

ROME; REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE

On page 98 in Langer we find the discussion of the First Punic War which began a series of wars with these Carthaginians of North Africa.

Who Were the Carthaginians?

Other names for the Carthaginians were the Puni or the Phoenicians. The Carthaginians were Canaanites of the family of Sidon (Gen. 10:15). The man Sidon was the father of the Sidonians; their chief city was Sidon. A city founded by the Sidonians on the coast of Palestine, in addition to Sidon, was Tyre. (Note page 120 of volume one of the Compendium for a discussion of the Canaanite Carthaginians.) And the Tyrians, about 140 years after Solomon, had an internal problem as a result of which a group of Sidonians left Tyre and founded Carthage in North Africa. So Carthage became the great North African center of the Sidonians.

The Sidonian-Carthaginians were not Negroes. The Sidonians represent what we would call Mediterranean whites. Augustine of Hippo in North Africa, in his own literature, called himself of the family of Canaan; he looked upon himself in this sense as a Canaanite. It is very interesting and striking that the leading light, the man who set the stage for Roman Catholic theology more than any other person, should be a Canaanite Sidonian from North Africa!—a man whose ancestors were probably Baal worshippers in the days of Jezebel!

Destructiveness of the Romans

Now when you read material about Rome you will discover that all things not Roman are looked upon as uneducated, uncivilized, warlike. In short, all non-Romans are everything bad that the Romans are not! That is, until you read the picture of Rome presented by the "barbarians" and then you discover the story was not just all one-sided!

Years ago on radio there used to be a very interesting program called "Invitation to Learning." On one program they interviewed a group of men, some of them historians, and they were discussing the Roman Empire. One of the men making a study of it was asked about it, and he was not a historian. Now guess who was right! The non-historian was right! When he was asked the question, he said, "Gentlemen, it is commonly thought that wherever Rome went, Rome civilized the world. But when I read history, I don't see it that way. I discover that wherever Rome went Rome destroyed!" And you'd be surprised how much of that is really true.

The only thing Rome really did was to build roads—and the primary reason they did it was not to meet the needs of the New Testament Church! It was not because of the need for circulating the government mail for the people. It was the need of the Roman army, so they could move the army on the double from place to place!

Celts to Black Sea Area

Between 225-222 B.C. we read in page 99 that, "Large hordes of Celts moved from the Po Valley to Etruria. The Romans surrounded and slew a considerable body" of them. These Celts or Bavarians were seeking to have more territory than just in the Po area in which to live. And they finally came into conflict with Rome and Rome expelled the whole lot of them from the Po and all northern Italy.

In fact, when the story is over, you will discover that the Bavarians disappear from this part of the world entirely and were ultimately driven to the north shores of the Black Sea where they stayed for many, many years and do not make their reappearance in the history of Europe for a long time to come. Actually it was upwards of five centuries before the Bavarians remake their appearance in this part of the world. From that time on they were living as a large group in the plains of the Ukraine. We must read Bavarian history for that.

Rome Had to Have a Standing Army

Due to her military victories Rome acquired more and more overseas territories. Thus on page 101 in Langer (middle of first column) we read, "A further effect of these transmarine provinces was that it became necessary to maintain a standing army." During the Middle Ages this was not true; there was no such thing as a standing army until Napoleon developed it on the basis of the Prussian idea, and the Prussians in turn copied many of Napoleon's ideas. But we could say that during the later period of the Hapsburg dynasty there was no such thing as a true standing army. It has only come into vogue again in the last 200 years.

A few lines farther along on page 101 we read, "Though the fiction of annual re-enlistment and the requirement of a property qualification were maintained, the soldiers became in fact professional and served for 20 years or more. They could not then return to farms which would have passed into other hands or fallen into decay, and so they had either to be settled in colonies or allowed to congregate in Rome." So a serious problem developed in regard to farming. If you were to read Larned's Ready Reference Series, subject "Italy: Agriculture", you would discover one of the biggest problems that the Italians faced was how to keep cultivating the soil, and yet take the farmers off the soil and put them in the army. The old saying goes that so many men were away that other men were "plowing" with the soldiers' wives—which had a dual meaning!

The problem became very, very serious. As the decades passed it came to the place, before it was all over—I'm getting way ahead of the story—that people had to be passed on from owner to owner and they had to stay with a certain specific piece of land. A person was finally reduced to the status of a serf and to stay with the property—he couldn't move away from it! In a sense, they were in chains! So, gradually these poor farmers, whenever they could, moved to the city and lived on the dole. Very terrible conditions like this existed even by New Testament times—because Rome for 200 years now, you see, had been amassing these overseas provinces and colonies and had to draw on their own people to maintain them (just like the Portuguese later tried it and failed).

Rome Constantly at War

In the 200's B.C. the Romans were fighting wars with the Carthaginians, with the Syrians, in Greece—in fact, all around the world the Romans were making war. And it was not really until the time of Augustus Caesar (formerly Octavian) that there was any peace in the Roman world! The period of Pax Romana (Roman Peace) was not until after all these enemies were obliterated in war after war.

The Romans, after all, couldn't destroy everybody completely. No nation has ever come to the place in war where it can completely extirpate all other people! Now the Nazis ultimately had such a plan in mind, no doubt. The first step was to extirpate all Jews out of Europe—then all Gypsies, all Poles and other Slavs, all others until only Germans were left in the world. But even their modern methods could not achieve it.

On page 102 in Lenger we note that the Third Punic War ended in 146 B.C. with the destruction of Carthage. By this year Rome had conquered all the western Mediterranean area. The list of 8 provinces held in 146 is listed in the second column: Sicily, Sardinia, the two portions of Spain, the southern part of France, Illyricum, Africa, Macedonia, and Achaia.

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The Problems of the Republic

Now keep in mind that all this time Rome is still a Republic with co-rulers called Consuls and a Senate. Rome did not become a valid Empire until 31 B.C.! Rome was a Republic but was facing collapse internally! You begin to see these revolutions over and over again.

On page 104 in column one we read, "The state control of the GRAIN supply became a means whereby demagogues could win popular support (by reducing the price and by increasing the number of eligible beneficiaries)." Look, Rome was a huge city controlling the world, and whoever controlled Rome had to control the grain supply because whoever controlled the grain supply could control Rome. They could starve the city! The Romans couldn't produce enough food because the farmers were gone, the farms were deteriorating, so many people were in Rome on the dole that Italy and Rome itself could have been struggled if somebody got control of the supply of grain! And the grain came mainly out of Egypt. Unusual as it may seem to us now, the breadbasket of the world at that time was Egypt. Today it's not—today it's the cesspool!

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Druids Flee to Germany From Gaul

On page 109, column one, we read that in 52 B.C., "All Gaul flared into revolt under Vercingetorix. Caesar . . . finally won a complete victory and captured Vercingetorix. He spent the year 51 ruthlessly suppressing the remaining insurgents." So various elements in Gaul were suppressed and it is probable that at this time many peoples in Gaul fled to Germany—because we know that during this and later times, especially under Claudius (pp. 119-120), almost all known Druids in Gaul fled to Germany. They were the religious leaders, the teachers in the area (and there were some Germanic tribes in Gaul in those earlier days though they were Celtic-speaking).

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New Testament Times

The date of the birth of Christ is given on page 115, column one, as 4 B.C. which is correct. However, the death of Herod the Great was in 3 B.C., not 4 B.C. In this connection you should re-read "The Crucifixion Was Not On Friday."

Note also the discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls and mention of the Jewish revolt known as the Bar Cocheba (132-135 A.D.)

The chart on page 116 of "The House of Herod the Great" and all the relationships of the family are nicely laid out here. You can use this to clarify and back up any statements in the Book of Acts. Notice that Herod Agrippa I died in 44 A.D. and Herod Agrippa II died in 100 A.D. You will notice Salome and other members of the family scattered through here. There were intermarriages with other stocks.

Notice on page 117 that Caesar Augustus died in 14 A.D. and was succeeded by Tiberius. However, Tiberius had been associated on the throne already in 12 A.D.; hence we have the story of the government of Tiberius Caesar that is referred to

in Luke 3:1-3 where it is stated that John the Baptist began his work "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." This was not fifteen years after the death of Augustus. Rather, this means the 15th year of the responsibility in government of Tiberius. Most people don't accept Luke's statement because they want to believe in a "Good Friday" in 33 A.D.; hence they have to have the crucifixion in 33 and start the ministry of Christ in 29 A.D. instead of 27 A.D. because they reckon from 14 A.D. and not 12 A.D. in regard to Tiberius!

On page 118 is another chart, "The Julian-Claudian House"—the whole family relationship of the early Emperors from Augustus to Nero is given here. Do you see how often an Emperor dies without an heir? In almost every case a ruler has no heir: Augustus had no male heir; Nero has no male heir in the lineage; Tiberius has no male heir; Claudius has none; Caligula has none. Just look at that chart! If they had heirs they were daughters. This problem was due to the fact that they were practicing all kinds of birth control—who knows by what means! The idea was, unlike the Germans, that the Romans looked upon children as needless for the upper classes. They wanted to enjoy life without responsibility!

Here on page 119 see Ponius Pilate, procurator of Judaea, mentioned. His dates are given as 26-36 A.D. This is not true. His actual term was 27-37, January to January.

Now, most of the things stated here are correct. If I point out a few errors, it's incidental—but every one that exists pertains to the Bible! Somehow, when these men begin to study matters that pertain to the Bible they get all confused! It's as if they can't believe their eyes! Josephus is the only evidence: Josephus says that Pilate was governing for ten years. Josephus says furthermore that, at the end of this ten year period, Pilate was kicked out of his office and was immediately ordered back to Rome. While he was on the way back, Tiberius died—which was 37 A.D.! And that was in the spring. So the answer is that he was governor not from the beginning of 26 but from the beginning of 27 to the beginning of 37.

Why do they use the date 26 A.D.? Well, there are people who don't want to believe in 33 A.D. as the year of the crucifixion, they can't believe in 31 because that's a Wednesday so they've got to believe in 30—when they hope it could have been on Friday, even though it wasn't! And therefore they have to have the ministry of Christ begin in 26—instead of 29 to 33 they have it 26 to 30.

Now notice what is stated near the bottom of column one under the date 31 A.D.: "The plots of SEJANUS finally came to the notice of Tiberius, who engineered his arrest and execution." Now the story of this Sejanus is very interesting! Someone brought to my attention the fact that in 31 A.D. Sejanus had such power that there were some serious problems in the Roman Empire until he was caught! Those in positions of authority like Pilate had to be fearful. And the thing was this: Pilate was extremely afraid of what the Jews might say, that they could accuse Pilate to the Emperor—and almost immediately Pilate would have lost his life! And he was afraid. That's why when Pilate said of Jesus, "I don't find anything wrong in this man," the Jews said, listen carefully, "We have no king but Caesar!" That was their retort. Pilate thought twice at that point! His life could have been at stake! If the Jews had wanted Pilate out of the way, they could have accused him and the leaders in the Empire would have listened to the Jews and not any local officials. That's why he was afraid. And it was 31 A.D. when this situation was at its climax forming a significant background climate for the circumstances of Christ's death. Langer goes on to state that "Tiberius remained in rigid seclusion" because he was afraid of what might happen. There were real problems in the government and anybody who looked suspicious was punished!

On pages 119-120 the reign of Emperor Claudius is discussed. Remember that he was the man who expelled the Jews from Rome. During his time there was a famine, but that point is not mentioned here in Langer. Anyway, the important thing is that under him there was an invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. and this was the beginning of the annexation of Britain into the Roman world. "The British leader Caractacus was finally captured in 51." However, many of the British royal family so impressed the Romans that they were given freedom in the court.

Claudius died in 54 A.D. and a young man, age 17, comes to the throne—Nero! He was born in 37, came to power in 54. In 61, when Paul was released—and I take it that he might have appeared before Nero the first time—Nero could not have been more than 24 years old. When Paul appealed unto Caesar in 56 A.D. (Acts 25:10-12) Nero was only 19 years of age. You know, I imagine we think of these Caesars as being elderly, Johnsonian (Pres. LBJ) types, but this was not the case at all!

"He began his rule well under the guidance of the philosopher Seneca . . . But in spirit he was an actor and wished to play the monarch in the grand manner . . . He deserted Octavia" his wife for these other women. "Finally he murdered his mother Agrippina in 59." When Paul reached Rome Nero had his mind on that! We are told here that after 62 "he divorced, exiled, and murdered Octavia, and married Poppaea" who was a Jewess— so the Jews did have a reasonably high position. And undoubtedly some of the problems that arose with the Jews were due to the fact that they got into a bad reputation with the Jewish wife of Nero.

In the middle of the second column on page 120 the Apostle Paul is mentioned. Here it is said that he was brought to trial before Felix in 60 A.D. I think this date is totally wrong. I think it is quite clear when we study the Book of Acts that he was arrested in 56; and then the years he was brought before various rulers was in 57 and 58 A.D. And then in 59 he was sent westward to Rome just after his final appearance before Festus and Herod Agrippa II (Acts 26).

Of course these men could have let Paul go. Do you know why they didn't release him? Because they were waiting for him to pay them—they were waiting for a bribe! The New Testament makes it very plain (Acts 24:25-27). They were hoping that Paul would pay them to release him. And he was in prison for two years and more because these people didn't get any money. They didn't care one bit about what the Jews were saying! In fact, the Jews who wanted to get rid of Paul had probably almost forgotten about him because he had been gone for two years, 56-58—and then he was in prison for nearly another year before he was sent toward Rome. And there he was in jail for two more years! And there the Jews hadn't even heard about the situation. They just wanted him out of the way so they could get their minds on something else.

69 A.D.—A Year of Revolt!

Nero committed suicide in 68 (page 121) and Galba came to the throne. Galba was an old man. "By the recognition of Galba, the helpless senate admitted that, in the words of Tacitus, 'emperors could be made elsewhere than at Rome!'" Then, as we see at the bottom of the first column, during this year of 68-69 there were four emperors—Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian—all of whom were appointed by different armies to try to take over!

Top of the second column on page 121: 69, Jan. 1. "The eight legions on the Rhine refused allegiance to Galba, and on Jan. 3 the four in lower Germany saluted

as emperor their legate Anulus Vitellius Thereupon Marcus Salvius Otho (b. 32), a dissolute friend of Nero . . . had returned with Galba, secured the support of the praetorians and had Galba and Piso murdered (Jan. 15). The helpless Senate then recognized him." Meanwhile, other parts of the Roman world were recognizing Vitellius.

So there was one Emperor after Nero all through the year 68, Galba. Then beginning with Jan. 1 of 69 A.D. the whole Empire fell apart with revolution!

One part of the army sided with Vitellius, another sided with Otho. But on Apr. 19 Otho committed suicide—that ended that! And then Vespasian was declared Emperor by the armies in Egypt. Later, on Dec. 20th, Vitellius was slain!

All this took place in the space of one year. This was a revolutionary year that brought about the complete cessation of all public meetings! Everything had to cease. And the reason the New Testament Church was no longer able to speak is that this year was a year of revolution throughout the Roman Empire. The authorities put an end to all public and private meetings in order to prevent the possibility of revolution!

Upon the death of Vitellius, "The senate immediately recognized Vespasian." The representative of Vespasian, Mucianus, "reached Rome in Jan. (70), and he ruled it until Vespasian arrived during the summer" of that year—because he had been in the east in the meantime.

And now Vespasian is the founder of a new dynasty, the Flavian dynasty, which included Titus, Domitian (who imprisoned the Apostle John), Nerva, and Trajan as you see on the next pages. We will take up their story in the next class.

So this gives you a picture of the Roman world from the time of the First Punic War down to 70 A.D.