

ROMANS: ORIGIN, DATE, AND DESTINATION

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I. Origin

Paul wrote Romans after the acquaintances previously known from elsewhere had moved to the imperial city (16:3-16), after he had preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:19, cp. 23), while he was in route to Jerusalem with the offering for the saints (Romans 15:25-28, 31), and at a time when he anticipated preaching the gospel in Spain (15:24, 28-29). According to Acts 19:21-22, while Paul was still in Ephesus on the third tour, he planned to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. On this third tour, Paul organized the collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (cp. Acts 20:4; 21:15; 1 Corinthians 16:1-9; 2 Corinthians 8-9). Having left Ephesus after the riot, Paul journeyed north through Troas, across through Macedonia, and down to Greece (20:1-6) before returning through Macedonia and down the east coast of the Aegean Sea to Miletus and on to Palestine. He had not planned to minister again in Asia (Acts 20:25, 38). His three-month stay in Corinth during this trip would have given him time to compose Romans.

In Romans 16:1, Paul calls Phoebe “*our sister . . . in Cenchrea*,” implying that she was nearby at the time of writing. Cenchrea lay across the narrow isthmus from Corinth. Phoebe’s proposed trip to Rome may have provided the occasion for Paul to write to Christians he had wanted to see for so long.

II. Date

The date of writing Romans depends on the date for Paul’s third journey. He wrote the epistle then somewhere between A.D. 55 and 57.

III. Destination

In Rome (ἐν Ρώμῃ) is omitted at 1:7 and 15 in a few sources. In 1:7 it is omitted from Gg, Origen, and minuscules 1739 and 1908. The destination is omitted from Gg in 1:7. Consequently, in only one manuscript, the bilingual Gg, are the destination notes omitted altogether. Since all manuscripts except Gg contain indications of destination, there is no problem about where the epistle was originally sent, whatever may be said for circulation theories that attempt to account for the shorter forms of the epistle. Those theories pertain only to the last two chapters.

The reason *in Rome* is omitted in 1:7 from Origen and the two minuscules is unintentional error in copying. With Gg the question is more difficult, because only a deliberate act would seem to account for leaving out both references to destination.