

HOW DID CHRISTIANITY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD?

The time came to fulfill the prophecy of David the Prophet and the King about the miraculous spread of Christianity through the work of the Apostles supported by the Holy Spirit “*Yet their message goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth. Psalm 19:4*”. So Eusebious, the Historian, saw the spread of Christianity all over the world fulfilled this prophecy. All the Apostles sacrificed themselves to fulfill the Lord’s request for them to go everywhere in the world preaching and teaching (Mark 16:15). The Holy Spirit was their leader and was working in and through them as mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts 13:1&2 and 16:6-10.

We can divide our Apostles into three groups in addition to St. Paul regarding their field of preaching. **The first group includes St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. Matthew and St. Bartholomew.** St. Peter preached in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). St. Andrew preached in Scythia (Russia and so he is the intercessor of the Russian Church), Besporan Kingdom and the Barbarian Lands to the east of the Black Sea (Now within Russia), Turkey and Sebastopolis, Colchis, Apsaros, Trebizond, Amasia, Nicea, Nikomidea to the south of the Black Sea and finally he attained the crown of martyrdom in Greece. St. Bartholomew preached in the Besporan Kingdom, India, Yemen, and Armenia. St. Matthew preached in Persia and Ethiopia.

The second group includes St. Thomas, St. Thaddeus, and St. Simon the Patriot. St. Thomas preached in Odessa, and India. St. Thaddeus preached in Bakr Lands (Iraq) and Odessa where he healed her king Abgr. St. Simon preached in Babylonia, and Syria. **The third group includes St. John and St. Philip** where they preached in Asia Minor. **St. Paul** preached in Damascus, Syria, Tarsus, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor in Antioch of Pasadena, Derba, Galatia, Ephesus, Greece in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Peria, and in Western Europe in Italy and Spain and finally attained his crown of martyrdom in Rome (Romans 15:19-24, 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 11:32).

It is certainly true that the main factor in the spreading of Christianity was the work of the Holy Spirit but there were some factors which facilitated the work of the Apostles in their preaching which included the Jews were everywhere with the same Old Testament, the same belief about the true living God, one international language “Greek”, one international state “the Roman Empire” which offered peace and roads for traveling and security in sailing and finally the most common philosophy of that time that all peoples are one united.

The Apostles preached everywhere and all the time taking every opportunity for preaching the Holy Gospel. They preached in synagogues (Acts 9:20, 13:5, 14:1, 17:1, 10, 17, 18:4, 19, 19:8), in every house (Acts 18:7, 20:7, 20:20, 28:17-31), schools (Acts 19:9&10), courts and places of governors (Acts 13:7, 24:24&25, 26:28), in jail (Acts 16), markets and public places (Acts 17:17-19), on rivers banks (Acts 16:13), and on Roman campus (Acts 21:40 and 22:1-21). They preached at every opportunity as St Paul taught his disciple St. Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2).

The main factor in the success of the Apostles’ preaching was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who led them in every step. He was the One who called for preaching (Acts 13:2), He taught the servants and spoke using their tongues (Acts 4:7-12), He determined the field and places of preaching for them as He would lead them to certain places and stop before others (Acts 8:26-29, 10:19-20, 11:6-10), He used to move them from one place to another (Acts 8:39&40), performing miracles (Acts 5:9-10, 13: 19-11) and led them in every decision as in Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28).

Concerning the relation of the Church of the Apostles and the state can be summarized as follow: Christianity came from Judaism and in the beginning it was considered as one of the Jewish denominations. The Roman Empire considered Judaism as one of the official religions and so Christianity had advantages from this acceptance until Romans realized it was actually a new religion then they began to persecute Christianity. It is not commonly known the exact time that Christianity reached Rome; however, the Holy Book of Acts mentioned attendance of Romans in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was established and so it is most probable those were the founder of the Church in Rome. Also, St Paul stated that some of his relatives were converted to Christianity before him (Romans 16). The first non-biblical evidence of Christianity in Rome was mentioned by the pagan historian Suetonius (52 AD) in his discourse concerning the exile of Jews by the Emperor Nero because of the argument with Christians about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of Nero, Christians were well known throughout the Roman Empire. Nero persecuted Christians and accused them of being responsible for burning and setting fire of Rome which began on July 18, 64 AD and continued for 7 days where 10 districts of its 14 districts were completely burned to the ground and destroyed. Following this burning, persecution began where thousands of believers were martyred by fire, and beheaded after severe torture and pain. The most famous of the martyrs in Nero's time were St. Peter and St. Paul. Most historians attribute Nero was responsible for their deaths. Many waves of persecution began and continued throughout all the states of the Roman Empire. Following Nero's example, the emperors Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus continued persecution of Christians and thousands of believers were martyred in their times. At the end of the Apostolic Age was a great persecution by Domitian (81-96 AD) who killed thousands of believers, among them his counselor Flavius Clements and exiled others such as Domitilla, Clemens' wife. Domitian was the emperor who persecuted St. John and exiled him to Patmos where he saw his Revelation and wrote the Holy Book of Revelation (1:1). After, Domitian, Nerva came to the authority in Rome (96-98) and he refused considering Christianity as a political crime, and returned exiles but he did not consider Christianity as an official allowable religion for the Romans and the Roman Empire.