
a *Grace Notes* course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study

by Warren Doud

Lesson 212: **Acts 12:1-11**

ACTS, Lesson 212, Acts 12:1-11

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acts 12:1-11 | 3 |
| Acts 12:1 | 3 |
| Acts 12:2 | 3 |
| Acts 12:3 | 4 |
| Acts 12:4 | 4 |
| Acts 12:5 | 5 |
| Acts 12:6 | 6 |
| Acts 12:7 | 6 |
| Acts 12:8 | 7 |
| Acts 12:9 | 7 |
| Acts 12:10 | 7 |
| Acts 12:11 | 8 |
| Herod | 8 |
| The Family of Herod | 8 |
| Herod the Great | 9 |
| Herod Agrippa I | 11 |
| The Roman Empire – A Short History | 12 |

Acts 12:1-11**Acts 12:1**

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

About that time

That is, about the time of the famine in Judea; the early part of the year 44 AD, since that is the year of Herod Agrippa's death.

Herod the King

Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great and king of Palestine for nearly three years, from 42 to 44 AD.

Topic: Roman History**Topic: Herod (the Herodian family)****stretched forth his hands**

NAS: "laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them."

NIV: "arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them."

Herod didn't personally arrest the believers; rather he encouraged his servants and soldiers to abuse Christians, to do things like harass them at their services, beat them up in the streets, and put some of them in jail.

Calvin: "This man was incensed to afflict the Church, not so much for any love he had for religion, as that by this means he might flatter the common people . . . He shed innocent blood, so that, according to the common craft of kings, he might gratify a furious people."¹

to vex (NAS: mistreat; NIV: persecute)

Aorist active infinitive of **kakow** from **kako~** "evil", hence "to do harm, or evil to". Probably the first who were afflicted were scourged or imprisoned.

¹ Calvin, Acts 12:1

Gloag: "The enemies of the church had now increased in number and influence. At first they were confined to the members of the Sanhedrin, and their close associates, especially the Sadducees. Afterwards, in the persecution which arose around Stephen, the people and their rulers united; but still the civil power of Rome was not hostile to believers. But now the Roman authority, in the person of the Rome-appointed king Herod Agrippa, is combined with the ecclesiastical power of the chief priests and the fanaticism of the people."²

certain of the church.

(NAS, NIV: "some who belonged to the church")

Herod Agrippa was intent on getting rid of all of the church leaders who were in his territory, which by now included a very extensive region.

Acts 12:2

And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

(NAS and NIV: "he had James ... put to death")

This is James the son of Zebedee, who was called The Elder, as distinguished from James the son of Alphaeus. He was one of three disciples who witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter, who saw the transfiguration and Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. James is the first apostle to be martyred.

We don't know why there is so much information about the death of Stephen and so little about the death of James. Herod likely selected James because he was prominent among the Christians and a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Jesus prophesied that apostles would be put to death.

Mark 10:38,39, But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they

² Gloag, Acts 12:1

said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:"

The Romans had deprived the Jews of the power of life and death; but Judea at this time Herod's rule, and he had that power because he had been appointed king by the Roman Senate.

There would have been a trial, just for appearances. There was probably a great clamor of crowds of Jews calling for James' death, just as there had been at the trials of the Lord Jesus.

James was probably beheaded. John the Baptist was beheaded, too. It was a common enough form of Roman execution, and would have pleased the Jews even more, because they considered beheading a shameful death.

Acts 12:3

And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

it pleased the Jews

We see in Josephus that Herod Agrippa badly wanted to be popular.

- He gained the favor of the Jews by taking a great personal risk to persuade Caligula not to build a statue to himself in Jerusalem.
- He made Jerusalem his main residence in Judea, and he was strict in his observance of the Mosaic law.
- He relieved the citizens of Jerusalem of the house tax and erected beautiful public buildings.
- He also started the construction of a new wall around Jerusalem, to render the city impregnable.
- Josephus: "This king was by nature very liberal in his gifts and ambitious to oblige people with large donations. He took delight

in giving and rejoiced in living in good reputation."³

He had James killed to please the Jews, and now he is going to sacrifice the life of Peter as well.

he proceeded further to take Peter also

Peter was one of the most conspicuous men in the church, and he had already earned the hatred of the Jews by his severe and hard-hitting teaching, and by his success in winning people to Christ. It was natural that he would be the next object of attack.

days of unleavened bread

This was the time of Passover. This was a fine time for Agrippa to make some kind of public demonstration of extra zeal against the Christians. There were crowds of Jews present (possible a million or more from out of town).

Acts 12:4

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

NAS: "and when he had seized him"

NIV: "After arresting him..."

he put him in prison

This was Peter's third imprisonment (cf. Acts 4:35 and 5:18). The first time, Peter and John were released because the Sanhedrin feared that the people would start a riot, because they had seen the lame man get healed. In the second imprisonment, the Sanhedrin wanted to put the apostles to death, but Gamaliel persuaded them not to try to fight against God. This time was even more dire, because Peter was now in the equivalent of Roman custody.

In the Roman Empire, imprisonment was usually not considered punishment; prisoners were kept in custody to await trial, which could

³ Josephus, Ant. xix. 7. 3

result in the prisoner being released, exiled, scourged, or put to death.

During the Passover it would have not been proper to have a criminal trial. Herod's purpose would have been to keep Peter in custody until the Passover had ended.⁴

delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers

Greek: **tessarsi tetradiōi~ stratiōtwn**

There were four soldiers in a quaternion, so there were sixteen soldiers in all. The soldiers would take shifts of six hours each, the usual Roman custom. In each shift of four soldiers, two would stand guard on the outside of the cell, and two would be with the prisoner, chained with him on the left and right.

Agrippa had probably heard of Peter's previous escape, so he was taking no chances this time.

intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

NAS: "intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people."

NIV: "Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover."

Peter was in the inner, or lower, ward of the prison, so he would be led up and out to the judgment seat where Agrippa would be sitting.

According to the strict Jews, it was not considered lawful to defile the feast days with executions, and Agrippa was a strict observer of the laws. Recall, however, that the rule was not observed in the case of the Lord Jesus, who was crucified during the Passover week.

The commentator Adam Clarke (1762-1832) got totally bent out of shape here over the use of the word "Easter" in the King James.

Clarke writes⁵: "Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd, translation than that

⁴ Baker, Acts 12:4

⁵ Clarke, Acts 12:4

in our text. But before I come to explain the word, it is necessary to observe that our term called Easter is not exactly the same with the Jewish Passover. This festival is always held on the 14th day after the first vernal full moon ..." And he goes on into a detailed explanation of how the Easter date is calculated, ending with the statement that the 25th of April is the latest date on which Easter can occur.

Then he says, "The term Easter, inserted here by our translators, they borrowed from Anglo-Saxon service books, or from their version of the Gospels.

"So we have in Matthew 26:2, 'Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover (**to pasca**), but the Anglo Saxon have "Wite ye that aefter twan dagum beoþ Eastro."

"Other examples occur: Wycliffe used the word **paske**, meaning "Passover", but Tindale, Coverdale, Becke and Cardmarden, following the old Saxon mode of translation, inserted "Easter", whose festival was celebrated by our pagan forefathers in the month of April; hence that month, in the Saxon calendar is called Easter month."

"Every view we can take of this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd" !!

Now look at what Albert Barnes (1798-1870) wrote about this phrase: "There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this", and he goes on to provide the same argument as Clarke's, almost word for word!

Acts 12:5

Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

kept in prison

Peter was probably in prison for a few days, since Herod would have waited until the Passover was complete to bring him to trial.

"kept" is **ejeereisw**, which means "continuously guarded".

prayer was made without ceasing

NAS: “prayer for him was being made fervently”

NIV: “the Church was earnestly praying to God for him”

“without ceasing” is **ektenhv**, “intense; zealous; instant”. The word signifies both fervor and earnestness⁶, so “earnest” and “without ceasing” are appropriate translations.

1 Peter 1:22, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (**ektenhv**):”

Luke 22:44, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly (**ektenhv**): and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

This is a severe crisis situation for the Jerusalem church; James had been executed, and Peter was to be the next victim. They know that Peter will not escape unless God provides some kind of miraculous interference.

Acts 12:6

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

When Herod would have brought him forth

That is, when Herod “was about to bring Peter to trial”. Herod’s plan was to bring Peter out before the crowd the next day, have a quick trial, and have him executed, as he had James.

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers.

This was the Roman method of securing prisoners, to actually chain them to the arms of soldiers, even during the sleeping hours. Usually the prisoner was bound to only one soldier, but sometimes for greater security,

⁶ Clarke: Acts 12:5

prisoners were bound to two soldiers. It’s interesting that Herod himself had been bound to soldiers⁷ for six months in Rome, until Tiberius died and Caligula had him released and rewarded. This practice of chaining prisoners was quite common and was referred to often by the ancient writers.⁸

Bound with two chains and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

One chain was fastened to each of the two soldiers. The soldiers usually took four-hour shifts of this type of prison duty. Of the 16 soldiers assigned to this detail, eight (8) were on duty at one time (the other eight presumably being off duty). Of the eight on duty, four were stationed in the outer ward of the prison, and four in the interior. Of these latter, two were chained to Peter.

Acts 12:7

And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

An angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison.

“Came upon him” is **epesth** from **episthmi** meaning “appeared” (as in NAS and NIV).

This was not a vision that Peter was seeing; it was an objective appearance of a messenger from God, as this whole narrative shows.

The Greek word for prison (**oikhma vice fulakh**) means “a room, a place, a dwelling” so it was a reference to Peter’s cell, or the area of the prison where he was being held. Gill says that Greek writers used this word for prison, for example, Herodotus refers to a large building, **oikhma mega**, used for a temporary

⁷ Josephus, Ant. xviii. 6.7

⁸ Gloag, Acts 12:6

holding place for prisoners of war who were to be executed.

he smote Peter on the side, saying, Arise up quickly.

“Smote” is **patassw** “to beat, knock, or strike”.

“Side” is **pleura**, technically “rib”, but generally the side of anything, including buildings, squares, cubes. Further, this word is used for the square or cube “root” of a number, since the side of a square or cube is equal to the square or cube root. Here, the angel is jabbing Peter in the ribs to wake him up.

And the chains fell off from his hands

Or, wrists.

Acts 12:8

And the angel said unto him, Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals. And so he did. And he said unto him, Cast your garment about you, and follow me.

It’s obvious what is happening here. Peter gets dressed and follows the angel out of the cell.

Acts 12:9

And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

Peter left the two soldiers he had been chained to. They didn’t wake up; the angel and Peter were moving very quietly.

and he did not know that it was true

Peter was really surprised and shocked by this, having woke up abruptly to a very unusual sight. He was confused for a while, and he didn’t really get out of the fog until he was outside the prison (verse 11). The NIV says, “he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real...”

he though he saw a vision

Imperfect action of **blepw**, “he kept on thinking that he was seeing a vision.” But he will soon

find out that this was no vision, or trance, but something real.

Acts 12:10

When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leads unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

past the first and second ward

For the word “ward” the NAS and NIV have “guard”. The Greek word is **fulakhn**, which can have several meanings, depending on the context. It can mean the “act of guarding”, or the “guard” himself. It is also often used to mean “prison”, as a place where a person is put in “ward”, or in custody. And it’s not clear here which of these ideas is meant. Probably, the “first ward” means the two soldiers (of the quaternion that was on duty) stationed by the door, and the “second ward” meant some other soldiers, perhaps part of the two quaternions assigned to Peter.⁹ It was indeed a miracle that Peter and the angel were able to pass undetected.

the iron gate that leads into the city

Robertson points out that the article is used three times (resumptively) in referring to the iron gate. It is **epivthn puhn thn sidhran thn ferousan** “the gate the iron one the one” leading into the city. In his grammar, Robertson says this figure is used to add emphasis to the noun. This iron gate was probably the one that opened out into the city street and it would have been both heavily bolted and guarded by soldiers.¹⁰

⁹ Robertson, Acts 12:10

¹⁰ Robertson, *Grammar*, page 762

opened of its own accord

“of its own accord” is **αὐτόματε**, “spontaneously; of its own accord” (Eng: automatically). The verb “opened” is the aorist indicative passive of **ανοίγω**, the passive indicates that the door did not open itself but it *was opened* by some outside agent.

they went out and passed on through on one street, and forthwith the angel left him

The angel took Peter out of the prison onto one of the narrow streets and then left him. We have no way of knowing what street it was. If the prison was the Tower of Antonia; and this was a very secure place indeed, and Peter would have had to go down a flight of steps from the gate to the city streets.

Acts 12:11

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

when Peter was come to himself

Peter had been awakened abruptly out of his sleep, being poked by the angel and waking up to an uncommonly bright light shining around him. Then, the chains dropped off his hands and he got dressed in a daze, thinking that he was dreaming. He quickly made his escape through several sets of guards and through an impenetrable iron gate, out into the city streets in the middle of the night. But when the angel left him, it became clear to him that his deliverance was real, and he said to himself,

Now I know of a surety ...

“Now I know of a truth”. There was no further confusion in Peter’s mind about what had happened. But he was still in great danger, because the soldiers would soon learn of his escape, by 6 AM when the guards would be changed, if not sooner.

from all the expectations of the Jews

James had been put to death, and the Jewish people and leaders were waiting for the execution of Peter like hungry wolves.¹¹ Not only the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, but the whole body of the Jewish nation who were now at Jerusalem for the Passover, expected the execution of Peter before they returned to their cities and countries; but now both they and Herod were disappointed.

Herod

from several sources, including:

Josephus, Flavius, *Antiquities*; and *Wars of the Jews*

Edersheim, Alfred, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*; *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*; and *The Temple*.

The Family of Herod

The Herod mentioned in Matthew 2 and in Luke 1, is known to history as Herod the Great. His family was Jewish, by race, but they were actually Idumeans (Edomites).

Edom is the name of a country lying south of Judah. It is bounded on the north by Moab, and it extends from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. The people of Edom were descendants of Esau, and the country has a prominence in the Bible (along with Moab) as the scene of the final destruction of the Gentile world-power in the Day of the Lord. Rev. 16:13-16; 19:17-21).

Nebuchadnezzar ceded portions of Judah to the Edomites after the fall of Jerusalem. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 49; and explains why Jeremiah had been exhorting the Jews to destroy the Edomites. Lamentations 4:21, Amos 1:11,12, and Obadiah 8-10, all prophecy the destruction of Edom by God.

The Nabataeans were the first of God's whips against the Edomites; for the Nabataeans pushed the Edomites back up into a small parcel of land

¹¹ Robertson, Acts 12:11

next to Judah. Then John Hyrcanus I, king-hierarch of Judea, 134-104 BC, subjugated Edom in fulfillment of the above prophecies, "that Jacob shall lay Esau by the heel." Hyrcanus "permitted the Idumeans to remain in their country as free men if they would circumcise their genitals and observe Jewish law." (God's final whip against the Edomites was Rome. For the Romans used 20,000 of the Idumeans as allies in the siege of Jerusalem, 70AD. But afterwards, the Romans annihilated the Idumeans, stating simply that they were a lawless and despicable race.)

Herod's grandfather, **Antipas**, had been appointed as the governor of Idumea by the Romans. He died in 78 BC, and Julius Caesar appointed Herod's father, **Antipater**, procurator of Judea, who held the post from 47 to 43 BC.

After Caesar's death in 44 BC, Rome was ruled for a time by a triumvirate, including Mark Antony, who appointed **Herod the Great** as the tetrarch of Galilee in 37 BC. Herod increased the physical splendor of Jerusalem and erected the Temple, which was the center of Jewish worship in the time of Christ.

Herod's slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem (Matt. 5:16) was in keeping with his cruel character.

Four sons of Herod the Great are named in the New Testament:

1. **Archelaus** (Matt. 2:22). When Herod died in March of 4 BC, he was succeeded by Archelaus.
2. **Herod Antipas** (Mark 6:14ff; Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:1), who was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, from 4 BC until he was banished in 39 AD. He was opposed by John the Baptist (Luke 3:19; Matt. 14; Mark 6:14ff); he desired to see Christ (Luke 9:9); he was reconciled to Pilate (Luke 23:6-12). He is the Herod of Acts 4:27.
3. **Herod Philip (Boethos)**, mentioned in Mark 6:17 as Philip (cf. also Matt. 14:3; Luke 3:19).

4. **Herod Philip** (Luke 3:1), the tetrarch of territory east of Jordan from 4 BC to 33 AD.

[A tetrarch is the ruler of the "fourth" part of a territory.]

Herod the Great had another son, **Aristobulus**, who is not mentioned in the Bible. Two of Aristobulus' children are mentioned, however:

1. **Herodias** (Mark 6:17ff; Matt. 14:3). She had been married to her uncle, Herod Philip (Boethos); but she left him to live with another uncle, Herod Antipas, the rule rebuked by John the Baptist. It was Herodias' daughter who danced for Herod Antipas (Mark 6:22ff; Matt. 14:6-11). We know from historical sources that the daughter's name was **Salome**. Salome's first husband was her great uncle, the Herod Philip of Luke 3:1.

2. **Herod Agrippa I** (Acts 12:1, 6; 18-24).

Three other descendants of Herod the Great are mentioned in the New Testament, three children of Herod Agrippa I.

1. **Herod Agrippa II** (Acts 25:13ff; 26:1,2,27-32)
2. **Drusilla** (Acts 24:24)
3. **Berenice** (Acts 25:13; 26:30)

All told, then, two or more names from each of the three successive generations after Herod the Great are mentioned in the New Testament.

Herod the Great

Caesar Augustus (Octavian), now Princeps (first citizen) of the Roman Empire after the death of Julius Caesar, appointed Herod, the son of Antipater, king of Judea, and financed his Jewish army with Roman money. Herod drove out the Parthians, protected Jerusalem from pillage, sent Antigonus to Antony for execution, killed all the Jewish leaders who had supported the puppet government, and entered into one of the most colorful reigns in history, from 37 to 4 B.C.

Herod possessed intellect without morals, ability without scruple, and courage without honor. He was like the Caesars in many

respects. He overlaid freedom with dictatorial order enforced by the military. He beautified Jerusalem with Greek architecture and sculpture. He enlarged his realm and made it prosper, achieving more by subtlety and intrigue than by force of arms. He was broken by the treachery of his offspring. He married many women and unwisely; and he knew every good fortune but happiness.

According to Josephus, Herod had great physical bravery, strength, and martial skill. He was a perfect marksman with javelin and bow, a mighty hunter who killed forty wild beasts in one day. He was always able to wind up on top of the heap even though enemies sought to discredit him with Antony, Augustus, or Cleopatra. From every crisis he emerged richer, more powerful than before.

Augustus judged Herod too great a soul for so small a kingdom and restored all the cities of the Hasmoneans to him and wanted him to rule over Syria and Egypt as well. He had become king by the help and money of Rome; and the Jewish people were working night and day to free themselves from Roman rule. So they hated Herod. Also, the fragile economy of the country bent and broke under the strain of the taxes used by the luxurious court and ambitious building program. He enlarged the Temple of Zerubbabel, calling it too small, and enraging the people. His own Temple was destroyed by Titus Vespasian in 70 A.D.

Herod's sister persuaded him that his favorite wife, Mariamne, sister of Aristobulus, and granddaughter of Hyrcanus II, was trying to poison him. He had Mariamne tried and executed. Thereafter he was faced by continual plots by his family, and he jailed some and executed others. As an old man he broke down with sickness and grief. He suffered from dropsy, ulcers, convulsions, and probably cancer. He died at the age of 69 hated by all his people. It was said of him that he stole to the throne like a fox, ruled like a tiger, and died like a dog. The Jewish kingdom was divided among

his three sons Philip, Herod Antipas, and Archelaus.

The following paragraphs, to the end of the article, are reproduced from Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*.

At first Herod the Great espoused the cause of Antony; but he contrived to remedy his mistake by paying a prompt visit, after the battle of Actium, to Augustus in the island of Rhodes. This singular interview of the Jewish prince with the Roman conqueror in a Greek island was the beginning of an important period for the Hebrew nation. An exotic civilization was systematically introduced and extended. Those Greek influences, which had been begun under the Seleucids, and not discontinued under the Hasmoneans, were now more widely diffused; and the Roman customs, which had hitherto been comparatively unknown, were now made familiar. Herod was indeed too wise, and knew the Jews too well, to attempt, like Antiochus, to introduce foreign institutions without any regard to their religious feelings. He endeavored to ingratiate himself with them by rebuilding and decorating their national temple; and a part of that magnificent bridge which was connected with the great southern colonnade is still believed to exist – remaining, in its vast proportions and Roman form, an appropriate monument of the Herodian period of Judea.

The period when Herod was reigning at Jerusalem under the protectorate of Augustus was chiefly remarkable for great architectural works, for the promotion of commerce, the influx of strangers, and the increased diffusion of the two great languages of the heathen world. The names of places are themselves a monument of the spirit of the times. As Tarsus was called Juliopolis from Julius Caesar, and Soli Pompeiopolis from his great rival, so Samaria was called Sebaste after the Greek name of Augustus, and the new metropolis, which was built by Herod on the seashore, was called Caesarea in honor of the same Latin emperor; while Antipatris, on the road (Acts 23:31)

between the old capital and the new, still commemorated the name of the king's Idumean father. We must not suppose that the internal change in the minds of the people was proportional to the magnitude of these outward improvements. They suffered much, and their hatred grew towards Rome and toward the Herods. A parallel might be drawn between the state of Judea under Herod the Great, and that of Egypt under Mahomet Ali, where great works have been successfully accomplished, where the spread of ideas has been promoted, traffic made busy and prosperous, and communication with the civilized works wonderfully increased, but where the mass of the people has continued to be miserable and degraded.

After Herod's death the same influences still continued to operate in Judea. Archelaus persevered in his father's policy, though destitute of his father's energy. The same may be said of the other sons, Antipas and Philip, in their contiguous principalities. All the Herods were great builders and eager partisans of the Roman emperors; and we are familiar in the gospels with that Caesarea Philippi, which one of them built in the upper part of the valley of the Jordan and named in honor of Augustus; and with Tiberias on the banks of the lake of Gennessaret which bore the name of his wicked successor. But while Antipas and Philip still retained their dominions under the protectorate of the emperor, Archelaus had been banished and the weight of the Roman power had descended still more heavily on Judea. It was placed under the direct jurisdiction of a governor, residing at Caesarea by the Sea, and depending, as we have seen above, on the governor of Syria at Antioch.

And now we are made familiar with those features which might be adduced as characterizing any other province at the same epoch – the praetorium (John 28:28), the publicans (Luke 3:12; 19:2), the tribute-money (Matt. 22:19), soldiers and centurions recruited in Italy, Caesar the only king (John 19:15), and the ultimate appeal against the injustice of the

governor (Acts 25:11). In this period the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ took place, the first preaching of His apostles, and the conversion of St. Paul. But once more change came over the political fortunes of Judea. Herod Agrippa was the friend of Caligula, as Herod the Great had been the friend of Augustus; and when Tiberius died, he received the grant of an independent principality in the north of 125

Palestine. He was able to ingratiate himself with Claudius, the succeeding emperor. Judea was added to his dominion, which now embraced the whole circle of the territory ruled by his grandfather. by this time St. Paul was actively pursuing his apostolic career. We need not, therefore, advance beyond this point in a chapter which is only intended to be a general introduction to the Apostle's history.

Herod Agrippa I

Herod Agrippa I, original name Marcus Julius Agrippa, lived from 10 BC to 44 AD. He was a king of the Jews, the grandson of Herod the Great, and the son of Aristobulus IV and Berenice. He was the brother of Herodias, who was responsible for John the Baptist's death.

Agrippa was considered a black sheep by the Herodian family; he led a careless and extravagant life, and he accumulated many debts.

After the murder of his father, Agrippa was sent to Rome to the court of the emperor, Tiberius. Tiberius liked Agrippa very much, and Tiberius' son Drusus and Agrippa were close friends.

When Drusus was poisoned by Sejanus in 23AD, Agrippa lost the support of the emperor and was obliged to leave Rome and go back to Judea.

After a brief period of seclusion in Judea, his uncle, Herod the Tetrarch, the husband of Herodias, made Agrippa **agoranomo~**, the Overseer of Markets, in Tiberius's government; and he gave him a large sum of money.

However, after a short time, his uncle got tired of supporting him, and Agrippa was forced to

leave Judea. He went first to Antioch, then back to Rome. Tiberius welcomed him back, and Agrippa became a close companion of Caligula, who, before he became emperor himself, was quite popular.

One day, Agrippa was talking to someone and said that he wished that Tiberius would die so that Caligula could be emperor. One of his servants overheard this remark, told the authorities, and Agrippa was arrested and cast into prison. He stayed in prison until Tiberius' death six months later (37 AD).

When Caligula became emperor, he released Agrippa from prison and gave him a huge chain of gold, equal in weight to the chain Agrippa had worn in prison. More importantly, he gave him the title of King of the Jews, and he gave him the Judean territory of Philip the Tetrarch, along with the Tetrarchy of Lysanius. The Roman Senate also gave him the honorary rank of *praetor* (Guardian of the State), and soon after than gave him the rank of a Roman consul.

In 38 AD Agrippa went to Palestine to see his new domain. This provoked the jealousy of Antipas, who had coveted the kingship for a long time. Agrippa's sister Herodias was also very angry that Agrippa had become king, so she persuaded Antipas to ask the emperor for the title; Antipas left for Rome early the next year.

When Agrippa heard what Antipas was doing, he sent one of his own servants to Rome to accuse Antipas of a conspiracy against Rome. This effort was successful and led to Antipas' downfall; Agrippa was given all of Antipas' territory and possessions.

When Caligula was murdered in 41 AD, Agrippa happened to be in Rome, and he helped Claudius ascend to the throne. Claudius confirmed Agrippa in his rulership in Palestine, and he added Judea and Samaria to his domains. Agrippa now ruled over all the territory that his grandfather, Herod the Great, had ruled.

Agrippa returned to Judea and governed it to the great satisfaction of the Jews. He had a great zeal for Judaism, and therefore a great hatred for Christians. He killed James the son of Zebedee, probably by beheading, and he imprisoned Peter. He was the most popular of all the Herods, with the Jews.

Agrippa died suddenly in 44 AD. He was attending a public gathering and was being cheered and flattered by the crowd, who called him a god. He was seized with a great pain in the abdomen, and he died a few days later.

The Roman Empire – A Short History

Introduction

This phrase, “the wisdom of divine prearrangement”, is quoted from the book *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* written by the Christian historians Conybeare and Howson. This book is one of the most widely studied biographies of the Apostle Paul. (I say “studied” because the book is not casually read.) “Divine pre-arrangements” refer to God's activity in guiding the development of the world's government and society in order to make perfect preparation for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the formation and growth of the early Christian Church. The Lord's bringing about of the “fullness of time” included the introduction and spread of the (**koinei**) Greek language and the completion and maturity of the Roman Empire.

At the time of Christ, all parts of the civilized world were bound together in one empire; one common organization controlled the whole. Channels of communication were opened everywhere and new facilities for travel were provided. The Roman government and society were prepared by divine pre-arrangements to help the progress of that religion which it persecuted. The manner in which Rome provided aid to the spread of Christianity is well illustrated by some events in the life of the Apostle Paul.

Paul's Roman citizenship rescued him in Macedonia. A Roman soldier rescued him from the mob at Ephesus. Roman soldiers saved his life when the mob in Jerusalem wanted to kill him in

the temple area. Roman soldiers escorted Paul from Caesarea to Rome on the voyage in which they suffered shipwreck. Roman soldiers delivered Paul to the Roman garrison of the Praetorian Guard for his imprisonment. Paul led a Roman governor to Christ in Cyprus. He was protected by another governor in Achaia. And a third governor sent him from Jerusalem to Rome.

All the weight of terrible tyranny was going to fall on the new religion; but before this took place, Christianity had taken firm root and had begun to grow strong in close connection with all parts of the Roman Empire. And when the Roman supreme government itself became Christian, it stayed unified until, upon dividing up into the separate nations of the European continent, each fragment was closely tied to Christianity, at least in name, as part of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Origins of Rome

While Greece was fighting the Persian wars and the Peloponnesian War, an obscure people was rising to power on the Italian peninsula. Rome had been settled about 1000 B.C. as people had migrated southward into Italy from north of the Alps. These people were known as the Etruscans, a race of people who are still obscure in history owing largely to the fact that their language has never been deciphered. We know that they worshipped evil spirits, practiced magic and voodoo, and that they enjoyed gladiatorial combat. They were also competent engineers. The early Roman kings were probably Etruscan; and the Etruscan culture dominated Italy until 508 B.C., the year assigned to the beginning of the Roman Republic.

Over the centuries, the Romans showed little talent for scientific or philosophical thinking. Their literature and art are pale imitations of Greek literature and art. Most of the Roman culture is borrowed from the Greeks. But the Romans excelled in two areas, those of law and government. The Greeks had failed in these areas and had not been able to develop a unified political state. The Romans created and held together an integrated, well-balanced empire without equal in the ancient world.

Where the Greeks jealously guarded their citizenship, the Romans offered their citizenship to large segments of conquered peoples, thereby winning a measure of loyalty and gratitude from them. While Greece destroyed itself in destructive civil wars, the Romans carried Greek culture to every part of the Western world; and for a time they brought peace and prosperity to every corner of the Mediterranean.

The Roman Republic: 508 to 30 B.C.

PATRICIANS AND PLEBEIANS

The revolution against the Etruscan domination was led by the Patricians in 508 B.C. The patricians (from the Latin word *pater*, "father") were wealthy landowners and aristocrats, and the type of government they established reflected their leadership. All public offices were held by patricians.

The "common" people were called "plebeians", a word that means "crude or coarse in manners or culture." (First year cadets at the U.S. Military Academy are called "plebes." A "plebiscite" is a vote by which the people of an entire country or district declare an opinion for or against an issue. Voltaire wanted war to be declared by plebiscite, that is, by the people who would be doing the fighting. He thought that this would end war.)

The Roman government was called "The Senate of the Roman People"; in Latin, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, or SPQR, which is found on thousands of monuments in Italy. But the word *populus* originally referred only to upper classes. Plebeians could not serve in the Senate in the early days of the Republic.

The lowest rung on the social ladder, however, was reserved for slaves, who were bought and sold as property, even by the lower plebeians.

Many businessmen were plebeians by birth and were annoyed to be excluded from the Senate. The poorer masses resented their poverty, their continually increasing debt and taxation, and the unjust laws applied to them, such as the law which provided that a creditor could imprison a debtor or sell him as a slave. The plebeians demanded that the harsh laws be repealed and that land owned by

the state and won through conquest be divided up among the people.

In 494 B.C., the Senate was engaged in fighting wars and tried to draft plebeians into the army. The plebs refused to serve until their demands were met; and since the Senate was afraid of invasion, they agreed to reduce or cancel the debts of the plebs and to give plebs the offices of two tribunes who would defend their rights in the Senate. In the same time period, high ranking officials who were trying to get elected or appointed to high office tried to curry favor with the plebs by offering land grants or by gifts of food during times of famine.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC

At the time of the revolution against the Etruscans, the king was replaced by two consuls, one to act as a check on the other. Consuls were elected for one-year terms and handled the administration of justice and military defense. The consuls, in turn, appointed the Senate, composed of 300 heads of patrician families, who served for life. The Senate advised the consuls on legislation and public policy.

The Assembly was formed to represent the plebeian class, and gradually became the highest lawmaking body, at least in theory. But in practice the Assembly had little power because the Senate held veto power over the acts of the Assembly and controlled the expenditure of public funds. From 508 B.C. until the outbreak of the First Punic War in 264 B.C., the plebeian class was constantly struggling to limit the power of the patricians and to win greater privileges and rights for themselves.

At first the laws of the Empire were not published, and the plebeians were kept in the dark about the laws. In 450 B.C. they forced the publication of the Law of the Twelve Tables; and while the laws were weighted heavily in favor of the patricians, at least now the plebs knew what the laws were and could better protect themselves against the arbitrary acts of the patrician magistrates.

In 362 B.C., the first plebeian was elected consul; and plebs began to occupy more public offices.

And since all officeholders automatically became members of the Senate, the Senate began to have more plebs.

In 339 B.C., the laws against intermarriage between patricians and plebs were repealed, and plebs were declared eligible for all offices. In 287 B.C., the Hortensian Law (named for Quintus Hortensius) was enacted which stripped the Senate of its veto power over the Assembly.

The Twelve Tables remained the law of Rome for 900 years. Until the time of Cicero, every schoolboy had to memorize them.

THE ROMAN ARMY

From the very beginning the Romans were land hungry and intent upon expanding their territories. At the beginning of the 5th Century BC, Rome conquered two neighboring tribes. In 390 BC, the city's imperial career of conquest was nearly ended when barbarian tribes of Gauls invaded Latium and sacked Rome. The republic was saved by paying a ransom of 1,000 pounds of gold. After this, the republic never lost a war. As with Persia, the success of the political institutions of Rome lay in its ability to wage war and to put down revolts. The Roman army was the most successful military organization in history.

In Rome, the citizens and the army were one and the same. The army, assembled in its legions and centuries, was the Assembly, the chief lawmaking body of the state.

The Roman Legion was a mixed unit of brigade strength, approximately 4,000 to 6,000 men, 300 to 500 cavalry, along with various auxiliary groups. Two legions made up a consul's army. Each legion was divided into centuries, at times 100 or 200 men. Each legion had its ensign (guidon). Honor forbade its falling into enemy hands; and officers sometimes threw the ensign into the ranks of the enemy to stir the soldiers into a desperate recovery.

In battle, the front ranks of the infantry used javelins when ten to twenty paces from the enemy — these were short wooden lances with metal points. On the wings, the archers and slingers attacked with arrows and stones. In hand-to-hand

combat the soldiers used the machaira, the famous Roman short sword (cf. military tactics of Dionysius of Syracuse, about. 400 BC).

THE CONQUEST OF ITALY

Rome was always surrounded by fierce enemies. At first, the republic was just a weak city-state, with an area of about 350 square miles. The surrounding enemy towns organized themselves into the Latin League, for the purpose of conquering the tiny republic. The Romans won the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 BC, aided, they said, by the gods Castor and Pollux who had left Mt. Olympus to fight on their side. A treaty was signed which admitted Rome into the Latin League; and Rome quickly became the leader and master of central Italy.

In 405 BC, Rome and another city-state, Etruria, entered into a conflict over control of the Tiber River. After several wars and skirmishes, in 351 BC southern Italy was annexed to Rome. One full generation had been involved in the 14 wars in southern Italy. During this period, tribes from Gaul and Germany had infiltrated down through the Alps and had settled as far south as the Po River. These people are described as tall, handsome, relishing war, but fighting with little armor. These are the Gauls who besieged Rome and were paid off with 1,000 pounds of gold.

In about 300 BC, the Romans finally managed to put together a semblance of order among the tribes; and the united tribes pushed the Gauls back behind the Po River. Rome was now master of Italy and the seas from Gaul to Greece.

Still not satisfied, Rome gave the Greeks the choice between entering into an alliance or fighting it out. Some of the city-states in Greece accepted Roman domination, but others held out. The holdouts enlisted the aid of Pyrrhus, an Italian king who was not a Roman. He was made general of the Greek resistance forces. In 280 BC, Pyrrhus defeated the Romans at Heraclea; but he lost so many soldiers in the battles that he was unable to follow up his victory. It is from this historical event that we get the term "Pyrrhic victory".

Pyrrhus released 2,000 Roman prisoners of war and offered peace. The Senate was about to make terms, but Appius Claudius persuaded the Senate not to make peace with a foreign army on Italian soil. The 2,000 prisoners were sent back to Pyrrhus, and the war was resumed. Pyrrhus won another victory in Italy, then he became disgusted by the laziness and cowardice of his allies. He sailed to Sicily at the time the Carthaginians were besieging Syracuse, so he was not welcomed there either. He sailed back to Italy a few months later, and lost a battle to the Romans at Regentum. This was the first victory of the Roman maniples over the Greek phalanxes and began a new chapter in the history of military tactics.

The total conquest of Italy was followed by immediate expansion of Roman control to colonies. Colonies served the purpose of relieving unemployment, reduced population pressure, and quieted class strife. The colonies served as garrisons in remote places and were an extended line of defense for Rome. The colonies provided outposts and outlets for Roman trade, and additional food was raised for the capital. The peninsula was multi-lingual, but the Latin language spread as Italy was forged into a united state.

While Rome was consolidating her gains, a great power, older and richer than Rome, was closing the Romans off from the western Mediterranean areas of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Africa, and Spain. This power was Carthage, the ancient Phoenician civilization, and they were harassing Roman shipping from Tyre and Sidon to the Guadalquivir River.

The city of Carthage was near the modern Tunis. The Latins had given the name "Africa" to the region around Carthage and Utica, and they called the population there "Poeni", the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians had originated on the eastern Mediterranean coast, around Tyre and Sidon, and were Semites - sons of Shem. (Tyre had been besieged by Shalmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander). They were similar in features to the Jews, and their language had many similarities to Hebrew. They were very wealthy and lived well,

adopting the Greek style of dress and building modern and expensive homes and temples.

Greek and Roman historians did not have much praise for the Carthaginians, considering them mercenary and dishonest. (But the historian Plutarch was a Greek, and the historian Polybius was a friend of Scipio Africanus, who burned Carthage; so there may have been some bias in this reporting.)

The Phoenicians migrated to North Africa under pressure from the great empires of Asia, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Greeks. They were great trading people, sailing immense cargo galley ships from Asia to Britain. They did not stop at the pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) but sailed as far as 2,500 miles down the coast of Africa. The rich merchants provided funds for a large army and navy which transformed Carthage from a trading post into a great empire.

Carthage was expanding right to the borders of Rome (the western half of Sicily). This expansion added to its wealth the gold of Spain as well as its iron, copper, and silver. The income of Carthage at its peak was twelve times that of Athens. The gods of Carthage were Baal-Haman to whom child sacrifices were offered. Their religions had the worst features of the Canaanite worship. God eventually allowed great devastation to be brought upon Carthage at the hands of the Romans.

THE FIRST PUNIC WAR (264 B.C.)

The First Punic War was fought at sea, where the Carthaginians had the advantage of being great seamen. The wealthy citizens of Rome, however, put together an army of 60,000 men and 200 ships with their own money. The dry land soldiers practiced long and hard to learn how to row the huge quinquiremes (five ranks of oars on each side) and to conduct combat aboard ship. The Carthaginians were resting in the successes of Hamilcar Barca and did no building up of their forces. The Roman armada, sailing secretly, defeated the Carthaginian fleet at the Aegadian Islands off the west coast of Sicily. Carthage was forced to sue for peace and paid a heavy money payment to Rome.

INTERBELLUM

Rome was near bankruptcy, in spite of the payments from Carthage. Currency was debased more than 90%. Carthage, meanwhile, was set up to be destroyed by its own greed, and its internal striving and civil wars gave Rome time to gather strength.

The rulers of Carthage withheld for some time the pay of the mercenaries which served under Hamilcar Barca. The soldiers poured into the city demanding money. Carthage's subject people, taxed beyond endurance during the war, joined the uprising. The women of Libya sold their jewelry to finance revolution. Twenty thousand mercenaries and rebels laid siege to Carthage, which had few soldiers to defend it. The rich merchants appealed to Hamilcar; and he organized and trained an army of 10,000 and raised the siege of Carthage.

The defeated mercenaries and rebels retreated into the mountains. They broke the legs and cut off the hands of 700 prisoners, then threw them into a mass grave and buried them alive. But Hamilcar maneuvered 40,000 rebels into a box canyon and slowly starved them until they tried to fight their way out and were cut to pieces.

When this internal conflict was over, Carthage discovered that Rome had occupied Sardinia, a Carthaginian island. When Carthage protested, Rome declared war. In no position to fight, Carthage bought peace with an indemnity of 1200 talents of gold and gave the islands of Sardinia and Corsica to Rome.

During the last quarter of the Third Century B.C. (c. 225 B.C.), Hamilcar Barca took a small Carthaginian army into Spain to set up a foothold in Europe. He recaptured some of the cities he had lost before, he built up an army of Spanish citizens, and he began what became a vigorous push for Carthage into new territories. Rome tolerated this conquest of Spain partly because of having been distracted by class strife at home and her own expansionist activities in the Adriatic Sea and trying to clear that area of pirates. Also, Rome was at war with the Gauls (again) so could not concentrate on Spain.

Hamilcar was killed leading a charge against a Spanish tribe, so he was succeeded in command by his son-in-law Hasdrubal (“He whose help is Baal”) who governed wisely for the eight years from 229 to 221 BC, winning cooperation of Spaniards and building the fabulous silver mines near the city of New Carthage, the Spanish city now named Cartagena. In the Carthaginian high command were also Hamilcar’s sons Hasdrubal (same name as the son-in-law), Mago, and Hannibal (“The grace of Baal”). Hasdrubal was assassinated in 221 BC, and Hannibal was elected by the army to be commander.

In 225 BC, an army of Gauls swept down the Italian peninsula toward Rome. They had 50,000 foot soldiers and 20,000 horse. The Roman legions met the invaders near Telamon, killing 40,000 and taking 10,000 prisoners. They marched on to subjugate (‘put under the yoke”) Cisalpine Gaul (“Gaul on the near side of the Alps”). Protective Roman colonies were placed at Placentia and Cremona. This was a great victory for Rome, but it had some bad side effects - now the Gauls wanted to get back at Rome more than ever. And Hannibal saw a great opportunity to enter Gaul from Spain (across the Pyrenees), raise an army of Gallic allies, cross the Alps and crush Italy.

HANNIBAL

[from *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, Caesar and Christ, by Will Durant]

Hannibal was now twenty-eight years old...and had received a soldier’s training through nineteen years in camp. He had disciplined his body to hardship, his appetite to moderation, his tongue to silence, his thought to objectivity. He was “the first to enter the battle, and the last to abandon the field”, according to Livy...The Romans accused him of avarice, cruelty, and treachery, for he honored no scruples in seizing supplies for his troops, punished disloyalty severely...Yet we find him often merciful, always chivalrous. The Romans could not readily forgive him for winning battles with his brains rather than with the lives of his men...Hannibal led his troops north...and then struck eastward into the Alps. Celtic tribes had

crossed those ranges before him...but he had difficulty getting his elephants through narrow or precipitous passages. After a climb of nine days, he reached the summit and found it covered with snow...His army of 59,000 was reduced to 26,000 by the time he reached the plains of Italy, so great were the hardships. Fortunately, he was welcomed as a liberator by the Cisalpine Gauls, who joined him as allies. The Roman settlers fled southward across the Po River.

Rome mobilized all its resources and called upon all the states in Italy to defend the land. The Romans raised an army of 300,000 foot, 14,000 horse, and 456,000 reserves. Hannibal won two battles in North Italy, but he knew he was still outnumbered 10 to 1. He failed to persuade the Italian states to join him, and his Gallic “allies” were losing heart. The Romans attacked Hannibal at Cannae with 80,000 infantry, and 6000 cavalry. Hannibal had 19,000 Carthaginian and Spanish veterans, 16,000 unreliable Gauls, and 10,000 horse. He placed the Gauls at his center, expecting them to give way, which they did. When the Romans followed them into the pocket, his veterans closed in on the Roman flanks and the cavalry attacked from behind. The Romans lost all chance of maneuvering, and 44,000 fell in one day’s battle, including eighty senators who had enlisted as soldiers. This battle ended the days of Roman reliance upon infantry and set the lines of military tactics for two thousand years.

Hannibal’s defeat of the Roman legions at Cannae shattered Rome’s hold on the southern Italian states. Several joined Hannibal, and Carthage sent some reinforcements and supplies. For a month, the city of Rome was hysterical in terror. The class war ceased, and all citizens rushed to the aid of the state. Every male who could carry weapons was enlisted and served voluntarily without pay. Rome settled in for a defense against the Lion of Carthage.

But Hannibal did not come! His 40,000 were too small a force against a city to whose defense would come many armies on a moment’s notice. If he took Rome, how could he hold it? Hannibal decided to wait until Carthage, Greece (Macedon), and Syracuse could unite with him in an offensive

that would retake Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and Illyria. He released all but a few of the Roman captives and took his troops to winter in Capua.

After a winter of relaxation and pleasure in one of the vice capitals of the world, Hannibal's soldiers were never again the invincible troops which had borne so much hardship. During the next five years Hannibal led them to some minor successes, using Capua as his HQ. The Romans besieged this city with 200,000 legionnaires, and Hannibal was forced to retire to the south of Italy.

Meanwhile, a Roman army had been sent to Spain to keep Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, occupied. Hasdrubal was defeated at the Ebro River, but the Romans lost their gains when their leaders were killed. Hasdrubal's main force escaped, crossed the Pyrenees into Gaul and the Alps into Italy. He sent a message to Hannibal with his plans for reinforcing him, but the message was intercepted by the Romans. Despite his excellent generalship, Hasdrubal was defeated by the Romans before he could reach Hannibal. Hasdrubal went to his death in combat rather than face imprisonment and disgrace by the Romans.

In 205 B.C. a new Roman army was raised, sailed for Africa, and attacked Carthage. The Carthaginians appealed to Hannibal to come to their aid. Imagine the feelings of this half-blind warrior, driven into a corner of Italy by an endless stream of enemies, seeing all his toil and hardship of fifteen years brought to nothing, and all his triumphs wasted. Half his troops refused to leave Italy with him. He landed near Carthage, hastily formed a new army, and went out to face Scipio Africanus at Zama, fifty miles south of Carthage (202 B.C.).

The two generals met in courteous interview, found agreement impossible, and joined battle. For the first time in his life, Hannibal was defeated. More than 20,000 Carthaginians were left dead on the field. Hannibal attacked Scipio in personal combat, wounding him. He attacked the leader of the Numidian cavalry, Masinissa, reformed his disorganized forces again and again, and led them in desperate countercharges. Seeing conditions hopeless, Hannibal fled to Carthage and

advised the Senate there to sue for peace. Rome settled with Carthage on the following terms:

- Carthage was allowed to retain her African empire
- She was to surrender all war vessels except ten triremes
- She was not to make war against anyone outside Rome or within it without Rome's consent
- She was to pay Rome \$720,000 per year for fifty years

This Second Punic War changed the Mediterranean in a way that is still being felt in the Twentieth Century A.D.

- It gave Spain and all its wealth to Rome, providing funds for Roman conquest of Greece
- It reunited Italy under Rome's unquestioned mastery
- It threw open all routes and markets to Roman ships and goods
- It ravaged or injured half the farmland in Italy, destroyed 400 towns, killed 300,000 men, from which southern Italy has not quite recovered to this day.
- It weakened democracy by showing that a popular assembly cannot wisely choose generals or direct a war
- It began the transformation of Roman life and morals by hurting agriculture and helping trade, by taking men from the countryside and teaching them the violence of the battlefield, and by bringing new money to finance luxuries and imperialistic expansion.
- In short, the war with Carthage was a pivotal event for almost every phase of Roman history.

To Carthage it was the beginning of the end. Their government became so corrupt that the people again called for Hannibal to come out of retirement and save the nation. He was elected leader in 196 B.C. He punished corruption and virtually eliminated graft. He relieved the citizens of some of the most burdensome taxes.

To get rid of Hannibal, the rich merchants secretly sent word to Rome that Hannibal was plotting to renew the war. Scipio used all his influence to protect his friendly rival, but was overruled. The Roman Senate demanded the surrender of Hannibal. Hannibal fled the city, rode 150 miles to Thapsus, and took ship for Antioch. He found Antiochus III hesitating between war with Rome and peace; he advised war and became one of the king's staff. When the Romans defeated Antiochus at Magnesia (near Ephesus) in 189 B.C., they made it a condition of peace that Hannibal be turned over to them.

Hannibal escaped, first to Crete, then to Bithynia. The Romans hunted him down and surrounded his hiding place with soldiers. Hannibal said, "Let us relieve the Romans from the anxiety they have so long experienced, since they think it tries their patience too much to wait for an old man's death." He drank the poison he carried with him and died at the age of 67. A few months later, his conqueror and admirer, Scipio, followed him in death. In a final war with Carthage lasting from 151 to 146 B.C., Rome completely annihilated the Carthaginians and razed their cities to the ground, sowing them with salt.

THE REVOLUTION, 145 TO 30 B.C.

Had Rome been able to avoid further war, she might have been able to concentrate her forces on the solution of her domestic problems. The very size of the Empire, however, made it impossible to avoid foreign conflicts. In 111 B.C., Rome fought a major war with King Jugurtha of Numidia in North Africa. This was followed by campaigns to punish the invading Gauls, and by a war to prevent Mithridates of Pontus from expanding his power into Asia Minor. In 104 B.C. Rome had to suppress a major slave revolt in Sicily.

The consul Marius recruited thousands of landless peasants for Rome's legions. Up to this point the legions had consisted of peasants who owned land, served their time in the army, and returned to their crops. But now the army consisted mostly of mercenaries who were loyal only to the generals who paid and fed them and led them to places where they could get booty.

Marius was the hero of the war against Jugurtha in Africa, so he was elected consul in 107 B.C. During the next 20 years, he served five separate terms. He was a poor statesman, but his large army easily overrode any opposition. He established the precedent of rule by military commanders.

In 91 B.C. Rome's Italian allies rose in revolt, charging that they were being exploited to benefit the Roman ruling class. Marius stopped the rebellion by conferring Roman citizenship on the allies, which gave them voice and vote in the Senate and Assembly. But the patrician aristocracy didn't like this move because it weakened their powers. So Sulla, the hero who defeated Mithridates in Pontus, having a stronger army, removed Marius from office by engaging him in civil wars which killed an estimated 500,000 Romans.

Sulla was the spokesman for the aristocracy and he curtailed the powers of the tribunes and restored the ancient powers of the Senate over the Assembly. In 82 B.C. Sulla was appointed dictator for life by the Assembly. The Roman constitution provided for the office of dictator during times of national emergency, but the dictator was supposed to be appointed for a fixed term and was to relinquish his powers upon the expiration of his term of office. Sulla retired in 79 B.C., not wanting to rule for life.

Several new popular leaders who had private armies began fighting for control of the Roman government. In 73 B.C. Pompey brought the rebellion of Spartacus under control, and in 63 B.C. he conquered Syria and Palestine which brought additional revenue to Rome. He became a very strong and popular leader. During the same years, Julius Caesar was conquering Gaul as far away as Belgium. For a time, Pompey and Julius Caesar cooperated in trying to take over the government.

JULIUS CAESAR 100 TO 44 B.C.

In 68 B.C., Julius Caesar was elected quaestor (governor) and assigned to serve in Spain; he was 32 years old. He led military expeditions against the native tribes, sacked towns, and collected

enough plunder to pay off some of his enormous debts. At the same time, he won the gratitude of Spanish aristocrats by lowering interest charges on money loaned to them by Romans. He returned to Rome and in 65 B.C. was elected commissioner of public works. He spent the money he had stolen in Spain and had borrowed from other men (he owed Crassus \$2,880,000), mainly on new buildings and fancy decorations for the city. He also courted favor with the working class by setting up games and entertainment.

Sulla had removed the trophies of Marius from Rome, including banners, pictures, and spoils representing the features and victory scenes of the old radical. Caesar had these restored, and by that act alone he announced his rebel policy. All the old veterans were happy with him, but the conservatives protested and marked him as a man to be broken. In 63 B.C., Caesar was chosen *pontifex maximus*, the head of the Roman religion. In 61 B.C., he was appointed propraetor for Spain, but his creditors would not let him travel to Spain.

Crassus again came to his rescue, underwriting his obligations, hoping for spoil and political favors if Caesar were successful in Spain. Caesar again used his troops to steal the Spanish tribes blind, came back to Rome with enough money to pay all his debts and have great riches left over for the Treasury. The Senate voted him a triumph. They knew Caesar wanted to be elected consul; and they also knew the custom that dictated that one who is to be given a triumph must remain outside the city until the day of the triumph. They had planned for the elections to take place before the day of the triumph. But Caesar refused to accept the triumph and entered the city to campaign for his election.

Meanwhile, Pompey had just returned from the East with a powerful army and a succession of military and diplomatic achievements behind him. He conquered Bithynia, Pontus, and Syria. He accepted a huge bribe from the King of Egypt to quell a revolt there, then refused to do so, calling it illegal. He had pacified Palestine and made it a client state of Rome. He founded thirty-nine cities and had established law, order, and peace, acting with good judgment, statesmanship, and making huge profits wherever he went. Pompey was made

extremely wealthy, and he had an army that could make him dictator at a word. Yet he generously disbanded his troops, paid them well, and entered Rome with only his personal staff.

Pompey requested that state lands be given to his soldiers. The Senate refused; and they also refused to ratify his agreements with conquered kings. The effect was to break down the relationship between the Senate and the higher classes; and Pompey and the capitalists began to look for support elsewhere.

It was at this juncture (60 B.C.) that Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus formed the first triumvirate (“rule of three men”) by which each pledged himself to oppose legislation unsatisfactory to any one of them. Pompey agreed to support Caesar for the consulate, and Caesar promised that if elected he would carry through the measures for which Pompey had been fighting. The hugely rich Crassus bankrolled these endeavors.

Caesar was elected consul and proposed the land distribution to soldiers and ratification of Pompey’s agreements with the kings. The Senate turned him down at every juncture, so he offered these ideas to the Assembly, who voted in his favor. Pompey was impressed by Caesar’s keeping his promises. The voters were kept in good humor with amusements and games.

THE CONQUEST OF GAUL

Caesar had himself appointed governor of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul in 58 B.C., and he shortly took up his duties there. The Germans had moved across the Rhine River into Gaul for the past 20 years, settling in Flanders and other northern areas. During the same period, Helvetii, from Geneva, some 400,000 strong, were moving west through territory now governed by Caesar. The German tribes were in motion, the whole line of the Rhine was threatened, and Caesar’s job was no less than to save Rome from invasion by establishing Gaul as a buffer zone.

Caesar equipped four extra legions at his own expense (illegally). Deputations from many Gallic tribes asked him for help, and he declared war against the Germans and Helvetii. He met the

Helvetians near modern Autun, winning by a narrow margin. He gave them safe passage back to their homelands (in Switzerland). He fought the Germani, under Ariovistus, at Ostheim (10 miles west of the Rhine, 160 miles south of Cologne), killing or capturing almost all of them.

Caesar began the reorganization of Gaul under Roman authority, but northern Gauls and Belgae united to attack in the area north of the Seine and Rhine rivers. They were defeated as were a succession of various rebelling tribes.

Caesar had to return to Northern Italy to replenish the legions and to work with Pompey and Crassus on political affairs. But the Germans began coming back across the Rhine. In 55 B.C., Caesar again defeated the Germans and drove them across the Rhine. Caesar invaded Britain, reached the Thames River, and exacted tribute from the tribes there.

In early 52 B.C., Caesar received word that the Gaul Vercingetorix was lining up nationalistic tribes in rebellion. Caesar's legions fought several battles against the Gauls (at Bourges, Orleans, etc.) which took a steady toll of his men and supplies. He found his fortunes at a low ebb. He staked everything on a siege of Alesia (modern Alise Ste. Reine), where Vercingetorix had 30,000 troops. Caesar surrounded the town with about as many soldiers. But he got word that there were at least 250,000 Gauls coming from the north to Vercingetorix' relief.

Caesar threw up walls in front of and behind his positions. For a week the Gauls threw themselves against the walls in vain charges. The outside attackers ran out of supplies and weapons just as the Romans had reached the end of their stores. The Gauls left the field, and the starving city sent Vercingetorix out to sue for peace. Caesar took him captive and placed him in a cage to display at his triumph in Rome. The fate of Gaul was decided, and the character of the French civilization was set. Territory twice the size of Italy was added to the Roman Empire, and 5,000,000 people became Rome's customers. Gaul provided a buffer against the Germans for four centuries.

THE PRINCIPATE, 30 B.C. TO 192 A.D.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., Mark Antony (Caesar's chief lieutenant), Octavian (Caesar's 18 year old nephew), and Lepidus (governor of Spain), formed a triumvirate to avenge the death of Caesar and to continue his policies. They hunted down the leaders of the Senate, including Cicero. While he had no part in the killing of Caesar, the triumvirs feared his oratorical and literary brilliance and wanted him out of the way. Three hundred senators and 2,000 equestrians (middle class government officials and merchants) were condemned to death. Brutus and Cassius, the actual leaders of the plot to kill Caesar, fled east to raise an army and fight the triumvirs for control of Rome.

Antony and Octavian defeated the legions of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and the Empire was divided between Lepidus (Africa), Antony (the East), and Octavian (Italy and the West). There was the inevitable power struggle among the triumvirs, and Octavian defeated Lepidus in Africa and took over.

Octavian could not attack Mark Antony directly because Antony had been a close associate of Caesar. But Antony fell under the control of Cleopatra. Octavian was then able to declare that Antony had become Cleopatra's puppet and that she was conspiring to overthrow the government of Rome for herself. The tactic worked. Rome and its Italian allies pledged support to Octavian, and Antony was defeated in the naval battle of Actium. Octavian was now master of the Mediterranean world.

Octavian was careful not to appear to be taking over. He resigned all his offices and returned the power of the state to the Senate and to the people of Rome. However, the Senate refused to allow Octavian to resign, instead naming him Augustus, a religious title indicating that its possessor has superhuman powers. As Augustus, Octavian commanded the Roman armies and navy, controlled public funds, and ruled the Roman provinces. But Octavian never assumed the title of Emperor (*imperator* = dictator). He called himself Princeps, or "first citizen" of the state, an equal among equals. Augustus and his successors

actually exercised the powers of emperors, but they technically did not claim the title. Hence, the Roman state was known as the Principate until about 284 A.D.

Augustus (Octavian) restructured Roman government; and until about 180 A.D., the basic pattern of government was his. He introduced the following reforms which had great influence on the development of the Christian church over the first three centuries A.D.:

1. All provinces were placed under the control of the Princesps, who appointed military governors.
2. All provinces were divided into municipalities. All municipal officers were elected by the freeborn citizens of the city, the community enjoying complete autonomy. Imperial officials did not interfere in local matters. Usually, the communities were dominated by their wealthier citizens.
3. Imperial officers appointed to govern the provinces were salaried by Rome. Tax collectors, in particular, were given an annual salary rather than a percentage of the taxes collected. This was done to prevent them from abusing their powers in order to fatten their pockets, and it helped make them more dependent on Rome.
4. Augustus began extensive road building programs and empire-wide postal service. This made for better trade and commerce and for better communications and imperial administration.
5. In order to strengthen his hold on the provinces, August had himself proclaimed a deity. He felt that foreign people would find it easier to obey the commands of a god than those of a conqueror. In Italy, he did not proclaim his divinity because he had a legal right to rule there anyway.
6. Under Augustus, Roman law began to reach maturity. Eminent judges issued *responsa prudentium*, the “answer of the wise”, legal opinions on the issues brought before the judges. Gradually, these answers formed a

body and philosophy of law and were accepted as precedent for the decision of similar cases. Roman law was based on statutes of the Senate, edicts of the Princesps, the “responsas”, and certain ancient customs which had the force of law. The statutes, edicts, and responsas formed the *ius civile*, the written law of the Empire. The old customs formed the *ius gentium*, the unwritten common law.

7. Roman citizens had the right to appeal to the Princesps from the decisions of local courts, and they were immune from degrading corporal punishments. This raised the dignity of Roman citizenship and established the principle that all Roman citizens, irrespective of social class, were equal before the law.

THE CITY OF ROME IN BIBLE TIMES

Rome was founded on the Tiber river in 753 B.C. It soon spread to cover seven hills, which were : Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal. The Roman Forum lay between the Palatine and Capitoline hills and was the center of Roman cultural, civic, and commercial activities.

The finest of Rome’s temples, palaces, circuses, baths, monuments, amphitheatres, and imperial buildings were near the Forum. All Roman life centered in this area, and all roads in the empire radiated from the golden milestone located in the Forum. Paul, Peter, and Luke must have been in the forum often; and here Paul may have been tried for his life. The dust and dirt of centuries cover this area now; and earthquake, fire, and time have taken their toll.

There were excavations in Rome as early as the 16th century, with extensive archaeological work being done since then. In the late 19th century, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology took up the work and have continued to oversee it until the present.

Ancient Rome was a sumptuous and magnificent city. There are many descriptions in history of its magnificence. The Forum measures 240 by 690 feet and was the scene of the trial and death of

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| The Acts of the Apostles | Page 23 |
| ACTS 212, Acts 12:1-11 | a Grace Notes study |

Julius Caesar and the oration of Mark Antony. The Coliseum, covering six acres, seated 60,000 spectators at gladiatorial contests in which Christians were thrown to wild beasts. The palaces of the emperor and the temple of Jupiter were on the Palatine Hill. More than 250,000 people could watch chariot races at the Circus Maximus.

Near the Forum can be seen the Arch of Titus (Vespasian) which has a sculptured relief of Titus and his legions carrying the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem after the siege of 70 A.D. Of course, this had not been built when the apostle Paul was alive. Also, the Arch of Constantine is in the area and tells of Constantine's proclamation of 316 A.D. in which he announced that Christianity was to be the official religion of the empire. During the excavation, in 1941, of Ostia, Rome's seaport at the mouth of the Tiber, an inscription was found indicating that in 14 A.D., during the reign of Tiberius, Rome had a population of over 4 million.

Of all the discoveries in and around Rome, the most interesting to Christians and Jews are the Catacombs which lay along the roadways outside the city, but which are never farther than three miles from the old city walls. The origin of these Catacombs is one of the strangest phases of history. They started out as sand pits discovered and exploited by people who needed building materials. The material was actually a combination of volcanic ash and sand, melted enough to cause the particles to adhere to each other. This tufa stone comprised the earth's surface for miles around Rome and was excellent when used in masonry. Many subterranean channels were dug in "mining" this sand.

During the first century, there came tremendous conflict between the young Church and the Roman Empire. The marked characteristic of the empire was tolerance; and the most notable characteristics of the Christian church were its love and benevolence. So, you would think the two would have gotten along well together. They did not, however, because the Christians swore allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of the lives, and everything

else was expected to be subservient to Him. Of course the Romans did not like this.

Also, the church had high standards for moral conduct, and they called for conformity to these standards. They said, "If you expect to be saved, you must conform to Christ's way of life." This was resented. The church condemned the world and sought to save it, but from the world there came contempt and aversion, followed by persecution.

The Christians were also thought to be very unsocial people. They were considered strange, and were hated as enemies of society. They were simple and moral in their dress, they would not go to games and feasts, they condemned those who sold fodder for the animals which were to be sacrificed to pagan gods. The public began to dread them because they thought the gods would be angry and cause their crops to fail if too many people refused to make offerings. If crops failed, if the Tiber river overflowed, if plagues came, the cry was "Send the Christians to the lions!" Yet the Christians were kind to all who were in trouble, stayed and nursed the sick during the plague when others fled, and lived highly moral lives.

In order to test people's loyalty, the Roman government required that every one appear at certain public places and there burn a pinch of incense to the emperor. The Christians considered this emperor worship, and they wished to worship only Christ. So government authorities began to seek them out and punish them with death. As a protective measure the Christians began to meet and work in secret. They sought refuge in the underground sand pits. With their tools they hollowed out rooms, chapels, and burying places. The Catacombs became their place of safe retreat. They came to live there, to worship there, and were buried there, by the tens of thousands.

The Catacombs were discovered, and excavations begun, in the 16th century. Since 1950 they have been excavated very extensively. Enough information has been gathered to fill many books. About six million people are buried in about sixty Catacombs, fifty-four of which are Christian, and six of which are Jewish. Each of these has an

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| The Acts of the Apostles | Page 24 |
| ACTS 212, Acts 12:1-11 | a Grace Notes study |

obscure entrance from which a stairway leads down to tunnels and galleries which branch off in all directions creating a network of tunnels and streets on as many as four levels connected by stairways. On each level is an immense maze of tunnels - so that in all there are about 587 miles of tunnels.

Along the walls of these passageways, or at dead ends, the Christians are buried in wall tombs. Each tomb is closed with tiles or with a marble slab on which the name, and perhaps a portrait, of the deceased appears. Often the walls and ceilings were decorated with paintings of Bible characters, or scenes such as Moses striking the rock, David, Daniel, Noah, or Jonah — in each case they represented a miraculous deliverance by God. In 1853, the archaeologist DeRossi found a marble slab with the engraving, “Marcus Antonius Rastutus made this sepulchre for himself and his own, who are confident in the Lord.”
