Dating of Paul's Letters in Chronological Order

Date	Letters	Provenance
48-49	Galatians	Jerusalem? Antioch?
Early 50s	1 Thessalonians	Corinth
Early 50s	2 Thessalonians	Corinth
Mid 50s	1 Corinthians	Ephesus
Mid 50s	2 Corinthians	Macedonia, most likely Philippi
Mid to late 50s	Romans	Corinth
Early 60s	Philippians	Roman Imprisonment
Early 60s	Ephesians	Roman Imprisonment
Early 60s	Colossians	Roman Imprisonment
Early 60s	Philemon (same time with Colossians)	Roman Imprisonment
mid 60s	1 Timothy	Macedonia
mid 60s	Titus	? unknown
mid to late 60s (before 68)	2 Timothy	Roman Imprisonment

Note:
The dating of Paul's letters is notorious difficult for Galatians and the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus).

Introduction to Romans

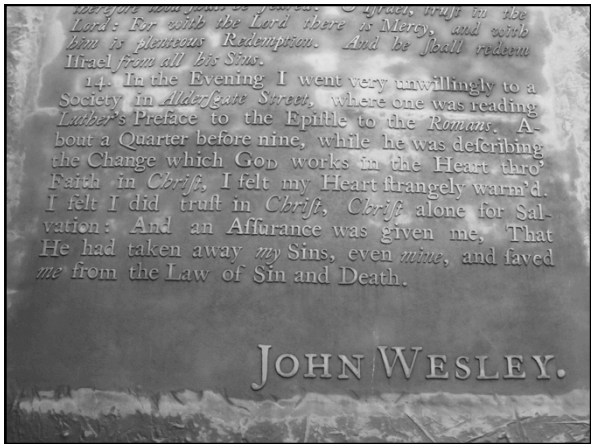




Impact of Romans on Martin Luther

Influence of Romans on John Wesley's conversion





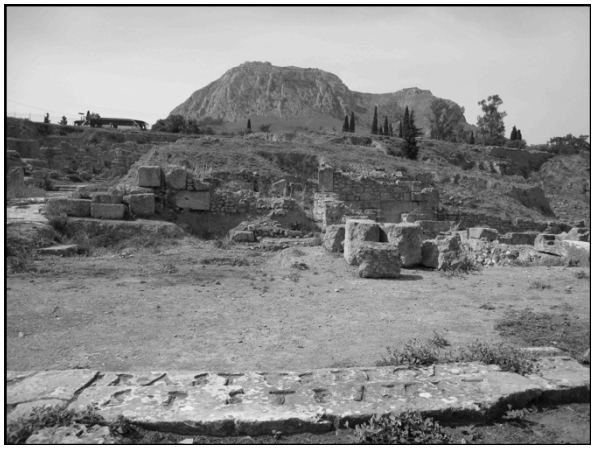
Hearing Romans Afresh

- Interpretation subject to theological debates and inquiry -> many of us have been brought up in certain tradition of what Romans has to say and we tend to read into Romans what we have been taught to find there
- A systematic presentation of Paul's gospel?

Introductory Issues

1) Authorship
   - Paul as author
   - Tertius as amanuensis (Rom 16:22)
2) Dating and Provenance
   - Rom 15:19-32
   - Cf. Acts 19:10, 21-22; 20:2-3
   - Rom 16:2 – Phoebe from Cenchrea – deacon or servant?
   - Rom 16:23 – Gaius – same as 1 Cor 1:14?
   - Rom 16:21-23 – Erastus; cf. 2 Tim 4:20?





Introductory Issues

- **ERASTVS. PRO. AED. S. P. STRAVIT**, which is an abbreviation of **ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT**.
- "Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid this pavement at his own expense"

Introductory Issues

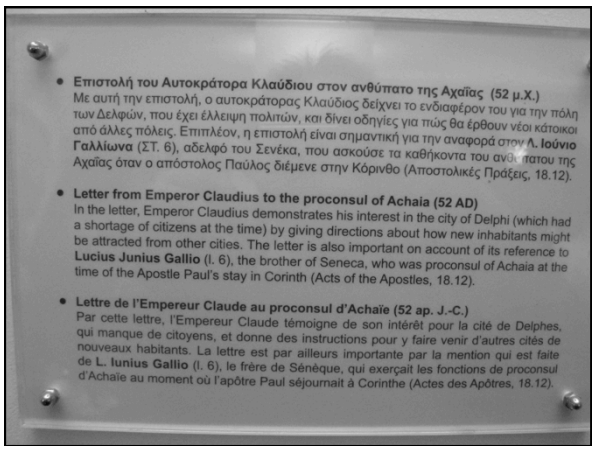
- Cf. Romans 16:23 "Erastus, who is the city's director of public works,…send you their greetings."
- οἰκονόμος – public treasurer
- Same Erastus?
  - Cf. Bruce Winter, Justin Meggit

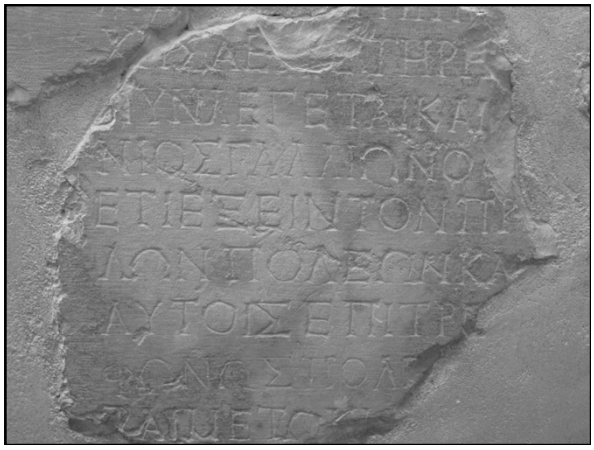
Introductory Issues

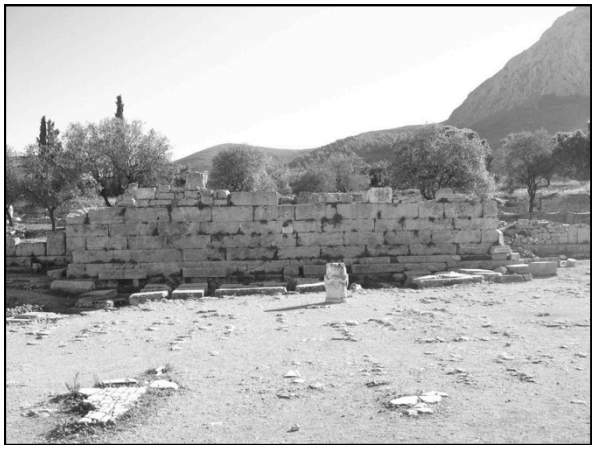
- Written from Corinth?
- If so, when?
  - Gallio incident
  - 2 years in Ephesus
  - 3-month visit Cf Acts 20:2-3

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law." …Gallio said to the Jews, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law--settle the matter yourselves…" So he had them ejected from the court.

- Acts 18:12-16









Introductory Issues

– If so, when?
- Gallio incident – Acts 18:12-17
- 2 years in Ephesus
- 3-month visit Cf Acts 20:2-3
- 55-58 CE

Introductory Issues

3) Integrity of the letter
- Romans 16 part of the letter?
- Romans 15:30-33 – perfect ending?
- Romans 16:25-27

Introductory Issues

4) Relationship of Romans 9-11 to the whole letter
- William Campbell
- N. T. Wright

5) Jews – Judeans debate
- How to translate *Ἰουδαῖος*? – Jews, Jewish, Judeans?
- Religious; geographical or ethnicity issue?

Introductory Issues

6) Origin of the Roman churhes
- no information
- Paul never planted the church, despite the claims of Irenaeus in Eusebius *History* 5.8.1: "Matthew produced his gospel written among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul proclaimed the gospel and founded the church at Rome"
- Suggestion of Ambrosiaster

Introductory Issues

7) Audience of Romans
- Jews only/Majority Jews: Baur, Mason, Manson, Zahn. Not widely held today
- Gentiles only – Andrew Das based on Rom 1:5-6; 13; 11:13; 15:15-16
- Mixed audience – predominantly gentiles – more popularly held view

Introductory Issues

8) The starting point for Understanding Romans
- Systematic exposition of Christian doctrines?
- Reading through Martin Luther's eyes?

Introductory Issues

8) The starting point for Understanding Romans
- Dangers: If we IGNORE the following:
  - Romans is not only about individuals get saved but how Jews and Gentiles can both be people of God
  - Romans is written to at least 5 house churches
  - Churches affected by the edict of Claudius
  - Churches wrestling with the return of the Jews after the edict of Claudius
  - Churches struggling in listening to Rom 13:1-7

Introductory Issues

9) Recent debates in Pauline/Romans scholarship
- New Perspective of Paul/Justification by faith
- Jew-Gentiles debate
- Relationship of Romans 9-11 to the entire letter
- Anti-imperial propaganda

Edict of Claudius

- History of Jewish community
- Mentioned in 139 BCE – existence of Jewish community in Rome → relatively young history
- 100 years later – Jews forms significant proportion of Roman population
- Population increased when during Pompeii, Jews were brought to Rome as captives – see Jos, *Ant.* 14.77; *War* 1.155

Edict of Claudius

- Jos, *Ant.* 14.77: "we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans, and were deprived of that country which we had gained by our arms from the Syrians."
- Jos, *War*, 155: '…made them (the Jews) subject to him (Pompeii)…and reduced Judea within its proper bounds."

Edict of Claudius

- Anti-semitism in Rome is unmistakable; the religion to Romans is rather barbarian, esp the rite of circumcision; sabbath
- Transfer of funds to Jerusalem temple
- Expulsion of Jews under Tiberius in 19CE
  - 4000 Jews sent to Sardinia to fight bandits with the hope many would perish there
- However, Jewish population continued to grow under Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius

Edict of Claudius

- Rise in number of synagogues
  - E.g., synagogues of the Augustesians, Agrippa, Volumnius, Sibura, Campesian, Valkarengian, Synagogue of the Hebrew, Vernaculi, etc.
- Diverse community of individually structured congregations; lacking a controlling body
- Loose structure makes it ideal for the spread of Christ-movement

Edict of Claudius

- Christian propaganda may have led to increased factions and disputes

Edict of Claudius

- Suetonius biography on Claudius:
- Statement in 49CE: *Judaeos assidue tumultuantes impulsore Chresto Roma expulit*
- "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome"

Edict of Claudius

- Acts 18:2 – Prisca and Aquila
- Who is Chrestus?
  - A mistake made by Suetonius to mean "Christus", the Messiah of Israel's scripture?
    - Understand "the instigation of Chrestus" is Suetonius's confused reference to the proclamation in Rome of Jesus Christ
    - This proclamation was the cause of public disturbances, of sufficient ferocity to provoke the emperor's harsh reaction

Edict of Claudius

    - That the disturbances therefore must reflect the intolerance within the Judean community for the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah, or for the allegedly characteristic Christian practice of including the gentiles in the community life (e.g., common meals)
  - This reading is extremely popular – it gives the impression that the edict of Claudius is an important episode in the emergence of Romans Christianity, and Prisca and Aquila are also expelled because of their religiosity, not ethnicity. Also highlight Judean intolerance and exclusivism.

Edict of Claudius

- See F. Blass; Wolfgang Wiefel; Cranfield, Lampe, Schreiner (p. 12), Bruce, Dunn; Fitzmyer popular commentaries – all make this assumption that Chrestus = Christus
- Also James Dunn, xliviii-xlix – "It is generally agreed that "Chrestus" means "Christ", and that the reference is therefore probably to disturbances among Jews concerning Jesus, that is, to disagreements between Jews who had accepted Jesus as Messiah (Jewish Christians) and Jews who rejected the Christian claims."

Edict of Claudius

- This reading is historically dubious
  - Suetonius is unlikely to make a mistake in referring to Chrestus. He uses the term "Christiani" elsewhere in his writing in describing the followers of Jesus, where he clearly describes them as "a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" (*Nero* 16)

Edict of Claudius

  - Hence, Chrestus is more likely to be a prominent Roman figure or someone the blame is attributed to

Edict of Claudius

- Syntactically, the phrase *impulsore Chresto* more likely modifies the action of Claudius rather than the Judeans – it is the emperor, not the Judeans who acted at Chrestus instigation
  - Statement in 49CE: *Judaeos assidue tumultuantes impulsore Chresto Roma expulit*
  - "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome

Edict of Claudius

- The phrase, "*assidue tumultuantes*", tells us not the character and causes of a specific disturbance on the part of the Jews in Rome but about the stereotyped way Suetonius looks upon the Jews in general as troublesome, on the assumption that as the emperor had expelled them, they must have deserved it.

Edict of Claudius

- Hence a different translation:
  - "Chrestus caused Claudius to expel from Rome the continuously rebelling Jews."
  - Therefore, the report is not about Christian and Christian propaganda – the Jews and Christians must be distinguished
  - The Jews are the target, precisely because they are Jews, not because they are Christians.

Edict of Claudius

- How many Jews were expelled?
  - Probably not everyone, but majority, esp those in prominent position
  - Numbers anywhere between 15,000-60,000

Edict of Claudius

- Effects of the Edict:
  - Jews were unable to meet in synagogues
  - Christians who remain are gentiles or lower class, low profile Jews.
  - Hence meeting in private homes and tenement areas started.
  - Significant effect on Roman churches – churches became predominantly gentile, and gentile influence increases tremendously

Edict of Claudius

- 54CE – reign of Nero
- Clemency is extended; anti Jewish measures repealed
- Not because of his friendly attitude to Jews, but clemency is often viewed as a means to gain loyalty and patronage
- Jews returned; Prisca and Aquila also returned – Rom 16:3-5; Acts 18:26; 2 Tim 4:19

Edict of Claudius

- What happens when the Jews returned?
  - Jewish believers find different form of organisations
  - Gentile Christians played important role in the Christian assemblies
  - Jewish elements in these assemblies might have been eliminated

Edict of Claudius

- The gentile-led assemblies now look completely different from what the Jewish believers knew
- The tensions can be seen in Rom 9-11 and 14-15; and if paid careful attention, all the exhortations were written to Gentiles, and not Jews. A plea for the gentiles to accept the Jews?
- This background helps understand Romans 16, and the entire Romans

Starting Point for Reading Romans

- Bornkamm: "Romans is the last will and testament of the Apostle Paul"

Starting Point for Reading Romans

- If Romans is about "justification by faith", how do we make sense of the following:
  - Romans written to groups of 5 house churches?
  - Churches affected by the edict of Claudius?
  - Churches wresting with the return of the Jews after the edict of Claudius has been repealed?
  - Churches struggling with listening to Rom 13:1-7?

Romans 16

- how would Paul know all the people?
  - Probably some of them are Jewish refugees expelled from Rome and who have returned
  - Prisca and Aquila?

Romans 16

- What do we know about these names?
  1. Aristobulus and Narcissus are not believers → those who are part of the households could be slaves or former slaves

Romans 16

- What do we know about these names?
  2. There are 9 women and 17 men, but women are praised more than men!

Romans 16

- women and men – 16:3-16 name 26 Christians (Narcissus and Aristobulus excluded – not Christians?) in Rome – 9 woman and 17 men. But who is praised in the church? More women and men.
  - 7 women are given title or compliment:
    - being co worker with Paul – Prisca
    - working hard in the lord – Mary, Tryphanena, Tryphosa, Persis
    - being a mother to Paul – the mother of Rufus
    - being of note among apostles – Junia

Romans 16

  - 5 men received praise:
    - co-workers – Aquila, Urbanus
    - approved in Christ – Apelles
    - chosen in the Lord – Rufus
    - being of note among apostles – Andronicus
  - Women held important leadership roles in church!! Note Phoebe

Romans 16

- What do we know about these names?
  3. Divided nature of Christianity in Rome – 5 groups, most like 1 is a house church with the 4 tenement church

Romans 16

- 5 groups of people:
  - 16:3-5 – church in home of Prisca and Aquila – the only house church?
  - 16:10b – those in the household of Aristobulus (note NRSV use family – household better term, incl. slaves and extended family)
  - 16:11b – household of Narcissus
  - 16:14 – 5 people without description are greeted by names – incl brothers and sisters with them
  - 16:15 – 5 others, with all the saints who are with them.

Romans 16

- Tenement church?
  - 4-5 storey buildings; small rooms
  - fire hazard
  - high rental
  - share with several families; very cramped
  - 300 sq ft – subdivide into smaller rooms to be shared by families – rent could be as high as 600 denarri.

Romans 16

- Possible social location for these 5 groups
- 1) Prisca and Aquila



Church of Santa Prisca, Aventine Hills, Rome



Another view of Santa Prisca

Roman Villa in Pompeii





View of another Roman villa in Pompeii

Romans 16

- Possible social location for these 5 groups
- 2) Aristobulus
- 3) Narcussus

Romans 16

- Possible social location for these 5 groups
- 4) The brothers (16:14)
- 5) The saints (16:15)

Questions

- What pictures emerge as you envision the various churches in Rome?
- If this letter is so tied to a specific historical situation, how much of it is still relevant today? How can we interpret other biblical writings in the context of our modern church communities?
- Is the main thesis of Romans in 1:16-17 as relevant for us today as it was for first-century Christians? Why or why not? Is this thesis taken seriously in your local congregation?

Questions

- Our society thinks in psychological and individualistic categories. Is it possible to think back into the minds of early Christians who did not understand concepts such as universal democracy, individual rights, or the power of the unconscious? Does the gospel take a different shape now than it did then? How might it be different? How might ethical implications be different?

Questions

- How do we deal with diversity in our churches today? Differences in theology? Diversity on issues of race or class status, and on controversial topics like woman's ordination, abortion, or homosexuality? How far can we tolerate differences in the spirit of Romans 14?

Questions

- If Paul's discussion of one's attitude toward the state (13:1-7) reflects something of the political situation of his time, how do we interpret it for our lives today?
- Can Romans lend insight into how to relate to people of different ethnic groups in our nation? What about Jewish people and the nation of Israel?

Questions

- Much of what Paul says in Romans is shaped by his eschatology, his strong hope of the eventual triumph of Jesus Christ over all the powers of evil and of God's renewal of all creation. Compare his hope and your hope for the future.



Why did Paul write Romans?

Purpose of Romans

- Paul seeks for partnership and missionary support to Spain (15:17-24; 1:11-13)
- Paul updates his travel plans asks for prayers for protection as he brings the Collection to Jerusalem (15:25-33)
- Paul addresses issues confronting the church – relationship between Jews and Gentiles; strong and the weak.





Roman Forum



Who Carries this Letter to Rome?

Who Carries the Letter to Rome? Romans 16:1-2

- Romans 16:1-2 – functions as a letter of recommendation, recommending Phoebe
  - Cf 2 Cor 3:1-3

Phoebe as the Letter Carrier? Romans 16:1-2

- Who is Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2?
  - Problems in the translation of 2 significant words:
    - Diakonos – is Phoebe merely a "servant" or "deacon"?
    - Prostatis – is Phoebe a "great help" or a "benefactor"?
    - Compare different translation

Phoebe as the Letter Carrier? Romans 16:1-2

- Who is Phoebe?
  - If Phoebe is a deacon holding the official position in the church by late 50s CE, a benefactor to Paul, and the carrier of Paul's most important letter, how would this then shape our understanding of women holding leadership position in the church today?
  - Is Paul a liberator of women of his days?

How is the Letter Read?

- What happens when the Letter reaches the 5 houses churches in Rome?
- How is the Letter read to the church?



The Flow of Argument of Romans

Flow of Romans

- 1:1-15 - Epistolary Thanksgiving
  - 1:1-7 – the anti-imperial rhetoric
  - 1:8-15 - thanksgiving

• **Nero** (according to imperial inscriptions)	• **Jesus** (according to Paul)
• Son of the divine, the deified Claudius	• Descended from the seed of David according to the flesh
• Descendant of Tiberius Caesar Augustus and Germanicus Caesar, themselves sons of the divine Augustus	• And appointed son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead.

The Arch of Titus: Showing the defeat of Jerusalem





Flow of Romans

- 1:16-18 – Thesis – the purpose of the gospel
  - Paul's gospel in summary
    - righteousness by faith for both Jews and Gentiles
    - Wrath of God for both Jews and gentiles

Flow of Romans

- 1:19-3:20 - Jews and Gentiles both under sin
  - 1:19-32 – sins of the Gentiles → "God gave them up" in 1:24, 26, 28
  - 2:1-3:8 – Jews are also guilty
  - 3:9-20 – scriptural support for the unrighteousness of all humanity

Flow of Romans

- 3:21-4:25 – Jews and Gentiles under the favour of God in Christ Jesus
  - 3:21-31 – justification by faith in Christ
    - legal metaphor, declaring not guilty (3:21-23)
    - Commercial metaphor – redemption (3:24)
    - Religious metaphor – sacrifice of atonement (3:25)
  - 4:1-25 – the example of Abraham – the faith of Abraham!

Flow of Romans

- 5:1-21 – The results of justification
  - 5:1-5 – peace with God
  - 5:6-11 – saved from God's wrath
  - 5:12-21 – this gift of salvation is for all people

Flow of Romans

- 6:1-8:39 – Sanctification through the Spirit
  - Freedom from sin (6:1-23)
    - Metaphor of Baptism (6:1-14)
    - Metaphor of slavery: Slaves of righteousness (6:15-23)
  - Freedom from law (7:1-25)
    - Metaphor of marriage (7:1-6)
    - Law and sin (7:7-25)
  - Freedom from death (8:1-39)
    - Victory is possible (8:1-11)
    - Metaphor of adoption (8:12-17)
    - Suffering and weakness (8:18-30), help of the Spirit

Flow of Romans

- 9:1-11:36 – question of Israel – why many Jews reject the gospel?
  - 9:1-29 – the frequent disobedience of Israel
  - 9:30-10:21 – they have treated the law as a means of works righteousness rather than living by faith → misuse and misunderstanding of the law
  - (evangelicals abuse of 11:14-15??)
  - 11:1-36 – this is only a temporary rejection

Flow of Romans

- 12:1-15:13 – Ethical implications of the gospel
  - 12:1-2 – the basic principle
  - 12:3-8 – using one's gifts for building up the body of Christ
  - 12:9-13:14 – exercising the gifts in love
  - 14:1-15:13 – Christian tolerance
- 15:14-33 – Travel plans
- 16:1-27 – Greetings and doxology

Some practical issues

- Homosexuality and the Christian life – 1:18-32
- The modern state of Israel
- Relationship between Christian and the State/government – 13:1-7
- Relationship in the Body of Christ – 14:1-15:13