

AN EXPOSITION:
THE BOOK OF ROMANS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Romans is the first epistle listed in the New Testament, written by the Apostle Paul. This vital book contains many of Paul's statements, which support numerous doctrines of Christianity (sinful nature of all people- Romans 3:23, security of salvation - Romans 8:38-39, and others). Romans can be partitioned into four main areas: the good news of salvation (1:1–8:39), God's plan for the Jews and Gentiles (9:1–11:36), living the good news (12:1–15:13), and concluding remarks (15:14–16:27). *Though it is the goal of this work to detail the major themes of the Book of Romans, this will be done primarily from the perspective of the historical context and purpose by which Paul wrote this epistle. This exposition will begin by describing the times and reason for which Paul wrote Romans, followed by a summary of the major themes within the epistle.*

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Before this exposition begins, it is imperative to provide a historical backdrop to which Romans was written. It might be a surprise to begin this inquisition with a quote from the Book of Acts:

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And, he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome), and he came to them.¹

As Christianity gained acceptance, the Jewish/Christian/Gentile relations in Rome grew increasingly tense and diverse during the reign of Emperor Claudius. The demographics were complex, comprised of Gentile Roman Converts to Christ (some receptive to Judaism, some not), Messianic believers (Jews who believed in Yeshua), Jews who rejected Yeshua, God-fearers (Gentile Romans who converted to Judaism, some receiving Yeshua, others not), Gentiles who hated Jews and Christians, and Jews who hated Gentiles! This expulsion caused a divide within the already divided church in Rome; Some Gentile Christians were pressured to disassociate

¹Acts 18:1-2.

from the “Jewish Christians” (who were previously Gentile) and the Jewish community in general in order to avoid persecution.²

Aquila and Priscilla were a part of this expulsion of the Jews from Rome. As the Bible records, it was ordered by the emperor Claudius (41-54 AD) approximately the year 41 AD, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”³ According to Suetonius, the Jews were expelled due to disturbances they caused as Christianity began to gain popularity and infect the synagogues of Rome.

This expulsion was reversed at the start of Emperor Nero's reign (54 AD), and it was at this time that Jews and "Jewish Christians" were allowed to return to Rome. According to Kenneth Berding, author and professor of Talbot School of Theology, the Jewish expulsion and return to Rome had three significant impacts on the Roman churches:⁴

1. The remaining Christian Gentiles in Rome (who did not identify with Judaism out of fear or some other reason) would continue to grow in size, isolated from Jewish leadership/input.
2. After 54 AD, anti-Semitic Rome would cause the returning “Christian Jews” (previously Gentile) to question if they were primarily Jewish or Christian.
3. The "Christian Jews" (previously Gentile) would have had difficulty assimilating with the Gentile churches remaining in Rome, tensions arising over which branch of Christianity was indeed authentic.

² Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, *The Jewish Apostle Paul: Rethinking One Of The Greatest Jews That Ever Lived*, Jewish Studies for Christians, 2020, 67-78.

³ James P. Sweeney, “Chronology of the New Testament,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁴Berding, Kenneth. “Something About The Book of Romans That Will Help You Really ‘Get’ It.” *The Good Book Blog - Biola University Blogs*. Last modified March 15, 2024. Accessed March 15, 2024. <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2012/something-about-the-book-of-romans-that-will-help-you-really-get-it>.

One can begin to understand the numerous challenges that were unique to the Roman church:

1. Gentile Christians who did not understand or accept the "Jewishness" of the returning Messianic believers and "Jewish Christians" (previously Gentile).
2. Some "Jewish Christians" (previously Gentile) did not consider the Gentile Christians as being authentic since they did not experience the same persecution as they did or identify with the Jewish foundation of Christianity.
3. The returning Messianic believers (Jews who recognized Yeshua as Messiah) may not have wanted to include the Gentile Christians within the assembly of "Jewish" believers.

It also cannot be forgotten that the Jews largely hated the Gentiles and Christians (especially Jewish converts), and the Gentile Romans hated the Jews and the Christians (especially the Gentile converts)! If tensions were high before the expulsion, one could see how the Jewish return to Rome greatly challenged Roman society and the Church (eventually leading to the persecution under Emperor Nero only a decade later).

This brief history provides the climate in which Paul wrote his epistle to the church in Rome, approximately three years after Claudius' ban was abolished (57 AD). Making this epistle even more unique amongst his others, Paul did not plant the church in Rome, only visiting for the first time after his petition to appeal to Caesar due to his encounter with the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 22-23, years after he wrote his epistle.

With Paul's letter being received by the Roman church amid this turbulent time, the purpose of his epistle becomes more meaningful: *Paul sought to bring much-needed unity to the greatly divided Church in Rome. He sought to establish common ground amongst the numerous issues that caused a rift between the different groups and explain to all that both Jews and Gentiles are to live in unity as one olive tree.*⁵ This will be the historical framework in which the Book of Romans will be explained.

⁵Romans 11:11-24. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, 81.

THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION (1:1–8:39)

Keeping the historical context in mind, Paul begins his plea for unity. He introduces the Gospel of Christ being available to all, to the Jew first, then to the Greek (Gentile).⁶ Paul's pattern of his argument being "to the Jew first and then to the Greek" is a theme sewn throughout His epistle, again displaying his desire to build this bridge between the most polarized individuals within the Church. He starts by addressing the common and inherent problem of all men: sinful humanity in the presence of a Holy God. He explains in chapter one that no one has an excuse to not seek the invisible God of the universe since the evidence of His existence (the created world) is clear to all.⁷ Even though this is evident everyone, those who do not seek Him as the God who is greater than any created thing (since He created all) will find themselves in a downward spiral of destruction and confusion, only becoming more separated from the Truth.⁸

Judgment and punishment are inescapable and due to all, to the Jew first (since they have the knowledge of the Scriptures), then also to the Greek. However, the opposite is also true; salvation comes to all willing to do what is right in God's eyes, to the Jew first, then to the Greek.⁹ Jews have the Scriptures and Gentiles have a God-given conscience that bears witness of God's ways, and all are judged according to what has been revealed to them.¹⁰ Paul explains that religion, genealogy, or good works cannot save. One must have an "inward circumcision of the heart," which comes from God, not from men.¹¹ In chapter three, he presents further evidence of this point, quoting from the books of Psalms, Isaiah, and Proverbs to prove this truth from the Scriptures. All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God,¹² but we are freely justified "by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at present His

⁶Romans 1:16.

⁷Romans 1:18-20.

⁸Romans 1:21-32.

⁹Romans 2:1-11.

¹⁰Romans 2:12-16.

¹¹Romans 2:29-30.

¹²Romans 3:23.

righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.¹³ There is one God that justifies both Jew and Gentile.¹⁴

Continuing into chapter four, Paul uses the example of Abraham from the Old Testament to prove that justification came through faith in God and not by works, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."¹⁵ It is here that Paul states a significant and more than likely difficult truth for the average Jew to accept, "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect."¹⁶ It is through faith in Jesus that mankind finds peace with God.¹⁷ Undeservingly, He died in our place, providing the perfect sacrifice we could not offer, demonstrating God's love for us.¹⁸ For the last half of chapter five, Paul compares Adam (the first man) to Christ (the last man/Adam), creating more imagery to illustrate an additional way that Yeshua fulfilled an Old Testament shadow)¹⁹.

Paul has now brought the reader to the point where everyone (Jew and Gentile) is eternally hopeless before the judgment of God and needs Christ's sacrifice through faith. He continues his Gospel in chapter six by presenting a series of hypothetical questions a person coming to faith might ask, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?",²⁰ "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?"²¹ His answer is an emphatic no! This cannot be so since you have died to your old life of sin and are united with Christ in His resurrection.²² The gift that God gives to His "slaves of righteousness" is eternal life, provided through the sacrifice of Yeshua.²³

¹³Romans 3:24-26.

¹⁴Romans 3:29-30.

¹⁵Romans 4:3 quoting Genesis 15:6.

¹⁶Romans 4:13-14.

¹⁷Romans 5:1.

¹⁸Romans 5:6-11.

¹⁹Romans 5:12-20.

²⁰Romans 6:1.

²¹Romans 6:15.

²²Romans 6:2-12, 16-20.

²³Romans 6:23.

Great misunderstanding has come from a variety of translations of verbiage in chapters seven and eight of Romans regarding phraseology, such as "being free from the Law"²⁴ and "free from the law of sin and death."²⁵ It is clear that the Law is good²⁶ and though we are "freed from the Law,"²⁷ Paul is not referring to a complete jettison of the Old Covenant. There were two aspects to the Old Covenant: blessings and curses, Deuteronomy 28 being an excellent example of both sides being presented in one place. Though some Christians may assume phrases like "freed from the law" mean a complete rejection of the Torah of Moses, Paul is actually speaking about being free from *the curses associated with not being completely obedient to the Law*. This distinction is made clear numerous times in Old Testament passages, which the NKJV translates in a variety of ways: *the vengeance of the covenant*,²⁸ *curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses*,²⁹ *curses written in the book*,³⁰ and *words of the covenant*.³¹ Furthermore, Nehemiah explains that when one enters into a covenant with God, they are "entering into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law."³² Turning to Christ does not mean that Christians are to forsake the words of Moses; just that one aspect of the Law no longer applies; relying on our obedience, and the consequences of our inevitable failure to obey perfectly since Yeshua provided Himself as the perfect sacrifice once and for all. Compare the following translations of Romans 7:3:

| Romans 7:3 | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| New Living Translation (NLT) | Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) | New King James Version (NKJV) |
| ...died to the <u>power of the law</u> | ...free from <u>that part of the Torah</u> | ...free from <u>that law</u> |

²⁴Romans 7:4.

²⁵Romans 8:2.

²⁶Matthew 5:17-20, Romans 7:7,12, 16 1 Timothy 1:8, et al.

²⁷Romans 7:6, 8:2.

²⁸Leviticus 26:25.

²⁹Daniel 9:11.

³⁰Deuteronomy 29:19-30:1, 2 Chronicles 34:24.

³¹Jeremiah 11:8.

³²Nehemiah 10:28-29.

To further complicate matters, in Romans seven alone, the Greek word for law (*nomos*) occurs 23 times as *law* in the NKJV, but does not always have the same meaning. *Nomos* can refer specifically to the Law as given to Moses, but can also mean any religious system or way of thinking.³³ Numerous versions, like the NKJV, seem to mechanically translate *nomos* as law, not taking this distinction into consideration. The Complete Jewish Bible creates this distinction by referring to God's Law as *Torah* and the war of our flesh as *torah*, as the following comparison illustrates:

| Romans 7:18-23 | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | New King James Version (NKJV) | Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) |
| 18 | For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. | For I know that there is nothing good housed inside me — that is, inside my old nature. I can want what is good, but I can't do it! |
| 19 | For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. | For I don't do the good I want; instead, the evil that I don't want is what I do! |
| 20 | Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. | But if I am doing what "the real me" doesn't want, it is no longer "the real me" doing it but the sin housed inside me. |
| 21 | I find then <u>a law</u> , that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. | So I find it to be the rule, a kind of <u>perverse "torah,"</u> that although I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me |
| 22 | For I delight in <u>the law of God</u> according to the inward man. | For in my inner self I completely agree with <u>God's Torah</u> |
| 23 | But I see <u>another law</u> in my members, warring against <u>the law of my mind</u> , and bringing me into captivity to <u>the law of sin</u> which is in my members. | but in my various parts, I see a <u>different "torah,"</u> one that battles with the <u>Torah in my mind</u> and makes me a prisoner of <u>sin's "torah,"</u> which is operating in my various parts. |

³³ Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

Though believers are "freed from the law," Paul is not referring to freedom from Torah, but the law of sin and death (consequences of disobedience, as was previously established). The war of the flesh (which the CJB calls a *perverse or different torah*) is at war with the *Torah of our minds* (i.e. the indwelling Holy Spirit), and though this war wages on daily, the war within our flesh has been won by the Spirit through Yeshua.³⁴ Keeping the historical context of Romans in mind, this may have been a point Paul wanted to make clear to his Messianic and Gentile audience; *all children of God are no longer condemned by Torah, but are still bound to its system of morality (to the Jew first but also to the Greek)*.

The focus of Romans 8 is the regenerated nature of the believer in Yeshua and the indescribable benefits of sonship with the Father; having no condemnation before God,³⁵ God's Spirit dwells in man,³⁶ and being sons of God and joint heirs with Christ.³⁷ As the previous paragraphs explained, the indwelling Holy Spirit strengthens the believer to engage the daily war with the flesh successfully. The Spirit prays with and through the believer to bring the perfect will of God to pass.³⁸ In the concluding verses of Romans 8, Paul summarizes the glorified spiritual state and eternal security of those who continually trust in Yeshua as Lord:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.³⁹

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE JEWS AND GENTILES (9:1–11:36)

After Paul has labored to explain the common need for Yeshua's salvation for both the Jew and Gentile, his next task is to reveal how God's plan involves both people groups. He begins with his burden for the Jewish people, his "countrymen, according to the flesh,"⁴⁰ whose hearts have

³⁴Romans 7:25.

³⁵Romans 8:1.

³⁶Romans 8:11.

³⁷Romans 8:12-17.

³⁸Romans 8:18-27.

³⁹Romans 8:38-39.

⁴⁰Romans 9:3.

been blinded to the true identity of Yeshua. As said earlier, Paul explains how being a seed of Abraham in the flesh is not enough (they are not all Israel who are of Israel)⁴¹ to gain eternal life. Even though the Israelites were entrusted with the covenants and oracles of God, at large, the Jewish people have rejected Yeshua as Messiah. This is, however, the plan of God, and though it might not seem to make sense, a created being is in no place to arrogantly question its creator.⁴² Paul employs the imagery of a Potter (God) fashioning vessels (people) for His purposes (imagery from Jeremiah 18:1-11 and Isaiah 29:16), some for honor, some for dishonor.⁴³ Though many may conclude that the vessels of wrath are the Jews and vessels of mercy are the Gentiles, Paul clarifies that his potter analogy applies to "even us whom He called [the Church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles], not of the Jews [in the flesh] *only*, but also of the [unconverted] Gentiles."⁴⁴ In Paul's time (and is the case still today), "[the] Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness."⁴⁵ God uses both parties to work out His eternal purposes.

Paul, the apostle to the nations, rejoiced that multitudes of Gentiles received Yeshua, but his heart was for the Jewish people.⁴⁶ In Chapter 10, Paul explains the purpose of the Gentiles in bringing the Jews to Messiah. As the Church lives out the Torah of God through the Spirit (and the grace of Yeshua) and not by the letter, God will provoke the Jews to jealousy, "by those who are not a nation," and He will, "move you to anger by a foolish nation."⁴⁷ This faithful testimony of the Church is to be the beautiful feet that bring the Gospel of Peace to the Jewish people who have not received Yeshua as Messiah.⁴⁸ God originally called Israel to be a light to the nations by entrusting them with the Laws and Covenants of God but failed to do so. Now, He

⁴¹Romans 9:6.

⁴²Romans 9:6-24.

⁴³Romans 9:19-21.

⁴⁴Romans 9:24, emphasis mine.

⁴⁵Romans 9:30-31.

⁴⁶Romans 9:1-5, 10:1.

⁴⁷Romans 10:19.

⁴⁸Romans 10:15.

has given this revelation to the nations to be a light to Israel: "But through their [Israel's] fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."⁴⁹

In Romans 11:13, Paul directs his words to the Gentiles (within the Roman church) not to become prideful in their role to drive Israel to jealousy. In his effort to explain the spiritual relationship between both parties, he compares the Jew to an olive tree and the Gentile to a wild olive tree.⁵⁰ Some "branches" from the olive tree (Jews) were broken off due to unbelief, and God grafted in "branches" (Gentiles) from the wild olive tree. The temptation of a Gentile to "boast against the branches of the Jews" that have been cut away (in unbelief) should be stifled by the following truths Paul explained:

1. God is more eager to regraft the "natural branches" (Jews) over the "wild branches" (Gentiles).⁵¹
2. If God did not spare the natural "Jewish" branches, He may not spare the Gentile "branches."⁵²
3. The "Gentile branch" [representing a Gentile "church" with doctrine independent from and not aligned with the Torah] does not support the "Root" (Torah), but the "Root" (Torah) supports it.⁵³

Everything explained by Paul up to this point was written to present the following "mystery," which was directed towards the Gentiles:

For I do not desire, brethren [Gentiles], that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Concerning the gospel they [Israel] are enemies for your [the Gentiles] sake, but concerning the election

⁴⁹Romans 11:11.

⁵⁰Romans 11:17-24.

⁵¹Romans 11:24.

⁵²Romans 11:21.

⁵³Romans 11:18.

they [Israel] are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [Israel's] disobedience, even so these also [Israel] have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you [Gentiles] they [Israel] also may obtain mercy. *For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.*⁵⁴

This statement by Paul goes right back to how he began his epistle: *there is a common need for God's grace and mercy for all, Jew and Gentile. Both have a purpose in His redemptive plan, and each relies on the other.* With this crucial foundation laid, Paul can now present his instructions for *how* the Body of Christ is to live in unity.

LIVING THE GOOD NEWS (12:1–15:13)

Remembering the numerous difficulties and challenges the Roman church faced, Paul dedicated this portion of his epistle to instructing (what he prayed would be) the unified church of Rome on how to live in one accord. Without keeping the historical context in mind, one can easily miss how great a challenge this must have been to Paul, especially to people whom (at the time of his writing) he had never met face to face. He sought to present guidelines for Christian living for the Gentile believer on one end of the spectrum and the Messianic believer on the other (and everyone else in between).

Romans 12 and 13 contain general instruction for Godly living. However, Paul frames his words by revealing that every believer's life should be a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."⁵⁵ These two chapters contain numerous directives that a follower of Messiah should emulate (most of which most Christians would quickly agree without hesitation), covering spiritual gifts, submission to government authorities, and general Godly behavior. Paul ends these two chapters encouraging the Roman church to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."⁵⁶

⁵⁴Romans 11:25-32, emphasis mine.

⁵⁵Romans 12:1.

⁵⁶Romans 3:14.

As the believer "puts on the Lord Jesus Christ," Paul continues his discourse into Chapter 14, addressing issues that would seem challenging to the diversity of the Roman church. The first half of this chapter touches on disputes over food and days of celebration. Few details are provided as to what precisely the disputes concerned.⁵⁷ In addressing this problem, Paul's more significant concern is the unity between Jewish and Gentile brothers. Though it can be edifying and beneficial to the spiritual walk of an individual believer to abstain from or permit certain things, the priority must be for the peace and edification of the church as a whole.⁵⁸

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹

Another example of Paul emphasis of unity over certain spiritual truths is his discourse on head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. After urging the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ and to keep the traditions he delivered unto them,⁶⁰ Paul explains his theology on head coverings. After stating his understanding of the issue, he goes one step further and says that this practice has some form of angelic implications.⁶¹ Despite this reality, Paul ends his explanation by emphasizing unity over obedience to his teaching, "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God."⁶² Paul's reasoning aligns with Yeshua's words in Matthew 12:7, which He quoted from Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." If your sacrifice to God causes you to be unmerciful to a brother or causes the brother to stumble, He will not desire your sacrifice. This truth, however does not alleviate a believer from living a holy life.⁶³

⁵⁷Romans 14:2 mentions a conflict about some within the church choosing only to eat vegetables.

⁵⁸Romans 14:19.

⁵⁹Romans 14:14-16.

⁶⁰1 Corinthians 11:1-2.

⁶¹1 Corinthians 11:10.

⁶²1 Corinthians 11:16.

⁶³See Romans 14:21, 1 Corinthians 8, and 10.

Like the division over eating certain foods, days of celebration are also addressed briefly, "He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it."⁶⁴ Though verses like Romans 14:5-6 are frequently used as evidence that the Sabbath has been done away with under the New Covenant, the word *Sabbath* is found nowhere in the Book of Romans. Other epistles of Paul provide evidence that he still observed the Sabbath and partook in the Feasts of the LORD even after his conversion on the road to Damascus.⁶⁵ However, while important, the priority according to Paul is for unity.

Despite the numerous differences that existed between the believers in Rome, Paul urged the Roman believers to "pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another,"⁶⁶ please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification,⁶⁷ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS (15:14–16:27)

In this final and short portion of Romans, Paul primarily speaks to the church about his specific travel plans to visit them. He explains that he was currently en route to Jerusalem,⁶⁹ which possibly places him in the city of Ephesus when this letter was written. Paul mentions many of his co-laborers in faith, but most notably Priscilla and Aquila (the same couple from Acts 18:2 who were expelled from Rome), who traveled back to Rome after the expulsion of Emperor Claudius and had an assembly in their home.⁷⁰ As he closes his letter, he gives one final plea to

⁶⁴Romans 14:6.

⁶⁵ To mention briefly, in English Bibles, Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 are usually worded as "on the first day of the week," when the Greek actually reads *sabbaton* (Sabbath). If Luke had "Sunday" in mind when he wrote *sabbaton*, it is curious why he did not use a word like *hebdomas* (Greek word for week). Second Maccabees 6:11 uses *hebdomas* to refer to a week and only five verses prior uses *sabbaton* to refer specifically to Sabbath. Regarding the Feasts of the Lord, two examples of Paul keeping the feasts can be found in Acts 18:21 and 20:16.

⁶⁶Romans 14:19.

⁶⁷Romans 15:2.

⁶⁸Romans 15:6.

⁶⁹Romans 15:25-26.

⁷⁰Romans 16:3-5.

avoid contentious people, who serve themselves and not the Lord⁷¹ and praises God for the revelation of the "mystery of the church" (the unification of Jew and Gentile through Yeshua), which was made known to all the nations.⁷²

CONCLUSION

Of all of Paul's letters, the Epistle to the Romans is unique for numerous reasons. It was written to a church that Paul never visited, and the existing conflicts were possibly the greatest that Paul had to address through his writings. In order to begin on the right foot and achieve unity, Paul started his letter by presenting the Gospel message, beginning with the sinful and depraved state of all people, leading to the hope that is found only through faith in Yeshua Messiah. He explains the mystery behind the purpose of the Jew and Gentile in the family of God and how each works to edify and be a witness to the other. Furthermore, Paul presents instructions for Godly living and emphasizes that minor differences concerning ceremonial purity should not take precedence over the greater need for unity.

Though Paul had not visited Rome when his epistle was written, his encounter with the Jews in Acts 21-23 forced his extraction from Judea by the Romans and Paul's eventual meeting with Caesar. Acts 28:17-24 describes Paul's first encounter with the Jews in Rome:

And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from

⁷¹Romans 16:17-20.

⁷²Romans 16:25-27.

both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

Towards the end of his life, Paul was finally able to be a physical presence in this important city within the empire and live true to the words of his letter, which they had received years prior. The final verses of Acts record how Paul spent the remaining years of his life before his martyrdom under emperor Nero:

Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.⁷³

⁷³ Acts 28:30-31.

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