

**Thrita Sims**

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**Bi606 Survey of Romans**

**Writing Assignment #1**

**Department of Religious Studies**

**Dr. Iria Abrams**

## Writing Assignment #1

Two thousand years ago, the world was ruled by Rome. From England to Africa and from Syria to Spain, one in every four people on earth lived and died under Roman law. The Roman Empire in the first century AD mixed sophistication with brutality and could suddenly lurch from civilization, strength, and power to terror, tyranny and greed.<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Empire cast a huge shadow over the New Testament world. Many consider the Roman Empire as the greatest civilization in history which dominated almost all of the lands along the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>2</sup> Rome's diverse culture centered around inland trade and commerce by the sea. The important trade represented the luxuries of life: silk, tapestries, jewelry, dyes, spices, and perfumes were brought in from the direct byway of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>3</sup> The political life of Rome was centered around the court. The senate shared power with the emperor, both legislative and administrative power. The will of the emperor and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/empires/Roman>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theologycurator.com/roman-empire-Kurt> Williams

<sup>3</sup> Henry F. Burton, The Biblical World, Volume 3, February 1986, Univ. of Chicago Press, pages 87-96.

his advisors was law supported and enforced by the infamous Roman military power.<sup>4</sup>

Rome in Paul's day was already the foremost city of the world in wealth and outward splendor. It had for two centuries been gathering the treasures of the Greek world, gold, silver, paintings and sculptures, along with architecture and literature.<sup>5</sup>

Page 2 Great structures, such like, the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus which seated 250,000 spectators.<sup>6</sup> Even though Rome was the world power, the lands it occupied were still deeply influenced by the spread of Greek culture that began with the conquest of Alexander the Great and his successors who "hellenized" the world.<sup>7</sup> Hellen is an ancient Greek term for Greece. *Koine* was the common Greek language that spanned the Empire which made a significant impact on communication that helped carried the Gospel uninterrupted among Jews and Gentiles in dozens of different cultures.<sup>8</sup>

The social life of Romans was separated by classes. The rich dwelled in costly abodes in luxury and idleness funded by either inherited wealth or by the extortion of immoral gains. The poorer

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/thomassmith/roman-greek-influence>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

**citizens lived in tenements with access to public baths. Lower class slaves did all the physical labor which perpetuated the laziness and idleness of the extremely wealthy.<sup>9</sup>**

**The philosophic Roman thinker cared very little for theology and differed in ethical philosophies. The Epicureans were utilitarians and the Stoics were intuitionists.<sup>10</sup> Roman religion was originally a form of nature worship whose gods were personifications of physical forces. The number of gods great and small was almost infinite. Every locality, every event, every act, had a specific and special divinity.<sup>11</sup> The emperors who led the Roman Empire were considered deity through cultic propaganda and were idolized and adored through poems,**

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**Images, statues, altars, and structures. Imperial divinity and imperial theology were spread through various forms of ancient media mainly in Greek cities. These idolized structures were erected in ancient Israel built by King Herod in the most grandiose and Hellenistic-Roman style.<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid to #3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid to #7.

**Roman religion was divided into two forms. Spirits watched over people, families and households. Romans also had a set of public gods.<sup>13</sup> The objective of Roman worship was to gain the blessing of gods to gain prosperity for themselves, their families and communities. Roman religion involved cult worship through which approval was granted by the gods through religious rituals and observances and not by personal behavior.<sup>14</sup>**

**During Roman domination, Christianity, a brand new religion, began to spread with its members, unfortunately, being terribly persecuted by Roman authorities. Despite its growing popularity, Christianity was sometimes misunderstood and its membership brought enormous risks. The Emperor Nero used them as scapegoats for the Great Fire of Rome and routinely arrested and tortured Christians with lavish publicity by crucifixion, being burned alive or were thrown to be devoured by wild animals in public arenas.<sup>15</sup>**

**Over time, Christianity survived in the Roman Empire and became its official religion that grew with the help of the common Greek language with using the complex Roman roads.**

### **Bibliography**

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid to #1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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