

Lecture 22 – Romans: Background, Occasion & Purpose

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.” Romans 1:8

Key Terms

Rome, persecution

Objectives

- *Describe what the occasion is for the letter to the Romans.
- *Discuss the two views on why Paul wrote the letter to the Romans.
- *List what you know about Rome in the late fifties of the first century.

Romans: Background, Occasion & Purpose

I. Background, Occasion and Purpose

- A. See Appendix A at the end of the syllabus.
- B. Letter to the Romans is written at Corinth in AD _____, during the _____ visit.
- C. Phoebe is probably the one who delivers the letter to Rome (Rom. 16:1-2).
- D. Occasion: Paul desires to visit Rome.
 1. Rom. 1:10-11
 2. Rom. 15:22-24
- E. Romans contributed to the collection for Jerusalem
- F. Paul’s calling to go to Rome
 1. Acts 19:21
 2. Acts 23:11
 3. Rom. 15:23-26

II. Reason for Paul to Write Romans

- A. Two views: Historical camp and dogmatic camp
 1. Historical camp
 - a. Appeal is made to Paul’s letter-writing patterns
 - b. Argument against this: _____.
 - c. Counter-arguments:
 - 1) Paul addresses concerns of the churches even when he had never visited them (such as Colossians).
 - 2) Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome; they would have talked to Paul about the Roman church and its concerns.
 2. Dogmatic camp
 - a. Paul has become experienced and wants to present the full nature of the Christian faith.
 - b. It does not matter who he writes it to; there is no historical connection.
 - c. Romans has a clear and intriguing development.
 3. Integration of both camps
 - a. It is more an historical concern, but the dogmatic presentation of the basic concerns of the Christian faith tailored to the Romans’ situation is also present.
 4. Tension between Jews and Gentiles in the Christian faith
 5. Romans 9-11
 - a. Paul is trying to understand why the Gospel is not being received by his own people, and at the same time is expanding among the Gentiles.

III. Rome in the Late Fifties of the First Century

- A. Nero (AD 54-68)
 - 1. 54-59: Oppression not yet evident
 - 2. 59: Oppression increases
 - 3. 64: First major persecution of Christians
 - a. Fire of Rome
- B. Rome is the major military power in the Mediterranean.
- C. Culture borrowed from Greeks
 - 1. Stoic philosophy - Seneca
- D. *Panem et circenses*
- E. Moral decay
- F. Multi-racial, multi-ethnic
- G. Many world religions
 - 1. Emperor worship
 - 2. Jewish religion
 - a. Jews had a special exemption from this worship.
 - b. Soon after 63 BC when Pompey took Palestine, Jews began arriving in Rome and a synagogue was established.
 - c. 59 BC Cicero mentioned Jews in Rome.
 - d. AD 19: Repression of Jews under Caligula
 - e. AD 52: Expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius
 - 1) Inner Jewish tension is the cause.