

Paul's New Testament epistle to the Romans

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Acts and Romans follow on -:

A rhyme that I remember from my Sunday school days - Paul's third and final missionary journey need not to have taken place other than to speak to and support the small group of Christians resident in Rome, the capital city of the great Roman empire then at the height of its power and dominance. Paul did not intend to travel to Rome, at least at this time, but after being imprisoned by Agrippa, the Roman puppet king, Paul appealed at his subsequent trial to be tried by the Roman emperor, as was his right as a Roman citizen. Hence a long sea journey taken in the autumn when the sea conditions were treacherous via Cyprus and eventually Malta.

It was on a Maltese island, appropriately named now St. Paul's bay, that the ship was wrecked. While the sailors and soldiers lit a fire to dry out, Paul was bitten by a snake; he unexpectedly survived, the first of several miracles in Malta. Paul stayed for 3 months on Malta during which much of his preaching took place in the catacombs before departing for Rome for his hearing before the emperor.

Before this took place, however, he made contact with the small local community of Christians. His message was one of reconciliation with the Jews, unfolding the gospel message that Jesus had died for all who had faith in Jesus and his death on the cross, the cross of shame which was to become the cross of glory and triumph.

Sadly before Paul's hearing before the emperor he was martyred by beheading. Paul's letter to the Romans is considered to principally be one of reconciliation.

The letter to the Romans, I would say, is one of reconciliation for today too, among Christians of differing traditions, putting to the world the message of love and respect for all.

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