and Priscilla were back in Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19). Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and "all the brethren" in Rome sent Timothy their greetings (2 Tim 4:21). Nothing more is mentioned in the New Testament about the church in Rome. But everything that is mentioned totally refutes Roman Catholic and other denominational traditions. We do know that the gospel of Christ reached the capital city of the Roman Empire within about 25 years of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and then prospered and thrived there.