The Gospel Comes to ITALY

The New Testament in the Ancient Roman World

April 12 – 22, 2027

Led by Dr. Jeffrey A. D. Weima

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Walk in the footsteps of the earliest Christians during the day and study the life and letters of the apostles Paul and Peter at night!

Travel by deluxe motorcoach to biblical and other ancient sites in Italy that provide an important window into the Roman world experienced by first-century followers of Jesus.

Highlights include visits to the Vatican with its Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Cathedral, the impressive monuments of ancient Rome (Colosseum, Arch of Constantine, Arch of Titus, Forum, Catacombs, Pantheon, Altar of Peace, and Mamertine Prison where according to tradition Paul and Peter were held), the ancient harbor city of Ostia, Hadrian's Villa, the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum preserved by Mt. Vesuvius' eruption, and Paestum with its two best intact Greek temples anywhere. Enjoy the scenic drive around the Amalfi Coast—one of most spectacular routes in the world.

Most evenings feature a study session that deals with the ministries of the apostles Paul and Peter. Join host Jeff Weima, professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary and leading biblical scholar, for this inspirational tour.

TOUR COST

$6,375 per person from Chicago, based on double occupancy.

Other departure cities available upon request.

Round-trip van or bus transfers from West Michigan to Chicago O'Hare will be made available at an additional cost of $190 per person, provided there is sufficient interest.

REGISTER ONLINE AT

bookings.wittetravel.com

use booking code 041227WEIM

or complete and return the printed registration form.

EARLY REGISTRATION IS ENCOURAGED!

LED BY

Dr. Jeffrey Weima is a Professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, where he has taught for the past 34 years. He is a sought-after speaker who is able to

communicate well the truths of the Bible in an interesting, contemporary, and practical manner. Jeff is the author of numerous scholarly articles, academic essays, and book reviews. He has published six books, including an award-winning commentary on the seven letters to the churches of Revelation. Jeff is an active member of several academic societies, and he lectures and teaches courses around the world, leads biblical study tours, conducts intensive preaching seminars for pastors, and preaches widely in churches in both the USA and Canada. Jeff and his wife, Bernice, have been married for 43 years. They have four children and 12 very cute grandchildren. This will be Dr. Weima's 49th time leading a biblical study tour.

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APRIL 2027
Monday, April 12

Departure

Our inspirational tour begins! Before it is possible to follow in the footsteps of the apostles Paul and Peter, we must first travel to Italy. We gather in Chicago for our transatlantic flight to Europe *(other departure cities available upon request)*. (D in-flight)

Tuesday, April 13

Arrive in Naples, Pompeii

Welcome to Italy! We arrive in Naples, where we meet our tour manager and board the waiting motorcoach for a short drive south to Pompeii, our "home base" for the next four nights. After checking in, the afternoon is free either to relax at our comfortable hotel or explore the small town of Pompeii. We end the day with a brief orientation session and a delicious evening meal. (B-in flight, D)

Inclusions:

- Flights from Chicago to Naples and returning from Rome (other departure cities available upon request)
- Land transportation by deluxe, air-conditioned motorcoach
- Accommodation for nine nights in standard first-class hotels
- Breakfast daily and eight dinners
- Professional tour manager to accompany the group throughout
- Sightseeing and admission fees in accordance with the itinerary
- Use of personal headsets
- Extensive study materials

Tour Pace

ACTIVE – Travelers considering this tour must be aware of existing challenges in Italy for those with mobility, balance, and respiratory issues. While picturesque landscapes and cultural experiences await, navigating cobblestone streets, uneven terrain and narrow pathways pose difficulties. **Passengers who require any mobility device, must be accompanied by a physically able companion who enables them to keep pace with walking tours on this trip.** Taxis or other transportation used to "catch up" to the group are at the passenger's expense. Activity levels vary from day-to-day. Sightseeing is often a brisk walk ranging from two to four miles each day on uneven ground. Your safety and comfort are our top priorities. We are committed to ensuring an inclusive and enjoyable experience for all travelers.

❶ Vineyard in Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius
Cover: Paestum

Wednesday, April 14

Paestum, Herculaneum, Pompeii

Our first full day begins with about an hour's drive south to the ancient city of Paestum or Poseidonia (in honor of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea). This city was founded in the 6th century BC by Greek settlers as part of the Magna Graecia ("Greater Greece") and fell under Roman control in 273 BC when it became an important trading port in the Roman Empire. The ancient ruins introduce us well to buildings typically found in a Greco-Roman city: the large Forum (open marketplace 1100 x 1000 feet), the Macellum (meat market), a small amphitheater, the Ekklesiasterion (a circular administrative building), and various religious buildings such as the Asclepieon (temple to the god of healing), Temple of Peace, and Sanctuary of Fortuna Virilis (temple of manly luck). The most impressive structures by far, however, include the three Greek temples built during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. These temples, which are dedicated to Athena (goddess of wisdom), Hera (the wife of Zeus), and Poseidon (the patron god of the city), are among the best-preserved sanctuaries from the ancient world. The ancient site also houses a museum that displays many fine objects from excavations in the area, including the famous "Tomb of the Diver" paintings. After time for an independent lunch, we drive back to Pompeii to visit the ancient city of Herculaneum, which was also destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. This city was buried not with 15-20 feet of volcanic ash (as happened to Pompeii), but with 60 feet of boiling mud that solidified into rock. The ruins here, though small by comparison with the ancient city of Pompeii, are most impressive and provide important images about everyday life in the world of the New Testament. We end the day back at our hotel for our first full study session and dinner. (B, D)

Thursday, April 15

Mt. Vesuvius, Pompeii

We spend the first and major part of our day on a fascinating tour of Cittá Morta—the Dead City. Buried by ash from Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79, Pompeii offers a unique opportunity to go back in time 2,000 years and get a very clear picture of what life was like in New Testament times. Some of the impressive things we see include: paved city streets laid out carefully in the Hippodamian grid plan; a theater where 5,000 people could watch Greek and Roman plays; an amphitheater which seats all the 20,000 citizens of the city who enjoyed here the gladiator fights; the palaestra—the large, open and columned courtyard where the gladiators and other athletes would exercise; public baths with their three pools of cold, lukewarm, and hot water; and the Forum—the political, commercial and religious center of the city with its municipal buildings, marketplace, and temples. Many homes of the wealthy are also well-preserved with their impressive courtyards, gardens, and mosaics. Perhaps most memorable, however, are the plaster casts of the bodies of those citizens who failed to escape and perished along with the city. After our visit to this extraordinary ancient site, we head to a winery at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius to enjoy a wine tasting. We then return to our hotel for another study session and a nourishing dinner. (B, D)

Friday, April 16

Amalfi Coast, Pompeii

Our exciting day consists of an amazing drive along the rugged and spectacular Amalfi Coast that ranks among the most scenic drives in the world. Since our large tour bus is not allowed on this winding, narrow road, we take a smaller bus to make brief stops in the historic resort towns of Positano and Amalfi, along with a scenic boat ride from Amalfi to Maiori. There is ample free time to wander the steep, winding, quaint streets of these coastal towns. Our day includes a stop

to sample limoncello, Italy's vibrant lemon liqueur, and we return to our hotel for another optional study session and evening meal. (B, D)

Saturday, April 17

Naples, Pozzuoli (Puteoli), Rome

We get an early start today with a drive to Naples for a guided tour of the National Archaeological Museum, one of the most impressive museums of antiquities in the world. It is of prime importance for the study of Greek and Roman sculpture but also houses a remarkable collection of artifacts recovered from the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. A short drive to the west brings us to the ancient seaport of Pozzuoli (or Puteoli)—the main harbor for the faraway city of Rome. The apostle Paul landed at this port on his prison journey to Rome and spent one week here with local Christians (Acts 28:13-14). Among the Roman remains here is the third-largest amphitheater and the ruins of the Serapeum, which is not, as the name suggests, a temple to the Egyptian god Serapis, but a macellum or meat-market. After lunch, we begin our journey to Rome. As we pass by the nearby city of Capua, we tell the story of Spartacus, who led a three-year revolt of some 100,000 slaves before finally being defeated. Capua was not only the place where Spartacus started the slave revolt, but it also marked the spot where 6,000 captured slaves were crucified at the end of the revolt on crosses every 100 feet along the entire 125-mile highway (Via Appia) leading to Rome. We parallel this ancient highway in our drive to Rome, the "Eternal City," where we spend the next five nights. (B, D)

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Sunday, April 18

Rome

Today involves a walking tour of the most important monuments from the Roman period. The Colosseum is the largest amphitheater in the ancient world (the date and time of this visit are subject to availability). One of the most recognizable buildings of Rome, it was once the scene of gladiatorial contests, mock naval battles, and fights pitting men against animals. We walk next to the Arch of Constantine, then the Arch of Titus, and finally through the Roman Forum. This commercial, political, and religious center was originally constructed some 2,500 years ago. Yet the ancient Senate, temples, basilicas, and triumphal arches are still impressive today. Exiting the Forum, we stop briefly for a view of the Mamertine Prison, the most ancient prison in the city. According to Christian tradition, both the apostle Peter and Paul were imprisoned here. Our visit to the Roman Forum ends at the smallest of Rome's seven hills but its most important: the Capitoline (Capitol) Hill. Here once stood the Temple of Jupiter, of which only the foundations remain, and it is now crowned with several modern buildings. After our independent lunch break, we have one more important monument of the Roman Empire to visit: the Ara Pacis ("Altar of Peace"). Originally built in 13 BC to commemorate the peace that Augustus established within the Empire, this altar was marvelously reconstructed in 1937-1938 and is housed in a beautiful new museum built in 2006. It is extremely important for understanding how the Roman Empire aggressively marketed itself as the provider of peace—the "Pax Romana." The Altar of Peace is located directly adjacent to another impressive ancient monument – the Mausoleum of Augustus, built in 28 BC – which is now part of a brand new public square, Piazza Augusto Imperatore. We then return to the hotel for a worship service based on Paul's letter to the Romans and a delicious dinner. (B, D)

❶ Pompeii
❷ Colosseum, Rome
❸ Positano, Amalfi Coast

Monday, April 19

Rome

Our second day in the "Eternal City" begins with a visit to the Catacombs of San Callisto. The catacombs were used by the early Christians as underground cemeteries outside the city walls, since burial within the city was strictly forbidden. The soft volcanic tufa rock underneath Rome is highly suitable for tunneling and these easily quarried catacombs provided the space for thousands of Christians to be buried from the 1st to 5th centuries. Next, we head to the traditional location of the apostle Paul's death and burial: St. Paul Outside the Walls Church. This beautiful church is the largest in Rome after St. Peter's. The tomb of Paul is believed to be beneath the altar, where there is a 1st-century tomb surrounded by Christian and pagan burials. Our bus next drops us off near the Pantheon. This impressive Roman monument, originally built in 27 BC and rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian around AD 120, was a temple dedicated to all the gods (Greek: pan theon). Its 141-foot-high dome was the largest in the world until the Florence Cathedral was built in 1436. From there we walk to Piazza Navona—arguably, the most beautiful square in the heart of Rome. The afternoon is free to sightsee and shop on your own. Some free time options include the Palatine Hill (a beautiful park containing impressive ruins from the palaces of the Roman emperors), St. Peter in Chains Church (which has Michelangelo's *Moses*), the Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps, or a stroll through the Villa Borghese Gardens. Tonight's dinner is independent to choose from one of Rome's many restaurants, with return to the hotel whenever we like. (B)

Tuesday, April 20

Vatican City, Tivoli, Rome

We have seen images of the Vatican on television and in movies, but today we witness it in person! The Vatican is actually a small (109 acres) yet powerful independent state that is the heart of the Roman Catholic Church. We begin with a guided tour of the fantastic Vatican Museums, which are filled with almost incomprehensible treasures. The highlight of our visit is the Sistine Chapel whose splendid vault was painted by Michelangelo and illustrates the great biblical stories of Creation, the Flood, and the Last Judgment. We also visit the impressive St. Peter's Square and St. Peter's Basilica—a masterpiece built between the 15th and 17th centuries on the site of an earlier church dating from the time of Emperor Constantine. The massive interior is breathtaking, and it contains many works of art, most notably Michelangelo's *Pieta*—the moving sculpture of Mary holding in her lap the body of Jesus after the crucifixion. After an independent lunch, we travel by bus a short distance outside the city to Tivoli to visit Hadrian's Villa—the largest and richest Imperial villa in the Roman Empire. This impressive villa originally consisted of over 30 buildings that recreated the favorite monuments of Hadrian which he saw during his prolonged travels around the empire. These included the Canopus or Sanctuary of Serapis in Alexandria, the Pecile or the "painted porch" in Athens, the Vale of Tempe in Thessaly, and the Lyceum or Academy in Athens. Before heading back

to the hotel, we enjoy a delicious meal at the unique cave-like restaurant Terme di Diana in Tivoli (or similar). (B, D)

Wednesday, April 21

Ostia Antica, Rome

Our final full day in Italy involves visiting Ostia Antica ("Ancient Ostia")—an ancient port city of Rome located 16 miles southwest of the capital at the mouth of the Tiber River. This port city suffered from the problem of silting with the result that it is now located some two miles inland away from the sea. Although this silting caused Ostia to ultimately be abandoned, it also resulted in preserving this ancient city in excellent condition. Modern visitors are treated to many impressive ruins: the Forum with its main temple—the Capitolium—dedicated to the three gods: Jupiter, Juno and Minerva; the Baths of Neptune and its

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floor mosaics; a Roman theater seating 4,000 spectators; a block of upper floor apartments and first-story shops, including take-away food bars; one of the oldest synagogues in the world dating to the time of Paul and Peter; and more. The quality of preservation is matched only by that at Pompeii but without the crowds of tourists, since many travelers today are unware of Ostia's treasures. Time permitting, we also make a brief visit to the local museum containing interesting pieces from this ancient site. After a late independent lunch, we drive back to Rome and our hotel, leaving some free time to do some final exploration of the city's many famous sites, shop for souvenirs, or begin packing for the trip home tomorrow. Prior to our farewell dinner, we gather for one last time for a "debriefing" session where we reflect together on the many extraordinary things we have seen and experienced on this biblical study tour. (B, D)

Thursday, April 22

Return

Today we reluctantly leave behind the exciting sites of Italy and make the journey back to North America and our home cities. We are confident *The Gospel Comes to Italy* has been an instructive, inspirational, and memorable trip for you! (B, L-in flight)

Daily activities are subject to change due to local circumstances.

Meals included:
B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner

❶ St. Paul Outside the Walls Church
❷ Ostia Antica
❸ St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican

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