

SUMMARY OF HISTORY

Roman Empire

Note to students: These important events of history, beginning with the close of the Roman Republic, are discussed here in only the briefest manner. To learn more about each of the events, periods and personalities given you would do well to look them up in Lenger and the other sources cited.

The era of Rome's rise to world domination may be divided, for the sake of convenience, into four major periods as follows:

- (1) From the re-founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus in 753 B.C. to the establishment of the Republic in 509 B.C. (Lenger, pp. 81-83). During this period Rome was ruled by a monarchy. For this list of early kings see vol. one of the Compendium, pp. 411-414.
- (2) From the founding of the Republic to 265 B.C. During this period Rome gained control of most of the Italian peninsula (Lenger, 84-87).
- (3) From 265 B.C. to 146 B.C. the Romans fought three long wars with Carthage and extended their power over Sicily, North Africa, Spain and the Greek peninsula (Lenger, 97-102).
- (4) Finally, between 146 and 27 B.C., Rome completed the conquest of the entire Mediterranean world (Lenger, 102-112).

- 44 B.C. Assassination of Julius Caesar on March 15th in the senate by a group of his "friends" who formed a conspiracy to attempt to save the Republic. The result was predictable—civil war! (Lenger, 110.)
- 44-31 Civil war between the three men commissioned to save the state—Antony, Lepidus and Octavian (called the Second Triumvirate).
- 31 Battle of Actium. Off the promontory of Actium in 31 B.C., located on the western coast of Greece, the Roman and Egyptian fleets clashed. In the midst of the battle, Cleopatra sailed back to Egypt with her ships. Antony, although he had an army on shore, abandoned it and also went to Egypt. The next year both he and Cleopatra committed suicide. Octavian had triumphed. Both the Ptolemaic empire and the Roman Republic had ended! The Roman Empire had begun! (Lenger, 97, 111.)
- 27 B.C.-14 Octavian—Augustus reigned for over 40 years as the first Roman Emperor. During this time, Christ was born (4 B.C.). The policies of Augustus resulted in a long period of peace and stability during which the true Church could begin and the gospel spread by the original Apostles.
- 19 Herod the Great began building the temple at Jerusalem in this year in the months immediately preceding Passover. The major part of the construction was completed by the autumn of B.C. 18 in about $1\frac{1}{2}$ years. However, improvements and additions were still being made 46 years later in A.D. 28 just before the first Passover in Jesus' ministry (John 2:20). (See pages 28-29 of the booklet, "The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday".)

- 5 B.C. In July of this year Caesar Augustus issued the decree for the census spoken of in Luke 2:1-2 (see pp. 25-26 of the "Crucifixion" booklet). As a result of this decree, prophecy was fulfilled and Christ was born the following year in Bethlehem.
- 4 B.C. Christ was born in the autumn of this year during the fall Holy Day season. Herod the Great, king of Judaea (37-4 B.C.), died a short time later in November. For the account of Herod's death see Josephus' Antiquities 17:6 and Wars 1:23. [The discussion of the time of Herod's death on pp. 26-27 of the "Crucifixion" booklet which states that Herod died in 3 B.C. needs to be revised.]
- 4 B.C.-39 Reign of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, called "Herod the tetrarch" in Matt. 14:1. John the Baptist condemned his marriage with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, and was put to death as a result.
- 6 A.D. Upon the death of Herod in 4 B.C., Augustus divided the kingdom in Palestine between three of Herod's sons: Archelaus received Judea, Antipas ruled Galilee, and Philip held northeastern Palestine. When complaints from Judea increased, Augustus exiled the incompetent Archelaus to Gaul and converted Judea into a Roman province in 6 A.D.

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- 14 A.D. The year of the death of Augustus marks the beginning of an era of almost two centuries of peace in the Roman Empire commonly known as the pax Romana. In A History of the Ancient World by Chester G. Starr, page 575, we read this statement: "For the Roman Empire as a whole the era from A.D. 14 to 180 (the death of Marcus Aurelius) was the most peaceful and secure that the ancient Mediterranean world had ever experienced."

Before going on with specific details, the history of the domination, decline, and fall of the Roman Empire may be broadly outlined in the following seven stages:

- (1) The period from 27 B.C. to 68 A.D. included the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero—the Julio-Claudian line.
- (2) In the year 69-70 Rome saw four different rulers on the throne — Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian! It was a year of chaos and revolt, but it was only temporary and peace returned to the empire.
- (3) The period 70-192 witnessed the resumption of the pax Romana and the growth of the Empire to its greatest geographical extent. The Flavian house—Vespasian, Titus, Domitian—was followed by the "five good emperors" (Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius) plus Commodus, the last of the Antonine line.
- (4) The period 192-284 (the bulk of the 3rd century A.D.) is "characterized by the complete collapse of government and economics throughout the Mediterranean"! (Langer, 127.) This drastic decline would have been fatal had it not been for the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine.
- (5) Diocletian ruled 284-305. His administrative reorganization of the empire set the pattern for the "image of the beast", the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchical government.

Outline of the domination, decline, and fall of the Roman Empire concluded:

- (6) Constantine ruled 305-337. He completed the restructuring of the Empire begun by Diocletian. During his reign "Christianity" became recognized and legalized in the Empire.
- (7) The period of final decline and fall may be dated 337-476 and after. The Germanic invaders from the north could no longer be held outside the Empire.

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- 12-37 A.D. Reign of Tiberius. During his first two years he was co-ruler with Augustus. This significant reign witnessed the ministry of John the Baptist, the ministry and death of Jesus, and the beginning of the true New Testament Church. One day Tiberius will wake up to realize the significance of the historical events that transpired in Palestine during his period of rule!
- 26-27 In this 15th year of the reign of Tiberius (dating from the year 12-13 when his co-rule began) John the Baptist conducted his ministry of repentance all about the Jordan River before Jesus was baptized by him (Luke 3:1-3). It should be noted here that, on the basis of the latest evidence, the reign of Tiberius should be dated October to October (not April to April as the "Crucifixion" booklet states — Dr. Hoeh needs to re-write this section also). Therefore his first year was Oct. 12 A.D. to Oct. 13 A.D. and his 15th year October of 26 to October of 27. Thus the ministry of John the Baptist, which probably lasted some six months, occurred during the last half of Tiberius' 15th year or from the spring to the autumn of 27 A.D. when Jesus' $3\frac{1}{2}$ year ministry began.
- 27-31 The ministry of Christ covered a period of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years from the autumn of 27 to the spring of 31 when the crucifixion occurred. Jesus began to preach publicly in A.D. 28 at Pentecost (Luke 4:16; see page 32 of the "Crucifixion" booklet).
- 27-37 Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judaea during this period of ten years. Apparently he was appointed to office prior to January of 27 and then took office some time during the first months of 27 A.D.
- 31 The arrest and execution of Sejanus, who was plotting against the Emperor, form an important part of the background of events in the Empire in relation to the crucifixion of Jesus as discussed by Dr. Hoeh in the "Rome package" syllabus material (discussed on p. 119 in Langer). In this same crucial year the New Testament Church began on the Day of Pentecost.
- 33 Simon Magus "dunked" (Acts 8). This marks the true origin of the Roman Catholic Church! (For this and subsequent events in early church history, see Lesson 49 of the Correspondance Course, the first in the series on the true history of the true church.)
- 35 Early in this year Saul was converted on the road to Damascus.
- 45 Simon Magus goes to Rome.
- 49 Ministerial conference at the headquarters church (Acts 15).

- 50 Paul goes to Europe — second 19-year cycle begins on Day of Pentecost (Acts 16).
- 54-68 Reign of Nero. Nero is important because of his relationship to the life of Paul, his persecution of the Christians in Rome, and the fact that his inept and dissolute rule culminated in the revolutionary and chaotic period of 69-70 when Jerusalem fell.
- 56 Paul writes the Epistle to the Romans. He is placed under arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21).
- 57-58 Paul remains under arrest and appears before Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II (50-100, page 115 in Langer). It was before Festus that Paul made his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12; 23:11). The full story is contained in chapters 21 through 26 of the Book of Acts.
- 59 Paul sails to Rome. This is the same year in which Nero murdered his mother, Agrippina! (Langer, p. 120.)
- 59-61 Paul's first Roman imprisonment lasted two years (Acts 28:30). He was released in 61.
- 62 After being released from Prison, Paul journeyed to Spain, England, and undoubtedly made a circuit of all Northwestern Europe. In this same year James, the Lord's brother, was martyred by being thrown from a high window of the temple.
- 64 A great fire destroyed most of Rome. Nero blamed his act of "slum clearance" on the Christians who were severely persecuted (Langer, 120).
- 66 Beginning of the Jewish revolt in Judaea which culminated in 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 67-68 Paul's second and last Roman imprisonment. He was arrested somewhere in Asia, taken again to Rome, and was beheaded in 68. Peter was killed in this same year. Nero committed suicide in a villa outside Rome ending the Julio-Claudian line of emperors.
- 69-70 This brief but violent period witnessed the rise and fall of three emperors—Galba, Otho, and Vitellius—before Vespasian stabilized the realm and founded the Flavian dynasty. This was a time of revolution in the entire Roman Empire and brought about the following key developments:
- (1) The second 19-year cycle ended for the Ephesian era of the Church because all public meetings were banned—the New Testament Church was no longer able to speak and reach people with the Gospel in a public manner. The authorities put an end to all public and private meetings in order to prevent the possibility of further revolution!
 - (2) Jerusalem fell, the Jews were slaughtered by the Roman armies under Titus (autumn of 70).
 - (3) Prior to this the Jerusalem headquarters church had fled to Pella.
 - (4) The Temple was burnt!

- 77-84 Conquest of Britain by the Romans. Despite later revolts, the Romanization of Britain continued rapidly from this time forward (Langer, 122).
- 79 An eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, on the Bay of Naples, buried Pompeii as well as another city, Herculaneum. And the next year, 80 A.D., a severe fire occurred in Rome.
- 96 The Emperor Domitian ruled 81-96. He is known for his responsibility in the imprisonment of John. He was finally assassinated in 96 A.D. (the event which marks the end of the Flavian line—Langer, p. 123) which leads to the implication that 96 is the year when John was released from Roman captivity (he had been banished to the island of Patmos, Rev. 1:9) The decade of the 90's A.D. is the one during which John's Gospel, his three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation were written.
- 96-98 Reign of the elderly Nerva (born 35 A.D.). Since Nerva and his three successors had no sons of their own (many Emperors had no male heir!), the principle of adoption, triumphing over heredity, secured a succession of capable rulers known as "the five good emperors"—Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius—Nerva's accession marking the beginning of the Antonine line which endured until 192.
- 98 Death of the Apostle John.
- 98-117 Reign of Emperor Trajan. He allowed Christians peace instead of persecution—though the law demanded persecution—because truly repentant and converted Christians were obedient, peaceful, dependable—the kind of subjects any government appreciates! (CC Lesson 49, page 10.)
- 122-127 In Britain, Hadrian (117-138) builds his wall across the island (Langer, page 124).
- 132-135 The Jews of Judaea revolted upon the founding of a Roman colony (Aelia Capitolina) in Jerusalem and the dedication of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of their temple. Their leaders were the priest Eleazar and the fanatic, Simon Bar Cocheba. As Dr. Hoeh explained in the "Rome package" syllabus material, Eusebius in his Church History, records that the Romans were not able to build this pagan temple because supernatural balls of fire came out to strike the workmen! It was not that the Jews put a stop to it because they were powerless to do so—it was the result of divine intervention. Remember that this is in the latter years of the reign of Hadrian. The suppression of the revolt all but depopulated Judaea and thereafter Jews could enter Jerusalem but once a year; Jerusalem was made a Roman colony. This completed the denationalization of the Jews begun by Vespasian. Until 1919 the Jews of the Dispersion (Diaspora), scattered among other peoples and generally despised, possessed only a racial and religious unity. The two great editions of the Talmud were prepared in Babylon in the late 5th century (Langer, 124).
- 135 Most of the Pella congregation apostatizes marking the end of the Ephesian era and the beginning of the Smyrna era.
- 154 Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna who had been trained by the apostle John, contended unsuccessfully with Anicetus, the bishop of Rome, about keeping the Passover. Anicetus held to Easter observance!

- 155 What happened next? You guessed it—Polycarp is burnt to death!
- 161-180 Reign of Marcus Aurelius, a distinguished Stoic philosopher; he was the author, in Greek, of Meditations. His reign represents the triumph of Stoicism. Read about the origin and significance of the Stoic philosophy in Dr. Martin's "Race Change" paper. Langer, page 125 states that, "Marcus is said to have issued a severe rescript against the Christians. In any case, they were subjected to increasingly bitter and far-reaching persecution, probably as fomenters of trouble by their prophecies of evil, and as disloyal to the state because they would not swear oaths to the emperor or offer incense to his statues or serve in the army." This description could, of course, apply as much to false Christians of the time—the not-yet legally recognized developing Catholic church—as to Christians of the Smyrna era, if not more so.
- 167-185 This was the first of four periods in which unbelievable wars, famines, plagues and natural disasters calamitously reduced the Roman Empire to rubble! The second was from 250-265 A.D., the third from 395 to 410 A.D., and the fourth, and by far the most distressing period of all, was from 525 to 610 A.D. (during and after the time of Justinian). These events are discussed in the article "Will We Ever Learn?" by Dr. Martin in the August, 1965, Plain Truth. These calamities are as much the cause of the decline and fall of Rome as any other single factor!! Yet many historians almost completely overlook them. Langer mentions very briefly the first two of these periods (pp. 125, 129).
- 180-192 Reign of Commodus, last of the Antonine line. He was the first emperor since Domitian to succeed by birth rather than by adoption. Boak gives the following description: "Lucius Aurelius Commodus, the ignoble son of a noble father, is one of the few in the long line of Roman rulers of whom nothing good can be said. Cowardly, cruel, and sensual, he gave himself up to a life of pleasure and left the conduct of the government in the hands of a succession of favorites, who used their power to further their own interests His chief ambition was to win fame as a gladiator. He frequently appeared in the arena. . . . (A History of Rome to 565 A.D., p. 269.) Langer describes his fitting end: "On Dec. 31, 192, his concubine Marcia, his chamberlain Eclectus, and the praetorian praefect Laetus had him strangled by a wrestler named Narcissus" (p. 126). As stated earlier, the period from 192 to 284 witnessed a drastic decline in the Empire which was saved only by the drastic measures of two strong rulers, Diocletian and Constantine.
- 193-211 Reign of Septimius Severus. He was the first Roman Emperor not of Roman extraction—he was a Phoenician from North Africa. See page 37 fd. in "The Race Change". And thus the Carthaginians triumphed over Rome after all!
- 195 Polycrates of Asia Minor defended the Passover before Victor of Rome; but Victor "excommunicated" those in Asia who still kept the Passover!
- 218-222 Brief reign of Elagabalus who was a full-fledged priest of the sun god in his native country of Syria. See Dr. Martin's description of him on pp. 38-39 of "The Race Change". He was murdered by the praetorian guard.
- 227 Founding of the New Persian Empire by Ardashir. This meant more problems for the trouble-ridden Empire—another enemy to hold off!

- 235-285 "The period of fifty years from 235 to 285 A.D. is a prolonged repetition of the shorter epochs of civil war of 68-69 and 193-197 A.D. During this interval twenty-six Augusti, including such as were colleagues in the Imperium, obtained recognition in Rome and of these only one escaped violent death. In addition, there were numerous usurpers or 'tyrants,' as candidates who failed to make good their claims to the principate were called. Almost all of these emperors were the nominees of the soldiery, and at least possessed military qualifications that were above the average. In general they conscientiously devoted themselves to the task of restoring order in the Empire, but their efforts were in the main nullified by the treachery of their own troops and the rise of rival emperors The main cause of this disorganization lay in the fact that the professional army had lost all sense of loyalty to the Empire" (Boak, p. 276).
- 249-251 Reign of Decius who "instituted the first general persecution of the Christians, and perhaps of all who would not sacrifice to the emperor. Emperor-worship, though used as early as Pliny as a test against Christians, seems now to have become a requirement of all loyal subjects, which indicates a growing belief in the actual divinity of the emperor" (Langer, 129).
- 250-265 This second period of great calamity in the Roman world included plague, famine, war, and earthquakes. A full one-half of the human race were completely wiped out of existence in this short 15 years!
- 253-268 Reigns of Valerianus (253-259) and Gallienus (259-268) under whom, in the words of Boak, p. 277, "the fortunes of the empire reached their lowest ebb!" During the rule of the former, as the frontiers ceased to hold, cities within the empire began to build walls. In the days of the latter, pretenders appeared throughout the empire and the period has been called that of the "thirty tyrants" (Langer, 129).
- 284-305 Reign of Diocletian, whose reforms along with those of Constantine, saved the Roman Empire which was about to collapse from internal and external problems! The Empire was divided into two parts, east and west (the two legs of the image, Dan. 21) with the dividing line running from the Danube down to the Adriatic coast south of Dalmatia. The two major spheres were subdivided into four praefectures—Gaul, Italy, Illyricum, and the East. Then each praefecture was divided into several dioceses: and, lastly, the dioceses were subdivided into provinces (a total of 116). This period in the history of Rome is very important in relation to the Bible because it is the time when the final structure of "the Beast" was settled from which the "image of the Beast"—the governmental organization of the burgeoning Roman Catholic Church—was copied!! (Langer, p. 131.)
- 303-313 A period of general persecution of the Christians under Diocletian. These ten years of persecution are referred to prophetically as ten days in the history of the Smyrna Era of the true Church in Rev. 2:10. This was a direct attempt to extirpate Christianity in all forms, whether true or heretical, in the whole Empire! As Langer notes, the persecution was stopped in the entire west in 306—after just three years—but raged in the east until 313. This is the reason the Catholic Church in the West survived to be so strong later. (Langer, 132.)

The Administrative Divisions of Diocletian 5th century



305-337 Reign of Constantine the Great. Christianity was too widespread to root out so, under Constantine, it was legalized. As Dr. Hoeh explains, it was brought into the government—tied to the government—so the government could control it! The key events in the reign follow:

- (1) 311 — Galerius, Licinius, and Constantine, in concert, issued an edict which put an end to the persecution of Christians and granted them the right to practice their religion.
- (2) 312 — Battle of the Milvian Bridge before which Constantine said he saw a cross in the sky and the device in hoc signo vinces (Langer, 133).
- (3) 313 — Edict of Milan. "In 313 Constantine and Licinius met at Milan, where they issued a joint edict of toleration, which placed Christianity upon an equal footing with the pagan cults of the state. Although this edict enunciated the principle of religious toleration for the Empire, it was issued with the view to win the political support of the Christians and pointed unmistakably to Christianity as the future state religion" (Boak, pp. 347-348).
- (4) 321 — Constantine designated Sunday as a general holiday. This "was in full accord with his policy of toleration, for although this was the day celebrated by Christians (?) as "the Lord's day," as the "day of the Sun" it could be celebrated by pagans also" (Boak, p. 350).

Key events in the reign of Constantine concluded:

- (5) 325 — Council of Nicaea. This was the world's first ecumenical (world-wide) council in the history of Catholicism! The Eleventh edition of the Britannica emphasizes that this "was the first attempt to fix the criteria of Christian orthodoxy by means of definitely formulated pronouncements on the content of Christian belief" Key topics were the date for the observance of Easter, the Arian controversy, and the doctrine of the Trinity.
- (6) 330 — Dedication of Constantinople as capital (Langer, 133). Until this year Constantine issued coins with the image of the Sun-god, with whom the emperor was often identified (Boak, 350).
- (7) 337 — Death of Constantine. On his death bed he was baptized by aspersion—otherwise known as sprinkling! This is the first recorded act of sprinkling in all of church history!!

- 343 Meeting of the Council of Sardica, composed of Western leaders only—it was not a universal or ecumenical council! It confirmed the Western feeling that the bishop of Rome ought to be the head of the Church by sanctioning Pope Julius as the final arbiter in disputes resulting from the Arian controversy.
- 361-363 Reign of Julian "the Apostate", the last emperor who did not favor Christianity. He wanted to substitute paganism for Christianity (Langer, 133). His statements about Christ help prove He was an actual historical figure (see Dr. Hoeh's comments in the syllabus material on Rome).
- 376 Exactly 100 years before the traditional date for the fall of the Roman Empire, the Visigoths crossed the Danube into the Empire. This is the date usually given to mark the beginning of the German invasions.
- 378 Battle of Adrianople. The Emperor Valens is killed. This marks the beginning of the end for the Empire. After this the Romans were never again able to keep the barbarians out of the Roman boundaries.
- 395-410 This marks the third period of great calamity to strike the Empire. See Dr. Martin's article (August, 1965, Plain Truth).
- 407 The Romans evacuate Britain.
- 410 The Visigoths sack Rome under Alaric (Langer, 134). First time in 800 years!!
- 429 The Vandals under Gaiseric, after a two-year siege of Hippo (where its bishop, Augustine dies in 430), seize North Africa.
- 435 The Vandal kingdom in Africa is recognized by the Roman government.
- 449 The Angles and Saxons leave Europe and move into Britain due to pressure from the vast Hunnic realm under Attila.
- 451 The Huns are stopped at the Battle of Chalons (Langer, 135). This was the most significant battle of antiquity because it meant the survival of the Roman concept of government in Europe, later promoted by Charlemagne.
- 455 The Vandals under Gaiseric sack Rome.
- 476 The Herulian, Odovacar, deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor in the west, at Ravenna. This is the traditional date for the end of the Roman Empire.