

Overview of Rome at the time of Christ.

Rome was a proud city. We are not sure who took the gospel to Rome. I would assume that some at Jerusalem for Passover when Peter made his first speech took what they heard back to Rome.

Rome was called the Queen City of the Earth. The Center of History. They were a dominating power from the 2nd century BC to 18 AD.

The last of the Roman expansion occurred in 31 BC with Antony and Cleopatra's defeat at the hands of Augustus. From this time on, Rome's policy was one of consolidation rather than expansion.

This time in the NT stands at the point where the series of providences has been completed and the whole Mediterranean has for the first time been provided with a uniform supervisory authority.

Remember that Rome did not take over complete authority when they took over a country. Sometimes the take over was peaceful, by treaty, so the local government still had some control. However, Rome was still the central seat of power.

There were 3 main responsibilities of the Roman government in NT times:

1. Security by the military and public order. Much like our governor calling out the National Guard.
2. Concern was with revenues. It cost a lot to run a large government, pay the military, and keep peace. Rome straightened out the taxation system and placed it on an equitable census basis.
3. And most important and hardest was of their duties was jurisdiction. Both by reference from the local authorities (Acts 25: 9,10). Litigation was concentrated around the Roman Tribunals.

At the time of Paul, the whole known world was at peace. There was a system of roads, mail service and more.

Rome was founded in 753 BC. Built on 7 hills. It was a meeting place and a melting pot of people. Built on the River Tiber and easy to get to.

Rome had multistory tenement blocks, many houses with running water.

The heart of the city was an array of public buildings, never equaled in any capital.

Rome attracted literary and artistic talent from all over the world and had a great influx of food stuff and luxury goods.

The Empire extended 3,000 miles East and West, 2,000 miles North and South with a total population of 120,000,000.

We know that Paul was in Rome at least 2 years. Even though a prisoner, he was allowed to live in his own house with his guard. Acts 28:16. He was free to receive visitors and to teach Christ. Paul wrote his epistle about 3 years before he went to Rome. His 2 years there was very fruitful-reaching even into the palace (Phil 4:23). While in Rome, he wrote his prison epistles; Eph, Phil, Colos and Philemon.

Whether Paul made it to Spain or not we don't know. But if he did, he did not remain long. It's fairly certain he was back in Greece and Asia Minor about AD 65 to 67, in which he wrote to Timothy and Titus. Was re-arrested and taken back to Rome and thought to be beheaded about AD 67.

Christians in that day were not among the elite of society. They were common people and slaves. Rome had known many great philosophers and philosophies. So why would anyone pay attention to a fable about a Jewish carpenter who arose from the dead? To think of a little Jewish tentmaker going to Rome to preach such a message is almost humorous. But Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel. He had confidence in his message.

The date of the book is about 55-58 AD. Most think 58. Written in Corinth. Most think it was during Paul's third missionary journey.

One note: Paul is leaning on OT scripture. One such is Habakkuk 2:4. "Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by faith." Or faithfulness.