

Acts to Revelation
The World of the First Christians

Session 15 – The Martyrdom of Paul and Peter

Session Summary – Persecution was heating up for the Christians in the entire Mediterranean region. The Book of Acts ends with Paul awaiting his trial before the Roman Emperor. We will investigate Nero’s burning of Rome in 64AD, and the final days of Paul and Peter and their ultimate deaths for the Christian faith. We will visit some of the most famous churches in Rome, which honor the legacies of these two important leaders. Despite being illegal, Christianity spread in Rome, especially in the homes of wealthy Romans. We will visit a church built over one of the oldest house churches ever discovered.

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

– 2 Timothy 4:6-9

Church of Santa Pudenziana – after Peter & Paul died, the Roman followers of Jesus continued to meet in the homes of wealthy Christians. In his final letter to Timothy, Paul mentioned one of these churches meeting at the house of Pudens. Pudens is thought to have been the son of Senator Quintus Cornelius Pudens; the church would have met at the family villa, or domus. In the 4th century, the Church of Santa Pudenziana was built over an earlier house church, which dates back to at least 140AD; it is recognized as the oldest Christian church in Rome. Recent evidence indicates the building may have been the actual house of the Roman Christian Pudens.

Scripture Reading: The Book of Hebrews

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is the traditional tomb of Peter located in Rome?
2. What was the Tullianum in Rome?
3. Where is the traditional tomb of Paul located in Rome?
4. Do we know who wrote the Book of Hebrews?
5. What Roman leader was ultimately responsible for destroying the Temple in Jerusalem?

Scripture for Next Week: John 1,2,3 and Revelation 1