

The book of Romans marks an important change in Scripture. Almost everything written before Romans (in Bible order) was focused on Israel as a nation. Romans is focused on the Church, the Body of Christ. We can see this major change in God's program by comparing Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with Romans. The Gospels concern themselves with the introduction of Israel's King (Jesus Christ) and the announcement of the coming of the prophesized Kingdom. The word King or Kingdom appears 188 times in the four Gospels but only once in Romans. Grace appears 21 times in Romans.

Romans would be a hard book to understand if Acts were removed. Acts bridges from Law to Grace; from Israel to the Gentiles; from Kingdom to Body; from the 12 Disciples to the one Paul.

Paul wrote Romans on his third Missionary Journey while in Corinth. Although Romans is Paul's first book in the Bible, he actually wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Galatians and 1 & 2 Corinthians first. Logically, Romans sets the stage for the rest of Paul's writings by training the reader in the concepts of this new age of Grace. The book order seems to follow the order laid out in Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Bullinger puts it like this:

1. Romans (Doctrine and instruction concerning believers' standing and walk)
 1. Corinthians (Reproof concerning practical departure from Romans)
 2. Galatians (Correction concerning doctrinal departure from Romans)
2. Ephesians (Doctrine and instruction concerning what believers are in Christ, and what Christ is to them)
 1. Philippians (Reproof concerning practical departure from Ephesians)
 2. Colossians (Correction concerning doctrinal departure from Ephesians)
3. Thessalonians (Doctrine and instruction regarding the Lord's return)

Overview

Romans is written as a lawyer would present his case in a court of law. Paul first shows the hopelessness of man by showing we are all guilty before God. He then gives mankind hope by pointing to the only way to God—Jesus Christ. Those who believe are justified and declared righteous. Paul then encourages those declared righteous to now act like they are.

General outline

1. Condemnation of man (Romans 1:18—3:20)
Man is hopelessly lost (Who we are without Christ)
2. Salvation of man (Romans 3:21—8:39)
Christ is the only answer (Who we are in Christ)
3. Vindication of God (Romans 9:1—11:36)
The casting away of Israel
4. Exhortation of man (Romans 12:1—15:33)
Reflecting who we are in Christ. (Who we should be in Christ—practical application)

This section is parenthetical, justifying God's casting away of Israel.

Romans 1:1—7

- There are a couple of parenthesis in this section. It could be broken down like this:

1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,

3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Verse 1

- Paul very clearly and succinctly tells his readers his position in relation to Christ. He first puts himself as a slave (Greek: δουλοσ – doulou) then declares his apostleship given to him by Jesus Christ.
 - *Doulos* indicates a position of permanent servitude to another, a position of one completely consumed by another person's wishes. This is the strongest Greek word of the six that denote servitude.
 - Jesus Christ made himself a slave to the Father according to Philippians 2:7.
- Interestingly, Paul is the one who put himself in that position of servitude to Jesus Christ and is possibly related to his understanding of God's love.

2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ controls (constrains, squeezes) us...

In contrast to this, Israel is also a slave to God but it is God who has given her that position.

Matthew 25: 23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Leviticus 25:42 Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves.

Is 41:8—9 ⁸"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, ⁹You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.

Is 43:10 "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.

- I believe this shows a change in God's dealing with mankind. Israel was always given a subservient role. She is called servant, bride, whore, and a subject of the King. We, on the other hand, are co-heirs with Christ, called the Body of Christ. We are considered to be at the same level as Christ. Amazing!
- Paul's role as an Apostle is reaffirmed at least 22 times in his writings. His apostleship also seemed to be accepted by Peter (leader of the 12 Disciples) as evidenced by Peter submitting to Paul's rebuke of Peter's actions at Antioch (Galatians 2). Peter also accepts Paul's writings as scripture and admits they are difficult to understand. We can see throughout Acts that Peter's role diminishes to nothing while Paul's ministry increases. Peter recognizes that God is now working through the one man, Paul instead of the 12 Disciples and Israel.

To claim the position of Apostle, it was necessary to have seen the Lord. Although Paul never met Jesus on earth, he met Him after being glorified. He was not just called an Apostle, he was called to be an Apostle by Jesus Christ. This happened on the road to Damascus and at that time was given his commission.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

Acts 26:16 But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

- Paul’s calling was to spread the Gospel of God. This term is generic in nature and can refer to whatever good news is coming from God. The Gospel of God in Mark 1:14 was preached by Jesus but we know Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 9:35). In this case the Gospel of God was specifically the Gospel of the Kingdom. Paul also preaches the Gospel of God (Romans 1:1; 15:16) but he specifies his gospel as the Gospel of the Grace of God in Acts 20:24. He was never entrusted with the Gospel of the Kingdom. I believe “Paul’s gospel” is also the same as the Gospel of Christ. This term is found only in Paul’s writings.

Verse 2

- This verse seems to leave the door open to Paul’s Gospel having been revealed in the Old Testament. If this were the case then the Mystery was not revealed exclusively to Paul and when Paul says:

Romans 16:25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

Ephesians 3:9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Colossians 1:26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

he must not have understood that “his gospel” was not really a mystery but had been at least partially revealed.

Actually, this good news about a Savior was revealed from ages past with the first hint in Genesis 3:15. The idea of a Savior dying for sins is found in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. This Old Testament good news was concerning the coming Savior which was good news for all mankind. Paul’s gospel was revealed to him and him alone as part of the Mystery. Verse 3 clearly indicates the gospel revealed in the Old Testament concerns the Son and does not indicate a partial revelation of the Mystery revealed to Paul.

Verses 3—4

- Jesus Christ is human (Son of man) as proved by his being descended from King David and Deity (Son of God). Those to whom the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached (Israel) knew Jesus in the flesh as the descendant of David. Paul and we in the Body of Christ know Jesus Christ as the risen and glorified Son of God. This is yet another indication of a change in God’s dealings with mankind.

2 Corinthians 5:16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

The proof of who Jesus was is wrapped up in the resurrection. Anyone can be put to death but it is only God who is able to raise someone up and give them a new body. We who are in Christ have this same hope. We will experience the power of God in our resurrection as we are changed to be like Christ.

Romans 6:5 if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Verse 5

- Paul once again affirms his God-given office of Apostle. Many don’t recognize Paul’s authority or his distinct message. Many feel that Paul should have been the 12th Disciple chosen in Acts 1 and that they were out of God’s will by choosing Matthias. This in spite of Scripture clearly stating that it was all done under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:24) and later were ALL filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1—4) indicating that they were not outside of God’s will in this selection of a replacement

Apostle. It is also obvious that Paul did not qualify for that position because he had not been with the Lord from the beginning. He wasn't even saved when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas. It was important for them to have 12 Disciples because the last days of prophesy concerning Israel were beginning (Acts 2:17) and the 12 Disciples were needed to sit on 12 thrones ruling in the coming Kingdom (Matthew 19:28).

Verses 6—7

- As Paul was called by Christ, all believers are called. If there is no call, there is no change of heart. One who is called is one who is saved. This, of course, ties in with election. There are many who think God set everything up for man to be saved and it was up to man to see his need and reach out to God. I believe that God set everything up for our salvation and then turned the heart of man to make it possible for him to believe and be saved. The whole process is God driven. God did not leave it up to man but was Himself actively involved in the process from the beginning to the end. This may become more apparent as we work our way through the first few chapters of Romans and see what the condition of man's heart is without Christ.

Romans 8:29—30 ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

The results of the call change when we go back into the Gospels. There is a general call but no guarantee of a response.

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

- Those in Rome and all believers are saints. The NASB says they are called as saints but the word "as" was added by the translators and is not in the original Greek. All believers are saints. That position is not dependant upon good works and miracles and the declaration of a church to make a person a saint.

The term saint has the idea of being set apart from the world and for God's purpose only. We are reserved to please God and to be used by Him in any way He desires. It is the idea of holiness. Jesus Christ is our example of perfect holiness. He only did the will of the Father and never anything to please himself.

Philippians 2:5—8 ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- The phrase "grace and peace" is repeated 13 times, once in each of Paul's epistles. This phrase seems to go beyond just a pleasant greeting but related to this new dispensation revealed through Paul. Under Kingdom preaching (beginning with John and continuing into early Acts) was announced the coming Kingdom. The next step in the prophetic timeline was the seven-year Tribulation followed by the Second coming and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. With national Israel's rejection of the Kingdom came a change in God's plans (From our view it appeared to be a change. From God's view, it was planned from eternity past. See Ephesians 1:4). Instead of God's wrath being poured out on the world God's grace was demonstrated by a declaration of peace. Because of the work of Christ on the cross we can now have peace with the Father and peace between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14). God's imminent judgment on the world was temporally averted and mankind was given more time to decide to follow Christ.

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