

STUDY PACK 19

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

“The deification of the emperors is the only instance in which they departed their accustomed prudence and modesty . . . But the conquerors soon imitated the vanquished nations in the arts of flattery, and the injurious spirit of the first Caesar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the titular deities of Rome. . . . A regular custom was introduced, that on the decease of every emperor who had neither lived nor died like a tyrant, the Senate by a solemn decree should place him _____.”

~ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, p.84 ~

I. THE CITY OF ROME

Little is known about the earliest settlements in Italy. It is believed that early tribes from the northeast came south into Italy about 2000 B.C. One of these tribes, known as the Latins, settled in tiny villages in Labium around 1000 B.C. These Latins were herdsmen and farmers who raised grain in the winter. They also raised olives and grapes in the lower lands with cattle, goats, and sheep on the higher lands. One village that was established by the Latins was built on Palatine, one of the seven hills which would later be the nucleus around which the city of Rome would be built.

Around 900 B.C. a civilized group of people known as the Etruscans moved into Italy and settled just north of the same seven hills. The Etruscans were a gifted people who brought with them many skills including that of being expert builders. After they had conquered and united many villages on and around the seven hills into one city-state, they built sewers, roads, bridges, and a very strong wall around the city.

Later on, an Etruscan king who was very cruel caused the Romans to drive the Etruscans out of the city. The story is told that as the Etruscans marched toward Rome to capture the city, a guard on the one narrow bridge crossing the Tiber called for help to destroy the bridge while he held off the invaders. As the bridge finally collapsed behind him, the guard jumped into the river and swam across to safety while being fired upon with arrows. Horatius became a hero for this deed, and a statue of him was placed in the marketplace.

Independence from the Etruscan king brought a desire for _____, and in 509 B.C. the Romans established _____. As opposed to a monarchy, in a republic the leaders do not inherit their responsibilities but are chosen by the citizens to be their representatives in civic affairs. Instead of a king, the republic had two officials known as consuls who would share responsibility and would balance each other's power. During times of war the two leaders proved to be a handicap to proper functioning and _____.

Under the new Republic, the Senate (which was founded under the monarchy) was enlarged to three hundred. The Senate members were nominated by the consuls and chosen by the king. The king generally followed the advice of the Senate on all important matters. Senate members and consuls could be chosen from the patricians or nobles. They were chosen for life and were extremely powerful.

The other government body was the Assembly which was made up of a slightly poorer group of citizens known as the plebeians. The plebeians could hold no office, but they were members of the Assembly. The plebeians were the class of people who did the physical work such as farming and serving in the military.

As the patricians became more powerful and richer, they exerted more authority over the plebeians. The plebeians finally rebelled and demanded certain rights and privileges. One important victory for the plebeians occurred about 509 B.C. when a law was passed that forbade the rulers _____ without giving a chance to appeal to the people. This is referred to as the Valerian Law of Appeal.

The second advancement for the plebeians occurred approximately 494 B.C. when some disillusioned plebeians marched out of Rome to start a city of their own. In order to bring them back to the city, the patricians promised to establish tribunes to represent the plebeians in governmental affairs. The responsibility of the tribunes to protect the rights of the plebeians was partially accomplished by the shouting of “Veto” or “I forbid” when improper laws were established.

One more demand from the plebeians was _____ and know rather than have all of the unwritten laws. After studying the laws of other lands, especially those of Greece, the commission wrote the code that was called the Twelve Tables. This was the beginning of one of Rome’s two greatest contributions to the world — that of the _____. The Roman plan of government or _____ of the nation was the second significant contribution. There were constant changes giving more rights to the plebeians resulting in greater legal equality between the patricians and the plebeians.

The Romans now identified the Roman state as a republic or “A thing of the people.” The supposed rights of the plebeians actually did nothing for the poorer plebeians as the rights to hold office were limited because the office holders were not paid, and therefore had to be wealthy enough to live without a regular income. In effect, this new system simply replaced the patrician-plebeian division with a rich-poor division in the society.

II. THE PUNIC WARS

Like most young nations, Rome continued to expand by conquering many of the nearby city-states until they were in complete control of Italy. The Romans also had begun to be heavily involved in sea trading.

Even before the founding of Rome, the Phoenicians had founded a colony on the African coast near Sicily known as Carthage. This city-state had fertile agricultural lands to the south and an excellent harbor on the north; and it also covered an area three times the size of Rome. Carthage had become a major trading city of the Mediterranean and was quickly developing into a military power with colonies on many Mediterranean islands and in southern Spain. The population was estimated to be a little over one half million people at this time.

The _____ from many of the colonies and other lands who were commanded by very capable generals from Carthage. The soldiers were brave, but as mercenaries there was not the spirit of unity to bond them to Carthage. The dependent colonies were ruled harshly and therefore had no bonds to Carthage, either. On the other hand, love of country was strongly imbedded in the heart of the Romans.

The first battle against Carthage involved the island of Sicily which was under the control of Carthaginians who had defeated the Greeks. In 264 B.C., a Roman army crossed into Sicily and the First Punic War had begun. Punic was from the Latin name for Phoenician, "Punicus." As Carthage had the largest navy of that time, Rome built one hundred and twenty ships with five banks of oars which they learned to row by sitting in the sand and oaring. It has been told that each ship was designed with a drawbridge with a long sharp spike on the end. The Romans would pull up next to a Carthaginian ship, ram it hard with the spike which would hold it while the Romans boarded and fought the enemy. With the help of this device, over half of the Carthaginian fleet was destroyed. This brought about the end of the twenty-four-year struggle between the two powers.

After the war, both Rome and Carthage continued to expand, and their mistrust for one another continued to grow with each conquering some of the other's lands. Finally, nearly twenty-five years after the First Punic War, Rome declared war against Carthage in 218 B.C.

The Carthaginian general who had been defeated at Sicily had personally trained his son militarily from a very young age with _____ . This son, who was to become an outstanding general, was Hannibal. He was a fearless man, strongly patriotic, whose military genius was near that of Alexander the Great. Hannibal's real strength was strategy. Hannibal planned to attack Rome from the North by marching from Spain up through the treacherous mountains and down through the Italian peninsula. Hannibal and his army, having lost many men in the long march through the mountains, were still able to win battle after battle, giving them control of northern Italy by the end of 218 B.C. Although Hannibal continued to win many battles, he never attacked Rome.

Meanwhile, Scipio, one of the most skillful and original military men Rome had ever produced, destroyed the holdings of Carthage in Spain and then invaded North Africa. Carthage sent for Hannibal to return to face the invaders. Here Hannibal met his first defeat. The Second Punic War ended in victory for Rome. But war had left its ugly scars on both countries.

Rome continued to conquer and expand for the next seventy years. In 149 B.C., the Romans, gravely concerned about the regained power and wealth of Carthage, accused them of breaking their treaty when they took up arms against a Roman ally who had taken some of their lands. Rome used this as an excuse to send a large army into Africa once again. Carthage was nearly helpless against the invaders, but they held out for three years until they were stormed in the spring of 146 B.C. On instructions from the Senate, _____ to prevent plant growth. The inhabitants were either killed or sold into slavery. Victory in the Third Punic War was an important step for Rome toward becoming an empire.

III. THE GRACCHI BROTHERS AND SOCIALISM

Tiberius Gracchus was elected tribune in 133 B.C. on a program of social reform. What he meant by social reform _____ . He used this appeal to rally the poor. Tiberius also had a program to give wage and price controls to the government. He also had a plan to manipulate these controls to his benefit. Land owners murdered him and over 300 of his followers.

In 123 B.C. his brother Gaius was elected tribune. He tried to enact a similar program. Riots broke out and the Senate declared a state of emergency. Gaius and over 3,000 of his followers were killed. Rome temporarily escaped socialism but the violence frightened the population.

Three great military leaders, Crassus, Pompey, and Julius Caesar, came into power during this period and became the first triumvirate _____. Crassus was killed in a battle in 53 B.C. This left Pompey and Julius Caesar as rivals for the leadership of Rome.

IV. JULIUS CAESAR

The rivalry between Pompey and Julius Caesar was strengthened by the Roman Senate which did not like Julius Caesar. In order to take away his power, the Senate ordered Caesar to return to Rome with his army. At the same time the Senate asked Pompey to lead an army against Caesar if he returned to Rome with his army. At this time Caesar was in Gaul where he heard what had happened, and he knew that if he crossed the Rubicon River (the boundary between Gaul and Italy) with his army he would have to fight Pompey. With great determination Caesar rode his horse into the river and solidly stated, “_____.” From this occurrence people now say that they have crossed their Rubicon to express that they have made a decision which cannot be reversed.

As Caesar and his army marched toward Rome, Pompey escaped to Greece with most of the Senate in order to raise a larger army with which to fight Caesar. After following Pompey to Greece, Caesar met him in a battle at Pharsalus in 48 B.C. Caesar won the battle but Pompey escaped to Egypt where he was assassinated. Caesar and his leaders spent the next three years battling supporters of Pompey in Spain, North Africa, and the East. He also spent a few months in Egypt with Cleopatra before returning to Rome. In 46 B.C. he was made dictator for ten years. In 44 B.C. Caesar was made dictator for life. Among his accomplishments, he granted citizenship to non-Italians, reduced debts, began a public works program, and freed one-third of the slaves. The calendar was revised with the help of a Greek astronomer which brought it into agreement with the Egyptian solar calendar of 365 days with an extra day every fourth year. This basic calendar is still in use. He also reduced welfare or the giving of free grain by fifty percent, and he made plans to codify the law.

Through his control of the Senate, _____, and it was very evident that he planned to have himself established as king. On the Ides of March, 44 B.C. (or the fifteenth of March) Caesar was assassinated in the Senate by a group of conspirators led by Brutus and Cassius. Upon being attacked, he defended himself bravely until he saw that one of the attackers was his friend Brutus. As he saw Brutus, he said “Et tu Brute!” or “You too Brutus!”. He stopped fighting, covered his head with his toga, and let them slay him.

V. THE EMPIRE

Just prior to his murder in 44 B.C., Julius Caesar had legally adopted his grandnephew, Octavius, as his only heir. Upon learning of Caesar’s death, Octavius rushed to Rome to take over the government. His ambition was aided by two powerful Romans who had been Caesar’s friends. These two, Mark Antony and Lepidus, made an agreement with Octavius and planned to crush the leaders who were responsible for Caesar’s death.

The purging of the enemies of Caesar went beyond the conspirators to include men of power who might be a threat to the new leadership. Included in this was Cicero, a brilliant man who had not

had any role in the conspiracy. He was slain by Mark Antony's soldiers. The guilty ones, Brutus and Cassius, escaped and organized an army, but they were defeated by Octavius and his alliance.

The working relationship of the three leaders became strained, and they quarreled due to Antony's jealousy of Octavius. By 31 B.C. Octavius had become the most powerful man in Rome. In a battle at sea, Octavius fought Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. Octavius won the battle, and Antony and Cleopatra escaped to Egypt where they both committed suicide. This battle _____, including Egypt, where he became the Pharaoh due to Cleopatra's death.

In 27 B.C., the Roman Senate gave Octavius the title of Augustus. He ruled for forty-four years. Augustus established new forms of taxation, established a centralized court system, gave a good degree of self-control to the cities and provinces, and set up the foundation for postal service. He helped to pass laws to control many of the social evils of his time such as adultery, divorce, and suicide. He lived rather simply and discouraged luxurious living by others. Augustus did transform Rome into one of the greatest and most beautiful cities of his day.

It was during the reign of Caesar Augustus that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, a part of the Roman Empire known as Palestine

VI. THE PAX ROMANA

Beginning with Caesar Augustus, _____ of the Roman Empire were known as the " _____ " or Roman Peace. Tiberius was the stepson of Augustus and followed him as Roman emperor, having been trained by Augustus himself. He was a very capable man but was not liked by the nobles or the commoners. Disgusted with Rome, he lived on the island of Capri for the last part of his reign which was from 14-37 A.D.

The grandnephew of Tiberius, known as Caligula (meaning little boot), served as the next emperor from 37-41 A.D. He acted like a madman, living extravagantly and wastefully. He was known to raise money by condemning rich men to death and seizing their property. After four miserable years, _____.

Claudius was the uncle of Caligula and the next emperor of Rome. He was quite timid, but he did have leadership ability. A significant contribution of his reign was _____ which he had built in order to bring water to Rome. In 43 A.D., Claudius sent troops to Britain and conquered that land. He ruled the empire from 42-53 A.D.

Claudius' stepson, Nero, was the next emperor and proved to be a tyrant. At the beginning of his reign Nero had good advisors and actually ruled well, but later showed his true self. He was not interested in government affairs, and supposed himself to be an actor and a great singer. He excelled at murder, including that of his mother and his wife. Christians suffered some of the most horrible persecutions of all times under wicked Nero. It is possible that _____.

Nero stopped riots against his government in 64 A.D. by having his agents set Rome on fire. In 68 A.D., Nero was declared a "public enemy" by the Senate. Nero committed suicide by stabbing himself to death.

Vespasian and his two sons were the next three rulers and are known as the Flavian Caesars. From 69-79 A.D. Vespasian, who was a simple, sturdy soldier, was able to establish good order in the empire.

The Jews _____; but Titus, son of Vespasian, destroyed the city and the Temple. It has been claimed that as many as one million Jews lost their lives, and over one hundred thousand men were taken into slavery. The choice young men were chosen for gladiator

exhibitions. The Jewish nation was said to be blotted out of existence. Many believe that the Jews were suffering because of their rejection of Christ as suggested in Matthew 23:37-39.

During the reign of Titus, 79-81 A.D., the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed by the volcano Vesuvius. Both cities were completely buried. The last of the Flavian Caesars was Domitian, the younger brother of Titus, who ruled from 81-96 A.D. He was _____.

The century of the so-called "Good Emperors" was from approximately _____. A Senator named Nerva served the empire from 96-98 A.D. and enjoyed a prosperous reign. He began the practice of adopting an heir to the throne which was followed for some period of time.

Nerva's adopted son, Trajan, took the throne after Nerva and reigned from 98-117 A.D. His military ability was nearly equal to that of Julius Caesar, and under him the empire was enlarged to its greatest size by such conquests as Dacia (Romania), Armenia, and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. The problems in administering distant lands caused Hadrian, Trajan's successor, to abandon them and work at maintaining rather than expanding the empire.

Antonius, a gentleman with high ideals, followed Hadrian with a long rule from 138-161 A.D. Antonius protected Christians from mistreatment. His quiet nature set the stage for his uneventful reign under which Rome achieved _____. He died with a fever in 161 A.D. in Venice. Antonius' adopted son Marcus Aurelius, who led the empire from 161-180 A.D., persecuted the Christians greatly. He considered them to be dangerous fanatics. His reign was troubled with outbreaks of war on the frontiers of the empire though he was a moral, peace-loving ruler.

The period of the good emperors was over when Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, ascended to the throne. He was a monstrous combination of the wicked Caligula and Nero, yet for some unknown reason his attitude toward the Christians was quite favorable.

VII. THE DECLINE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The quiet of the Roman Peace began to be interrupted with attacks by barbarian tribes on many frontiers. After a line of short-term weak emperors, Diocletian became the head of the empire in 284 A.D. He was dedicated to the task of remaking the Roman government to a smoother operating organization by dividing the lands into areas for ease of control. The Christians received harsh treatment under Diocletian, and _____ even though his wife and daughter had become Christians. He divided the empire into east and west and set Maximian to rule the west. The worshipful position of the emperor as a king was also established by Diocletian.

The persecution under Diocletian was _____ empire-wide persecution of the Christians. Rousas Rushdoony comments on the opposition of the empire to Christianity:

“The Kingship of Christ was a threat to the sovereignty of the state, and salvation by Christ’s atoning work was a denial of statist salvation.” (*World History Notes*).

Diocletian and Maximian gave up their positions in 305 A.D., and Constantine took over the east in 312 A.D. He reunited the Roman Empire and established a new capital in the east, which he renamed Constantinople. The mother of Constantine was a Christian, and she had considerable influence on her son. Constantine supported an “Edict of Toleration” which established toleration for all religions including the rapidly growing Christianity. Constantine proved himself to be an able general. Before the end of the century the “Edict of Toleration” was replaced by Christianity as _____.

VIII. THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Many of the Germanic tribes of this period settled near the Roman frontiers, and many of them even joined the Roman armies. These tribes were located for the most part to the north of the Italian peninsula. On the north edge of the eastern half of the empire were the Goths who had many Christians among their group, but these “Christians” were considered to be heretics and not orthodox. To the Far East in Asia were the Huns who were a rather violent, warlike people led by the ruthless Attila. The Roman Empire was being attacked almost continuously at some of its frontier points by various Germanic and other barbaric tribes.

This _____ was only one of the factors which was undermining the state of the empire. Another problem was _____. To replace these workers, more slave labor was introduced. The _____ were not as productive and were not really interested in promoting the affairs of the empire. _____ was an added burden to those who were already in a poor financial state. All of this led to a serious decline in industry and in agriculture.

The wealthy seemed to be apathetic with all level of families having a decline in family life. Many were disillusioned with the government and with life itself. Decay was evident in nearly all intellectual and artistic areas which was probably a reflection of the moral trends. Moral decay was widespread and divorce and prostitution were common occurrences. Homosexuality was acceptable and even fashionable. Political corruption was common. Gladiators fought to death to delighted crowds in the Colosseum. Sin abounded!

In 410 A.D., the glorious city of Rome was captured and sacked by invading barbarians. This weakened an already crumbling empire. In 455 A.D. Rome was sacked once again. This time the invaders were the vicious Attila and the Huns. Odoacer, a German soldier, removed the last emperor from the throne marking the final fall of the once great empire of Rome.