

# THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**LESSON NINE = The Church in Rome**  
*Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (3/2/11)*

Introduction: Each of the congregations in the New Testament had unique features and characteristics. They all had qualities we can learn from and use to better our own congregations today. In this lesson we are going to consider the church in Rome. Let's study together . . . . .

Discussion:

## **I. The Geography of Rome**

The city of Rome is located near the western coast of Italy.

History tells us that this area was probably the first to build straw and adobe style huts.

The primitive people were conquered around the 6th century BC and the culture advanced.

By 500 BC the hilltop communities were all pulled together into one large community/city.

The city was surrounded by large stone walls which protected them from invaders.

## **II. The History of Rome**

Rome was one of the first to develop a republican form of government led by the people.

\* The people hailed men like Pompey, Julius Caesar, Marc Antony, and Gaius Octavian,.

\* Octavian (Caesar Augustus) was a popular ruler (**Luke 2:1**).

Historians claimed that the population of Rome the time of the New Testament was 1 million.

\* However, in 1941 an ancient inscription was found saying it was 4,100,000 under Augustus.

\* They had many slaves, freemen, and foreigners in Rome.

During the time and ministry of Paul, the early church was surrounded by emperor worship.

\* Romans considered their emperors and their city to be divine.

\* They believed that their city was founded by Romulus and Remus in 753 BC (twin of Mars).

The Pax Augusta was one of the great blessings to the Romans (and ultimately to the Christians).

\* The Koine Greek helped advance engineering, architecture, agriculture, etc.

\* Rome gave certain privileges to the Jews and the Christians benefits too.

Claudius became enraged with the Jews and had them expelled from Rome in 49 AD (**Acts 18-19**).

Rome was blessed with large public forums, roads, shops, temples, and buildings.

## **III. The Beginning of the Church in Rome**

There were around 50,000 Jews in Rome during Paul's day (at least 13 synagogues).

\* All of them had names given in honor of one of the Roman emperors.

We are not sure who took the gospel to Rome first (**Romans 15:20, Acts 2:10**)

The Christians suffered persecution in Rome soon after the church was established.

The work was already established when Paul arrived (**Acts 18, Romans 16**).

**Romans 1:8** shows us that the community of believers were well-known among the brotherhood.

\* Some of the Christians in Rome knew Paul before he arrived there (maybe other missions).

\* Some of Paul's own relatives were a part of the church family at Rome (**Romans 16:7, 11**).

The church in Rome met in various locations (**Romans 16:5, I Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2, and Acts 18:7**).

#### **IV. The Work of the Church in Rome**

The work in Rome seems to be independent minded.

The Christians who left Rome for a time, probably returned without establishing roots.

The Roman church was more influenced by Paul than any other church leader (**Acts 21:20**).

Remember that Paul wrote several of his letters from Rome.

Paul wrote the book of Romans to both Jews (**Romans 2:1, 17**) and Gentiles (**Romans 11:13**).

When Paul's letter to the Romans arrived they were facing some crucial decisions.

The brethren needed to study and grow.

#### **V. The Letter to the Church in Rome**

The following outline could be used for Romans:

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Condemnation (1:18-3:20)
- III. Reconciliation (3:21-5:11)
- IV. Sanctification (5:12-8:39)
- V. Vindication (9:1-11:36)
- VI. Application (12:1-15:13)
- VII. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

*Anyone have a favorite verse from Romans they want to share?*

#### **VI. The Dilemmas of the Church in Rome**

Many issues plagued the church because of its location.

- \* They faced intellectual, cultural, religious, and personal issues.

- \* These are compounded because of the fact that the church was in the capital city.

Their successes and accomplishments came at a price (**Philippians 4:22**).

The church struggled with the common plight of man, sinfulness.

The Jews were still trying to force circumcision on the Gentiles.

- \* He tries to teach the brethren about equality and justification.

- \* The law opens the eyes of man, but the Spirit gives us identity.

The church was trying to learn how to handle the battle of the flesh and the Spirit.

#### **VII. The Maturity of the Church in Rome**

The church was learning about salvation, faith, and the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit and presence of God was a key to their survival.

The experience of Paul in Corinth and Ephesus helped the church.

- \* The congregation benefited from Paul's wisdom and experience.

- \* He had previously worked in some culturally diverse communities.

The church was able to make contact with people all over the world.

Paul hoped that the Roman brethren would help him in a mission to Spain (**Romans 15:23-28**).

- \* The vision and mission of Paul was successful.

- \* Church leaders would do well to consider his great example.

Conclusion: God clearly blessed the church in Rome. We can see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God throughout the New Testament. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom. Next week we will begin our study of Colosse.