

Was Peter ever in Rome?

The Bible does not explicitly mention Peter going to Rome in either the book of Acts or the Epistles. The closest biblical reference is found in the final greetings of 1 Peter, "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark" (1 Peter 5:13).

Some scholars have suggested that "Babylon" was a code name for Rome, and Peter used it to avoid persecution or to emphasize the similarities between the two empires. The book of Revelation also mentions Babylon, and a common interpretation likens it to Rome (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2).

Christian tradition is the biggest source of Peter's alleged trip to Rome, originating from the early church fathers. An example is Irenaeus of Lyons, who wrote in Against Heresies, "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church" (3.1.2). Later in the same volume, Irenaeus spoke of "tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul" (3.3.2). We note here that these passages are from an unreliable fourth-century translation and contain at least one error: Paul could not have founded the church in Rome because that church was already in existence many years before Paul ever visited Rome (Romans 15:23).

Others point to Ignatius of Antioch as providing a clue that Peter preached in Rome. In his Letter to the Romans, Ignatius wrote, "I do not enjoin you, as Peter and Paul did. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am a slave to this very hour" (4:3). But note that there's no statement here that Peter was physically in Rome;

Ignatius only says that Peter issued commands—it does not say he issued those commands from Rome.

According to church tradition, Peter was martyred in Rome under the rule of Emperor Nero, one of the most notorious persecutors of Christians. Church fathers such as Tertullian, Origen, Clement, and Dionysus reference the crucifixion of Peter. Additionally, the historian Eusebius writes about it in his work Ecclesiastical History (c. AD 324). The popular belief that Peter was crucified upside down came from the apocryphal Acts of Peter, but it carries less weight.

Considering the support from early church fathers, one can reasonably conclude that Peter was martyred in Rome. The idea that Peter lived and worked in Rome or was crucified upside down carries limited historical weight.