



# ROMANS

## Cultural and Historical Background

### Questions to consider

- Who wrote the book of Romans?
- When was the book of Romans written?
- Where was it written from?
- What were the situations surrounding the writing of it?
- How did the church in Rome begin?
- Who made up the church in Rome?
- What was the state of the church when the letter was written?
- What was the purpose of the book?



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- Who wrote the book of Romans?
  - The Apostle Paul (not a debated issue)
  - Romans 1:1 & 7 “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God . . . To all who are beloved of God in Rome.”
  - Paul used a scribe to actually write the letter.
  - Tertius wrote the letter for Paul, Romans 16:22 says “I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.”
- Date that it was written?
  - A.D. 57 near the end of Paul’s third missionary journey  
(see chronology of New Testament Bible books & timeline of the Apostle Paul)
- Where was it written from?
  - Corinth.
    - Acts 20:1-3 (see map on next page)



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Free source: [www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/JBPhillips.htm](http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/JBPhillips.htm)



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Byzantine church now partially submerged

**Romans 16:1-2**  
**Paul commends to the Romans a lady named Phoebe, who is in Cenchrea, a seaport of Corinth. She delivers the letter to Rome**



Harbor view



Scattered ruins now under water



### Cenchrea

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Cenchrea was a natural harbor



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- What were the situations surrounding the writing of it?
  - Paul was nearing a big turning point in his ministry.
  - What was Paul's mindset toward ministry geographically?
    - Romans 15:18-28
    - Verse 20-21 "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel not where Christ was already named, that I may not build on another man's foundation. but as it is written, They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand."
    - Verse 19 "in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so far as Illycium I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
  - So, Paul is going to move onto Spain, an un-reached area.
    - One phase of his missionary career was coming to and end. (15:19-20)
    - His plans were to engage in church planting work in Spain. (15:24&28)
    - He needed to go back to Jerusalem to give the money. (15:25)
    - He would stop by Rome on his way to Spain. (15:28)



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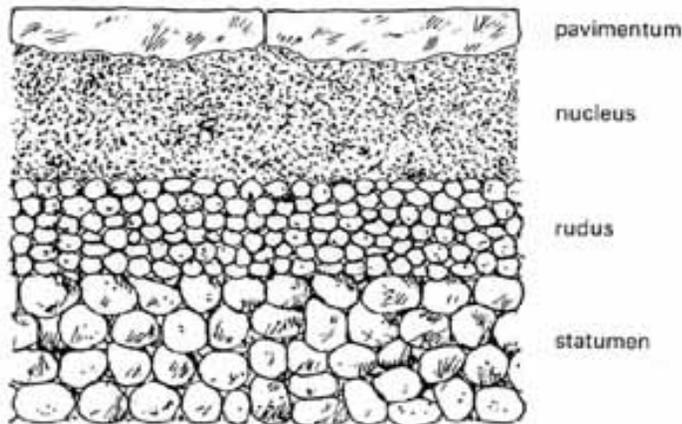
- How did the church in Rome begin?
  - Prior to writing the letter had Paul ever been to Rome?
  - No, (Romans 1:10) thus the nature of the letter to the Romans explaining the full scope of the gospel.
- Did Peter start the church in Rome?
  - No, it is difficult for Peter to have gone to Rome at such an early date.
  - Yet the Catholics claim that Peter founded the church there.
  - It would not make since for Paul so say that he did not want to build on another mans foundation if Peter had founded the church there.



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- How did the church start?
  - Acts 2:10 – Jews and Gentiles were present at the Day of Pentecost . . . They took the message back to Rome.
  - “Fourth-century father Ambrosiater: the Romans have embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles.” Douglas Moo – Encountering Romans, pg, 35
  - All roads lead to Rome – faith in Christ spread to Rome and those people took their faith to the synagogues.





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- Who made up the church in Rome?
  - By the end of the first century B.C. many Jews had migrated to Rome, yet they were not organized into a formal group and their synagogues were independent of each other.
  - Gentiles who were interested in Christianity would have attended the synagogues without becoming Jews.
  - By the time Romans was written Gentiles would have made up a large portion of the church in Rome. More Gentiles were turning to Christ than Jews.
  - The letter was written to both the Christian Jews and the Christian Gentiles in Rome.
    - Romans 1:7 “to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints”.
    - Paul directly addresses the Jew in 2:17-3:1, connects them with their spiritual father Abraham 4:1 and 11:1-7 also refers to the Jews.
    - Paul also includes the Gentile in 11:11-14 and 1:5-6.
    - Paul encourages them to work together and accept each other in 15:1-9. Why do you think that Paul gives them this exhortation?



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- What was the state of the church when the letter was written?
  - Ancient historian Suetonius says that the Emperor Claudius “expelled all the Jews from Rome because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of Chrestus”.
  - Most think that this expulsion was A.D. 49.
  - Acts 18:1-2 tells us that Priscilla and Aquila ended up in Corinth during Paul’s second journey, so for them to be kicked out in 49 and to be in Corinth for Paul’s second journey fits well.
  - When all of the Jews are forced to leave it caused big problems for the church in Rome.
  - The Christian Gentiles remain while the Jews left and this left the Gentiles as the only Christians in Rome.
  - The Jews were gone until A.D. 54 when Claudius died and then they began to relocate back to Rome.



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- What was the state of the church when the letter was written?
  - When the Jews returned there was tension between them and the Gentiles. Why?
    - The Jews were now the minority.
    - The Gentiles had been in charge of the church for 5 years thus it had lost some of its Jewish orientation.
  - This explains part of the purpose of the letter.
- What is the purpose of the letter?
  - To explain the Gospel of God. Romans 1:16
  - To explain God's plan for the Jews and God's plan for the Gentiles and encourage them to work together.