

THE BIG READ (6)

Jesus in Romans

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The New Testament begins with the four Gospels that tell the story of Jesus’ earthly life, and Acts which traces the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

The remainder of the New Testament is made up of epistles or letters that were sent to individual Christians or churches.

These letters address specific situations in the lives of believers and through them we are taught how to live as God’s people.

3. Thirteen of the New Testament letters were written by the apostle Paul.

Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

The letters are not arranged according to the date that they were written (Galatians was probably the first of these letters to be written).

The letters are arranged by their destination and length – the letters to the churches come first, followed by the letters to individuals, with the longest (more or less) of each coming first.

Romans is the first and the longest and the most important of Paul’s letters – containing the clearest presentation of the gospel.

Paul dictated this letter to a scribe called Tertius while he was in Corinth in AD57.

“I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.” (Romans 16:22)

4. What has been said about Romans?

Martin Luther: *“This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is the purest Gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”*

John Calvin: *“If we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture.”*

William Tyndale: *“the most excellent part of the New Testament.”*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *“a colossal and incomparable statement of Christian faith.”*

J.I. Packer: *“the high peak of the Bible.”*

John Stott: "the fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the gospel to be found anywhere in the New Testament."

F. F. Bruce: "There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study Romans."

John Piper: "the greatest letter ever written."

B. Why did Paul write this letter?

1. There was a church in Rome soon after the Day of Pentecost – Jews converted on that day took the gospel back with them to Rome.

"Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:9-11)

2. Paul was a stranger to the church in Rome having never visited the church (although Romans 16:3-16 makes it clear that he knew some people in the church).

"I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles." (Romans 1:13)

"This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you." (Romans 15:22)

3. But he was now planning to visit the church on the way to Spain, the destination of his next mission trip.

"But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while." (Romans 15:23-24)

Paul is hoping that the church in Rome will help him by providing support for this trip.

Before this mission trip could begin, Paul needed to take a collection for the poor at the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-32).



"and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:24-26)

Chapters 5:1-8:39: How the gospel assures us and changes us

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:18-19)

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called, those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:28-30)

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Romans 6:1-2)

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" (Romans 6:15)

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Romans 8:9)

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15)

"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25)

Chapters 9:1-11:36: How God is still faithful to His promises to Israel

"It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." (Romans 9:6)

"It is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring." (Romans 9:8)

"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the 'stumbling-stone'." (Romans 9:30-32)

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

"For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" (Romans 10:13)

"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew." (Romans 11:1-2)

"What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did." (Romans 11:7)

"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." (Romans 11:11)

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches." (Romans 11:17-18)

"Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness, Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." (Romans 11:22-23)

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:25-26)

Chapters 12:1-15:13: How we live in response to the gospel

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

D. Jesus in Romans

1. Jesus is most gloriously revealed in a section of Romans that has been described as "*possibly the most important single paragraph ever written.*"

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26)

2. Jesus is our righteousness

"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify." (Romans 3:21)

Jesus makes it possible for people who are unrighteous to be called righteous.

It is because of Jesus that we can be declared righteous.

Image 1: The Law Courts – Our Justification

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace."

We are in the docks expecting a guilty verdict, but to our surprise we are declared to be 'not guilty' – we are justified.

The reason is that Jesus lived a perfect and righteous life – He never sinned and had no guilt before God.

When He died on the cross a double transfer took place: our sin and guilt was transferred to Jesus and God declared Him "Guilty" and He received the punishment we deserved; at the same time Jesus' own righteousness was transferred to us, so God declares us "Not guilty".

Image 2: The Slave Market – Our Redemption

“through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24)

We are slaves to sin.

God shows His love for us by paying the price to free us from slavery to sin's power by handing over His Son to shed His precious blood for us.

Image 3: The Temple – Our Propitiation

“whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood.” (Romans 3:25 ESV)

We deserve God's anger and wrath because of our sin, but someone has died violently, and as a result God's anger and wrath towards us has been satisfied.

On the cross Jesus is punished for our sin and God's wrath toward us is diverted to Him until it was satisfied.

The result of this is that God is just because the punishment the sins of the people He declares righteous has been unleashed on Jesus, and for those who are not saved by Him, they will be punished for their sins in hell.

3. Jesus is only our righteousness if we have put our faith in Him.

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 3:22)

“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.” (Romans 3:25)

“...so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26)

E. Conclusion

1. Put your faith in the gospel.

It really does save people.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16)

2. Live lives worthy of the gospel.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)

3. Support the work of the gospel.

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.” (Romans 15:23-24)

ⁱ Map taken from Visual Unit (<http://visualunit.me/2012/06/09/romans-map-simplified/>)