

confirmed the believers there in the faith and practice of the early Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, and from thence he took his journey through Corinth and on south east through the Asiatic Provinces to Babylon, from whence he wrote his first epistle to the believers dispersed in the provinces of Asia-Minor.

The first believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures, returned to Rome while Tiberius still reigned. Peter's visit to that city was, as may be inferred from the Acts, and according to Eusebius in the reign of Claudius, while Paul did not enter the imperial city until Nero was some years on the throne, a period of over twenty years after the martyrdom of Jesus. And the return of Aquilla and Priscilla, who were with other foreign Jews, expelled from Rome in the reign of Claudius, could not take place till after the death of that monarch, which occurred in A. D. 54. But as we progress onward we will see that there are good reasons to believe that Matthew's Gospel was written a number of years before that time, and copies of it were in possession of both Peter and Paul and others of the apostolic missionaries when they went forth from Palestine to preach the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel among all nations. Jesus had commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel among all people, and he told them that they should be his witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, but also to the uttermost parts of the earth, and in carrying out

this commission there is historical testimony that some of them went beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire wherever there were large settlements of Jews or Children of Israel, for it was to these wanderers that the mission of "the twelve" was chiefly directed, and it is calculated that at that time there were some sixty thousand Jews in Rome, besides great numbers in other parts of Italy. Hence this region was most likely to be among the first places visited by some of the Apostles, and in missionary enterprises Peter took a leading part.

At the time (towards the close of the second century) when Irenaeus made the statement under consideration, the descendants of the parties in Rome, who at first claimed the leadership of Peter and Paul, had long been united under one bishop, hence would naturally claim both those teachers as their founders, and Irenaeus for obvious reasons was very anxious that these claims should be established, but as they were not in Rome at the same time, and there was evidently a number of years between the time when their respective followers formed communities in that city, the testimony of Irenaeus gives no positive date as to when Matthew's Hebrew Gospel was written, except that its origin was early and that it was the first of the synoptics. But it may be safely assumed that when the Nazarene faith had been fully proclaimed in Palestine and in the neighboring countries, and when the parent congregation of Jerusalem had been firmly established under the leadership of James the brother of Jesus,