

Romans

The Book Of Romans is widely thought of as one of the most hard to understand biblical texts - if my own experience is anything to go by then it definitely is, as I have read it many many times, and nearly always found myself getting tied in knots trying to work out what Paul is saying. But I am sure it is not really quite as difficult as it seems. The really tricky parts, in my view, are the first two chapters, and chapters 7-9. So I am going to go through them with my annotations, and.....see if you agree with me or not.

I am no expert on translations, I use the KJV, the NKJV and the NRSV. I particularly like the NRSV for Romans because it translates certain words in the Greek more accurately. Specifically, 'Hellas' and 'Ethnos'. The website blueletterbible.com has an excellent Greek reference text. I do not really understand why so many bible translations muddy the waters by translating 'Hellas' and 'Ethnos' so imprecisely. 'Hellas' means Greek, and 'Ethnos' means nations, in the sense of the nations of the world outside of historical Judea. The KJV for instance substitutes 'nations' with 'gentiles', which is partially admissible, as long as we remember that the vast majority of the House of Israel was scattered amongst the nations, and therefore gentiles does not mean non-Israelites, and often confoundedly translates 'Hellas' as gentiles. Confused? Small wonder. Look, it is not for the translators to add meanings, (and much confusion), to Paul's writings. I understand 'Hellas' to mean, strictly, Greek, and 'Ethnos' should be translated as nations, then there is no confusion at all, and it is from this basis I work; the NRSV also sticks to the actual meaning of Paul's words, without interpolation, and serves as a very good foundation text. The main thing is to have access to the original Greek text at all times. The irony of a text written in Greek, where the word for Greek is translated in the preponderance of translations as something quite other than Greek should not be lost on us! It is actually a double irony, as the question of literacy and learning, as denoted by 'Hellas', is at the heart of what Paul is telling us, and this meaning too is lost for us, thrown away by the highly literate and learned translators.....

This is not intended as an exhaustive verse by verse study. I find such studies tedious. Most of us can read, and if people have trouble with the 'bits in between' I am happy to try and answer questions. The areas I focus on are those I regard as the most obscure or complex, the most frequently misunderstood, and those that I think convey the central themes and are critical to the overall thrust of Paul's message. In my estimation, principally the first two chapters, and chapters 7-9 cause the most difficulty. Once you have the central themes, and the tough bits under control, the rest is more likely to fall into place. The Word of God needs to speak to us all individually - What do you prefer, a blended up pap, or to chew your own food? I am just here to open some difficult oysters. Too much commentary just gets between you the reader and God. Think of Romans like one huge IKEA flat pack, if you like, and once you've got the superstructure correctly in place, the rest tends to slot in automatically.

The historical record I work with, based largely on Dr Stephen Jones and Matthew McGee's work, is this (these dates are generally universally accepted to within a year or two anyhow):

Living Word Ministries

Exploring God's Word through studies and open discussion
<http://biblecommentary.college>

Jesus was crucified in AD 33

Establishment of Church in Rome AD 33 - 34

Stoning of Stephen and great Jerusalem persecution AD 35

Paul's conversion AD 37

Paul's letter to the Romans AD 57 - 58

Significant Facts:

House Of Judah - the tribes of Benjamin and Judah

House Of Israel - the other 10 tribes.

Israel - depends on context...