

Diaspora, Hellenism and Roman Rule: *The Roman Empire and Jewish Survival*



The New Testament World - Week 2
Adult Education

Diaspora Life and Roman Rule

Babylon

From as far back as Sargon in the 700's BCE, some Jews were there. Then of course after 586 BCE many were taken into captivity.

Time of Yeshua

All throughout the Roman Empire the cities had Jews
Influenced by Stoic and Platonic philosophy
Antioch and Cyrene were centers

Alexandria, Egypt

Was a city that had 5 sections and the Jews had 2. This was an important place for literature. The Jews were governed by the *politeuma* (resident aliens with their own self-governing institutions). There was a Senate called *Gerusia* (council of elders). Provided by an *ethnarch*, who was a chief judicial. From the 2nd century BCE the Alexandrian Jews were the mediators who brought Hellenism to the Greek world. They more than anyone else were Hellenistic Jews.

Some of the Alexandrian Jews did have citizenship and did participate in the games. Most of the literature we have is from Alexandrian Jews. The letter of Erasmus tells the story of the Septuagint - 70 Jewish scholars were brought in and put in different rooms and translated the Tanach. This is a miracle. However this is not true. Written about 2nd century BCE.

Philo – (20–50 BCE) a wealthy Jew living in Alexandria. He wrote allegorically (not to be rationalized). He was a mystic, a Platonic philosopher, a citizen of the Alexandrian polis, Greek education, a Greek thinker all the way through. His philosophy is true Jewish philosophy. He wrote about the logos. He brought the Torah to Alexandria Jews in a way they could understand. He thought the Torah is the revealed will of God to Jews and Gentiles.

There were smaller towns of Egypt and Cyrene. In North Africa there were over 1 million Jews. There were more in Babylon. In Teuchira, North Africa there are Jewish cemeteries from the 2nd and 1st century BCE. Cross population, but mostly poor. 47% of the funerary inscriptions were from young people who died before the age of 20. They had to marry before the age of 16 for the community to survive.

Asia Minor

In Miletas Jews were involved with Greek games.
In Sardis there was a huge complex that contained bath, gymnasium and synagogues.
Antioch was one of the most Roman cities in Asia Minor.

Rome

Simon was the first contact with Rome. He went there during the Hasmonean time to get Rome to be friends. 2nd century BCE

Prisoners were brought in 63 CE from Jerusalem.

Jews in Rome were tolerated but not liked. One of the reasons was because they were allies and friends with the Roman government (they had a lot of favor); this caused a lot of jealousy. Magic and necromancy had a strong influence on the Jews.

Under Julius Augustus the Jews were allowed to practice their religion (*religio licita*)

3 things they were given:

They could organize themselves in their own institutions, to establish an autonomous system of internal administration of justice

Anything they was against Jewish precepts they did not have to do (no idolatry)
They did not have to worship the emperor

This provoked a lot of jealousy. Greeks did not have this kind of freedom.

Three things mark a Jew in the Diaspora:

1. Circumcision
2. Shabbat – holidays
3. Kashrut

What connected the Diaspora Jews to the land:

Temple Worship

- Pilgrimage festivals; Passover, Shavuot; Succot
(By the 2nd Temple period they were not required to come 3 times a year, only once)
- ½ shekel temple tax was paid according to Passover – Israel; Shavuot – countries touching Israel; Succot – countries furthest away
- Sacrifices

Mo'edim

The Jewish calendar revolves around the new moon. Two people sited the New Moon. After the sacrifices were offered on Mt. Scopus a bomb fire was lit and then it would go to the next mountain and etc. It would reach Babylon within 2 hours. It is not known how they did to Egypt.

The reason the Diaspora celebrated 2 days was because they wanted to be sure they had the day right because the signal may come late.

The Greeks in the 6th century BCE – 7 times in a 19 year period you have an extra month consisting of 30 days. Had to balance the lunar year with the solar year so the holidays would fall in the same season. Moon gives us months, Sun gives year.

Development of the calendar – year then moon. Moon into weeks, and days. Not into the time of Yeshua that we get hours. Day was separated into 24 units, 12 units of light and 12 units of night. Example (1st, 2nd, 3rd watch).

Barley is the only thing that ripened during First Fruit. So when we look at the Passover and unleavened bread, first fruit is tied in and it must happen in spring.

Sanhedrin

This connected the Diaspora Jews to the land. You could go to the Sanhedrin for a ruling. If you submitted a decision to the Sanhedrin you had to accept it. If you didn't you could be killed. The Sanhedrin only had authority on religious matters not civil.

Torah reading was a minor discrepancy. In the Diaspora the Torah (54 portions) was read every year. In the land the Torah was read every 3 years (portions were smaller).

Professions

Jews of the Diaspora did everything occupation except banking. Biggest profession was diamond cutting.

Hellenism

A period of time between Alexander the Great to Pompey (30 BCE) (archaeological time period)

A period of time between Alexander the Great to Cleopatra VII (60 BCE) (technically speaking)

Alexander left soldiers behind to intermarry with the locals to help bring this about (merging the culture).

The Greek Culture that Alexander wanted to bring includes:

- Language
- Philosophy

- Literature
- Theater
- Athletics
- Gymnasium/Ephebeion (boys under 18-20)
- Polis
- Disciples
- Museum

Hellenistic influenced the church. The gospels were pinned by Semitic thinkers but were transmitted in Greek.

Roman Rule and the Republic

- Rome founded in 8th century BCE. It was organized into a Republic form of government by the 5th century. By the end of Augustus' rule there was an emperor. Before that it was a republic ruled by the Senate. Although you had an emperor after, he still submitted to the Senate. 200 years of war with Carthage (Punic Wars) ended in 146 BCE.
- Pompey conquered the Mediterranean including Israel and Egypt. After Julius Caesar was assassinated than Octavian became emperor he took on the name of Augustus.
- Rome passed through a period of peace called *Pax Romana*. This facilitated the spread of Christianity because of travel. Augustus set up a provincial type of government. This was to keep the pro-counsels subjugated to the emperors.
- Judea broke the peace with Rome in 70 and 135 CE through rebellion.
 1. Under Senate you had the proconsul
 2. Under the Emperor you had procurators, propaetors
 Lyconians in the province of Lysta and Derbe and province of Galatia.

After the temple in Jerusalem was defiled, the ideology changed and it became more political than religious. Fighting for independence.

Rome – The Roman Genius

- Polybius (2nd century BCE Greek historian) devoted a book to the source of Roman strength. Reason for Rome's achievement was internal. Her constitutional system was a perfect balance of the monarchic (consul), oligarchic (senate), and democratic (assemblies) elements. Held together by the fear of the gods expressed in due performance of the traditional rites.
- Roman power due to Roman piety. In time this would crumble.
- Rome was originally a city-state (different from the Greek city)
- Citizenship in Rome was infinitely expandable.
- Freed slaves became citizens (unlike in Greece).
- Rome more readily extended citizenship to those in other cities.
- It had a great ability to absorb alien populations—human and divine.
- Romans could take borrowed things and make them their own. They were a borrower—culturally and religiously.
- Through its ceremony of evocation, Rome called upon the gods of an enemy city to change sides, promising that the Romans would give more dutiful service to the deities than the people.
- Rome was the melting pot of the ancient world.
- Rome's political genius exceeded its deficiencies in imagination, a quality in which the Greeks excelled. Legal formulation or definition was Rome's great strength.
- The magistrates had imperium, or complete power.

- For Rome, the measure of all things was law whereas for the east the measure of all things was the king, and for the Jews the measure of all things was God.
- The growth of Rome was paramount.
- Their ideal was great statesmanship, not the search for the good, the true, and the beautiful, as in Greece.
- The real greatest of Roman policy lay in the government's interest in people. Moral authority of a high standard was preserved for a long time in the senate, until demoralization came in the first century.
- A permanent court had to be created in Rome in 149 BCE to deal with charges by provincials against Roman officials for extortion. Some Governors got rich. It was said that a governor must make 3 fortunes while in office: one to pay the debts incurred in obtaining the office, one to buy acquittal from the charges that would be brought for his administration and one to finance retirement.

Rome and the West

- Latin language and culture were planted in Spain, Gaul, Britain, the Rhineland, and North Africa (though not by deliberate policy).
- Carthage (a Sea power) was Rome's chief rival in the western Mediterranean and they used mercenaries on land. Rome's strength was in its citizen soldiers. Rome fought 3 major wars with Carthage, known as the Punic Wars ("Punic" from the Phoenician settlers of Carthage). As a result of the 1st Punic War (262-241 BCE) Rome acquired Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. Hannibal launched an invasion of Italy from Spain by crossing the Alps. His invasion brought great suffering and anxiety. Rome's general Scipio Africanus finally defeated Hannibal in Africa. Rome came to control northern Italy, southern Gaul, and Spain. The 3rd Punic war (149-146 BCE) brought the final defeat of Carthage and all of the western Mediterranean was in Rome's hands.

Rome and the East

- The Etruscans had connections with Asia Minor. Rome's contacts with (and eventual conquest of) the Etruscans gave it an early experience in taking over Near Eastern institutions and infusing them with its own natural temper.
- Campaigns in southern Italy from 280-275 BCE by Pyrrhus, king of Epirus in Greece, on behalf of the Greek colony of Tarentum engaged Rome in military conflict with Greece. Tarentum fell in 272 BCE and brought Greek slaves to Rome. Thereafter Rome would be significant in the Greek world, and Greek ideas were to penetrate Rome.
- Concluding Rome's 4 Macedonian Wars (214-205, 200-196, 171-167, 150-148 BCE) Macedonia was made a Roman province (148 BCE). In 146 BCE the Greek leagues were dissolved into their component city-states and the city of Corinth was destroyed.
- In 188 BCE the Seleucid king Antiochus II was driven from Asia, with Rome's friend Eumenes of Pergamum the chief benefactor. In 168 Rome ordered Syria to withdraw from Egypt. Within 1 week Rome had defeated Macedonia, taken Egypt under its protection, and forced Syria to submit to its wishes. A new power now overshadowed the 3 chief segments of Alexander's empire.
- Attalus III gave the kingdom of Pergamum to Rome in 133 BCE
- 129 BCE, Rome organized the province of Asia, leaving the rest of Asia Minor under native client kings.
- Syria was made a province in 63 BCE.
- Egypt in 31 BCE.
- Rome is the Greek word for strength. Roman power was respected in the east, if not always admired, and from the 2nd century (in keeping with the practice of worshiping power) the personified city of Rome was honored as a goddess there.
- Rome took over the political and cultural heritage of Alexander west of the Euphrates and became his real successor.
- Alexander's vision of one unified world became accomplished politically through Rome.
- Rome brought security and roads to the Near East.

- It did not bring a new culture.
- It made no effort to Latinize, and Greek remained the effective language.
- Greek culture prevailed in the eastern Mediterranean, whereas culture in the west owed and still owes its stamp to the Roman conquest.
- The educated man from the 2nd century BCE spoke both Greek and Latin.
- Greek culture flowed west as Roman military might and political administration moved east.

The Later Republic: Civil Wars

- The Roman Republic knew civil war for a century from 133 BCE.
- Civil wars began in 90 BCE with a rebellion by a confederacy of Italian peoples.
- Pompey established himself as a military leader and statesman by sweeping the Mediterranean of pirates, ending the threat of Mithridates VI, and bringing the remaining Seleucid territories within Roman control and settling their administration.
- The 1st Triumvirate came into the open with the first consulship of C. Julius Caesar in 59.
- Civil war returned to Rome when Caesar crossed the Rubicon River and invaded Italy in 49 BCE. Pompey's troops were not ready for battle, and he removed them across the Adriatic to Greece. The battle at Pharsalus in Thessaly in 48 left Caesar master of the Roman world.
- Caesar continued to fight battles against pockets of resistance until 45.
- Caesar's own staff officers as well as some whom he had aided were in on a plot to assassinate him.
- Cicero hoped that Caesar's death would mean the restoration of the old Republic, but it would not be.
- Octavian, nephew of Caesar and adopted by him, Mark Antony, Caesar's chief lieutenant, and Lepidus, former consul and governor of Gaul and Spain, formed a "2nd Triumvirate." The triumvirs gained control of Rome and began a massive proscription of the senatorial and equestrian classes. Brutus and Cassius had gathered armies in the Balkans and Syria, but Antony and Octavian disposed of them in the battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.
- Antony had an affair with Cleopatra VII, the last of the Ptolemaic rulers, in Egypt and this gave Octavian all the propaganda he needed to stir up national sentiment in Rome against Antony. The clash was treated as a war against Egypt.
- The defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BCE caused both to commit suicide in Egypt (30 BCE). The Ptolemaic dynasty was extinguished and the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms was now in Roman hands.
- The Roman civil wars ended, and the Republic also. Rome had been an imperial republic for a long time; now only the empire remained. Octavian would need to establish a new constitution.

The Roman Empire

The Early Empire

- Augustus – 27-14 BCE – instituted many reforms and revived state religion. Known as Dominus Flavis by some. He attempted to restore family life. He replenished the treasury and was a good overall ruler. He established the empire which greatly influenced Judaism. Yeshua was born during this time.
 - Octavian (later called Augustus) had absolute power.
 - He was a despot by universal consent.
 - His official version of the constitutional settlement was reached in 27 BCE and was a combination of political testament and propaganda.
 - Augustus was an ancient word suggesting the numinous and something more than human.
 - The ruler's name was changed and after 27 his official name was Imp(erator) Caesar divi f(ilius) ["son of a god," in this case the now deified Julius Caesar] Augustus.
 - He had the army and the money and he had the resources of Egypt.

- There was a great emphasis on peace: his rule ushered in the *pax romana*. A sense of gratitude was expressed toward him for the restoration of peace.
- He promoted this virtue of his reign. Security and safety made possible travel, trade, and renewed economic development and prosperity.
- He took the office of *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE as part of his program of restoring the religion of the Republic.
- Augustus initiated significant building activity, boasting that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.
- His contributions for early Christianity include peace, economic prosperity, improved communications, stable government, and a sense of renewal.
- There was a strong sense of a new beginning, an old era of upheaval and warfare ended and a new era of peace and prosperity beginning. Christian authors later concurred in the sentiment, but saw in it an even deeper meaning, for Jesus had been born under Augustus's reign (Luke 2:1).
- Tiberius (14-37 CE) – son of Augustus's 2nd wife Livia by a previous marriage.
 - Adopted son of Augustus. He was distant, haughty, suspicious and easily angered. He was wise and generally disliked and feared. The Roman army suffered many setbacks in Germany. Tiberius became very suspicious and cruel.
 - He was a brilliant military commander but had grown bitter and melancholy by the time he became emperor.
 - He did not approve of the cult of the ruler, but he took an interest in astrology.
 - He disliked the trappings of power, and although he professed a desire for the senate to have freedom, its own debasement under the long rule of Augustus and Tiberius's isolation from it strained relations between them. This isolation plus the oppressive practices of Sejanus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard gave to the senatorial class the black picture of Tiberius that is reflected in Tacitus.
 - Tiberius allowed Sejanus to exercise effective power, but Sejanus finally overreached himself and Tiberius in a counter plot had him executed in 31 CE.
 - Although Tiberius alienated the senate at home, he was vigilant in foreign affairs. His reign brought stability to the frontiers, and he brought better order to the provinces by leaving men in office longer (the practice in the Republic was to change provincial governors annually). Pilate's 10 years in Judea exemplifies this policy.
- Gaius Caligula (37-41 CE). Was the grandson of Tiberius's brother Drusus.
 - His nickname was Caligula ("little boots") from the soldiers among whom he grew up while his father Germanicus was on campaign in Germany. Very popular in the beginning of his reign and the end was marked with violence and cruelty. He demanded to be worshipped as god. He exhausted the public treasury. He confiscated property, legacies as was known for extortion. He was assassinated. He alienated himself from Judaism and Christianity because he demanded to be worshipped as a god.
 - He began with favor of the senate.
 - He had grown up with a family of tragedy and suspicion and this may have had something to do with the signs of mental derangement that appeared before his assassination.
 - He depleted the treasury and became convinced of his divinity, demanding divine honors.
 - His reign was marked by conflict with the Jews.
 - Although he was friendly to Agrippa the 1st he did not like Jews.
 - When the Jews in Yavneh tore down an altar erected to him in 40 CE, he ordered a statue of himself set up in the temple in Jerusalem. Petonius, the legate in Syria, knew what would happen and successfully stalled on the order. Jews were not the only people relieved when in 41 CE Caligula learned he was not a god.
- Claudius (41-54 CE). Claudius was Gaius's uncle.

- Partially paralyzed. He was a brilliant scholar but appeared like an idiot maybe because he drooled. He extended citizenship to provincials and conquered parts of Britain. He hated the foreign cults and tried to restore the ancient Roman religion. He expelled the Jews from Rome because of the riots caused by Christas.
- He was found hiding by the praetorian guards who killed Gaius. They took him as their candidate for princeps. The negotiator between the praetorians and the senate was Agrippa I, whom Claudius rewarded with an enlarged kingdom throughout Palestine.
- He appeared to be an idiot because he drooled saliva and limped. He was 50 when he ruled.
- He confirmed the privileges of the Jews in Alexandria, warning the Greeks there to maintain the peace and the Jews to be content with what they had and not to seek more privileges.
- Because of disturbances “at the instigation of one Chrestus [Christ?],” he expelled Jews from Rome (Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; cf. Acts 18:2)
- His major venture in foreign affairs was the addition of Britain to the empire.
- He set higher standards for Roman citizenship in domestic affairs, yet also opened it up to worthy men in the provinces.
- He sought to make the business of the senate more efficient, but his own activities in public projects in Italy further eroded the distinction between areas administered by the senate and those by the princeps.
- Nero (54-68 CE)
 - He saw himself as God incarnate. He had 5 years of success. He was extravagant and careless and hated by the senate and unpopular with the people and the army. He emptied the treasuries. He started the fire in Rome so he could build his golden house and he blamed it on the Christians. Tradition says Peter and Paul died during these persecutions
 - Ancient rumors suggest that Agrippina (the niece and wife of Claudius) had him poisoned when he was of no further use to her in order to secure the throne for her son Nero. The accession was without difficulty: he was proclaimed by the Praetorian Guard and presented to the senate for its approval.
 - His rule began with the quinquennium (the 5 good years), when affairs were under the control of Seneca, whose brother Gallio had been governor of Greece (Acts 18:12) Burrus, the prefect of the praetorian guards, advisors of the 16 year old Nero. Paul’s description of the Romans state in Romans 13 was written during this period. Agrippina was removed from influence and finally murdered, on Nero’s orders, in 59 CE.
 - He increasingly took the direction of affairs into his own hands.
 - Burrus died in 62 and Seneca retired, finally receiving a command to take his life in 65. Their influence was replaced by that of the new praetorian prefect, Tigellinus, who brought out Nero’s worst disposition and instituted despotism.
 - Nero also had his wife Octavia killed in 62 so he could marry Poppaea, described by Josephus as a “worshipper of God,” perhaps a proselyte.
 - He blamed the great fire of Rome in 64 on the Christians, now recognized as distinct from the Jews and marked for disfavor.
 - Tradition puts the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome in the aftermath.
 - The great Jewish revolt in Palestine broke out in 66, and Vespasian was placed in charge of suppressing it.
 - He instituted a reign of terror.
 - Revolts broke out among the legions in the west, and when the praetorian guards rebelled in Rome, Nero fled the city and committed suicide (at 30 yrs old). His death ended the Julio-Claudian dynasty: all of the emperors from Augustus to Nero were in one way or another related to the Julian and Claudian senatorial families, with other families of equal rank having been steadily eliminated.
- *Civil war: 68/69*
 - The confusion of Nero’s flight brought on civil war. The legions and generals discovered the “secret of empire, that “the princeps could be made elsewhere than at Rome” (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.4). Four different men came to power within the space of one year:

- Galba, governor in Spain
 - Otho, former governor of Lusitania
 - Vitellius, commander of the legions in Germany
 - Vespasian
- Vespasian (69-79 CE) - gained the support of the east, and leaving his son Titus to continue the Jewish War, made his march on Rome in late 69, arriving in the city himself in 70.
 - One of the first to declare for Vespasian was the governor of Egypt, Tiberius Alexander, an apostate Jew and nephew of Philo.
 - Vespasian inaugurated the Flavian dynasty. He came from a small town in the Sabine hills of Italy. His grandfather had been a centurion in the army, so he represents the rise of the governing class of the Italian towns to the highest influence in Rome.
 - He changed the character of the senate by drawing new members from the municipal aristocracy of Italy and the west.
 - His chief order of business was the restoration of order—financial stability, confidence in the central government, tidying up the provinces. From his time emperors were known by and knew their armies. He and Titus celebrated a triumph in Rome in 71 for the successful suppression of the revolt in Judea. Vespasian’s frugal and old-fashioned virtues were a needed respite in Rome.
 - He treated the cult of the emperor lightly and, when he was dying, joked about the practice of declaring a dead emperor divine: “I think that I am becoming a god” (Suetonius, *Vespasian* 23).
 - Titus (79-81 CE) – He was popular and a fever cut short his life. His reign was remembered for 2 events:
 - The eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 and gave him the opportunity to demonstrate his generosity.
 - The extravagant opening of the Colosseum, begun by his father and completed by his brother Domitian, and his further expenditures on games and shows, another feature of his reign and a reason for the favor in which the populace held him.
 - Domitian (81-96 CE) – His reign was characterized by the exile and execution of quite a number from senatorial families, so his memory was formally condemned by the senate after his assassination. He insisted on the title *dominus et deus* (“lord and god”), and Christian tradition remembered him as a persecutor and the emperor under whom the Book of Revelation was written. Brother of Titus, was a good manager. He made numerous enemies. He tried to raise the morals of Roman society. He demanded worship of himself and wanted to be called lord and god.
 - “5 Good Emperors”
 - Nerva (96-98 CE) – was a transitional figure. Senate liked him, but the army which resented the murder of Domitian did not. Nerva was childless and in his 60’s, adopted the commander of the army of Upper Germany, Trajan. This was probably an emergency measure to give military support to the new ruler. The practice of adopting one’s successor gave Rome a series of good emperors under whom the empire reached its highest development. The provinces were prosperous and generally well governed, the empire itself enjoyed internal peace, and a flourishing cultural development left imposing monumental remains throughout the Mediterranean countries.
 - Trajan (98-117 CE) came from Spain, and with him the provinces became full partners in the rule of the empire. He gave the empire its largest territorial extent through his successful campaigns, which pushed the frontiers in the north and east to the Danube and the Euphrates. He was a Spaniard. He enlarged the empire. During his reign is the revolt of the Jews. By the time of Trajan Christianity was a major religion. Before this it is a sect of Judaism.
 - Jewish disturbances in Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus in 115 destroyed much property and took many lives and had to be ruthlessly suppressed.
 - Hadrian (117-138 CE) He introduced a policy of stabilization on the frontier and at home. He was a lover of things Greek. He spent much time traveling in the eastern provinces, and many material remains testify to his interest in the Greek east. Under Hadrian occurred the second major Jewish

revolt in Palestine. He was Emperor during time period of the 2nd revolt (bar Kochba). Set up Temple of Zeus in Jerusalem. Jews fled to Pella. Many believers were excommunicated.

- Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE) He had a peaceful and largely uneventful reign. The empire was prosperous. There was no discordant note. The emperor gathered around himself men of letters and philosophers. His character represented by the epithet Pius, conferred on him by the senate and suggesting an amiable personality, made a great impression on the age.
- Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE). He had to face the problems that were to bring disasters to the Roman world in the next century. Soldiers returning from Mesopotamia brought with them the plague, which had lasting consequences for the political and economic development of the empire. It was still going when Germans and Sarmatians invaded the empire. He spent a lot of time fighting on his northern frontier. Germans invaded the northern empire. More persecution of Christians than any other emperor until the 3rd century.
 - Marcus was devoted to duty and principle; much of his time was occupied with wars on the northern frontier, fought with inadequate reserves of troops.
 - There were sporadic persecutions of the Christians under the second century emperors, with more martyrs made under Marcus Aurelius than under any emperor before the Decian persecution of the 3rd century.

The Later Empire

The return to hereditary succession with Marcus's son Commodus (180-192 CE) turned out bad. War followed his assassination. Septimius Severus won out and inaugurated the Severan dynasty, under which Syrian influence became prevalent in Rome.

The 2nd century- emergencies, with pressure from enemies on the frontier, strains on the economy and religious conflict within the empire.

But they really became a problem in the 3rd century. The movement of peoples from central Asia exerted ever more pressure on the northern frontiers, and Parthia (where the Sassanid dynasty had replaced the Arsacid in 230) gave trouble on the east. The purchasing power dropped and the debasement of the currency ruined the middle class. The 3rd century was a bad time for the Roman world. It survived. Decius and the Illyrian soldier-emperors began to stabilize the situation. With Diocletian and Constantine the constitutional realities changed the principate into the dominant: all pretense of partnership with the senate was gone, and the emperor ruled as supreme lord in name as well as in reality. The remarkable thing is that the empire held together as long as it did.

Constantine's rejuvenation gave the empire a century and a half lease on life in the west and laid the basis for the Byzantine state, which remained an important power in the eastern Mediterranean for the next millennium.

Administration of the Empire

Cities – Roman Empire was a collection of cities as far as power and government were concerned. The city was where things happened, where the opportunities were. The civilization of the Roman empire was an urban civilization to a greater extent than any time in the west up to the modern age. There was a classification system of the cities within the empire according to the privileges they possessed.

- First - the *coloniae civium romanorum* (colonies of Roman citizens). These were mostly towns in which military veterans were settled. They were sometimes granted partial or complete immunity from taxation. Each was a little Rome, Rome away from home. Some of the Roman colonies mentioned in the NT are Philippi, Corinth, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Troas.
- Second - the other towns that possessed the Roman franchise, the *municipia* or *oppida civium romanorum* (towns of Roman citizens).

- Third - “Latin” towns where the Roman franchise could be obtained by holding magistracy in the town government.
- Other cities possessed no official privileges, but among them were a few that still called themselves “free” (Ephesus, Smyrna, Tarsus, and Antioch of Syria) meaning their internal affairs were governed by their own laws, or “federate” (Athens, Tyre, and Rhodes), although this was anachronistic under the empire.
- The form of municipal government in the cities of the west tended to copy that at Rome. Under the Republic the major political offices were consul, praetor, and quaestor. Praetors were judges. Quaestor was the lowest office that gave entry to the senate. 20 quaestors were chosen each year; they had financial functions. All of the offices were filled by men from the senatorial class.
- Roman towns in the west normally had 2 chief magistrates, *duovirs*, on the pattern of the two consuls in Rome. Inferior to them were 2 *aediles*, who superintended buildings and public works. One such *aedile*, named Erastus and mentioned on an inscription at Corinth, has been identified as possible the same as Erastus, the “city treasurer,” mentioned in Romans 16:23. There was also a local council (*curia*) of former magistrate (called *decuriones*) like the senate in Rome.
- Greek cities in the east (notably Alexandria) were often subdivided into *politeumata* (corporations). The *politeuma* was a self-governing division of the city based on nationality. The Greek *politeuma* had a religious center, a council and magistrates, division of citizens into tribes, and other features of a Greek polis. The Jews in Alexandria, it seems, also formed a *politeuma*.

Provinces

- The peaceful and civilized provinces where no legions had to be quartered
- A provincial governor had the title of proconsul (Acts 19:38), that is, “in the place of consul” or functioning with the power of a consul in that provincia.
- Proconsuls chosen by lot out of the former magistrates at Rome.
- The emperor could manipulate this process in various ways.
- Former consuls were assigned to Asia and Africa, and the other senatorial provinces were governed by former praetors.
- Normally an interval of 5 years for praetors and 10 years for consuls between their magistracy in Rome and receiving a provincial governorship.
- The imperial provinces were the military provinces (e.g., Syria), where by reason of the lack of progress toward internal civilization or danger on the frontier legions were stationed.
- Smaller, troublesome provinces (such as Judea) that were under imperial control received for governor a member of the equestrian order who had a command of auxiliary troops, but not ordinarily legions.

Client Kingdoms

- Rome preferred to leave the government of areas in the east where Hellenization had not advanced very far in the hands of native rulers, who could rule their own people best and by reason of their dependency could serve Rome’s interests without Rome assuming responsibility.
- The modern term for these rulers is client kings because they stood in the relation of clients to the Roman emperor and held the title of king only with Rome’s sanction, but the Romans called them “friends” and “allies.” Herod (Mt. 2:1) and his descendants (Acts 12:1; 25:13) who ruled in Palestine occupied this status. Galatia was ruled this way until it became an imperial province in 25 BCE. The client kings were left free in internal administration, levied taxes for their own use, and maintained armies under their own control. They could not pursue their own foreign policy and were limited in their right to mint coins.
- Their duties were to supply auxiliaries and military aid on demand for the Roman army, maintain order and security on the frontiers, and pay taxes to Rome. These kingdoms also

- served to protect trade routes, as buffers between barbarians and the empire, proper, and in general to advance Rome's purposes.
- These client kingdoms disappeared in the course of time and were incorporated into the provincial structure. The uniformity of the status of towns became more general, and the provinces drew closer in status to Italy.

Ekklesia – usual term for political assemblies of citizens in Greek cities. Acts 19:39,41

Concilium – representative from cities and tribes of a province met in the capitol city and became a channel to Rome promoting the imperial cult, not actually having authority but rather influence. Acts 19:31

Citizenship – referenced in Philippians 3:20