

Lesson 2

Study Guide

Formation and Struggles - The Birth of the Church AD 33- 200

ADDENDUM

Here are important historical bits and pieces that should help us understand this period of the Formation and Struggles of the Early Church - AD 33-200:

The Persia Empire (550 - 350AD)

These were nomads from central Asia who trekked into Iran about 1000 BC from Turkistan and Uzbekistan. They first settled in the fertile area of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Mesopotamia – Iraq). They eventually took over the declining empires of the Medes, Babylonians and Assyrians blending them into what is known as the Persians. Within their climate of toleration developed several of the world’s significant religions and codes of ethical behavior. Zoroastrianism proclaimed the existence of one god and reward or punishment in the afterlife 500 years before our Christianity. Jewish scholars living in exile in Babylon (a few miles south of Baghdad) were allowed to refine beliefs and laws of Judaism and they were allowed to be free from bondage and return home.

- The royal family of the **Achaemenids** ruled Persia for 200 years by competent administration for each King managed to improve and expanded the empire from the other. No one had ever controlled such a vast Empire or so much wealth as the eleven Persian Kings beginning with **Cyrus the Great in 550BC** until the destruction of the empire by **Alexander the Great in 330BC**.
- **Cyrus the Great** who developed this empire is famous for striking the right balance between central and local control. His leadership qualities were extraordinary and his “charter of Human rights” way before its time. It recognized the basic rights and the value of cultural diversity. Thus people he conquered were not forced into a single mold of conformity. His administration centered on a satrap, a province, headed by a governor to carry out the administration and collect taxes. A military garrison was then over each satrap to carry out the decrees. This empire extended into China and India. Alexander the Great implemented this style of management system.

The Empire of Alexander the Great – (356-323BC)

No one had better tactics and strategy. However, it was either “my way or the highway” for Alexander which eventually caused his demise. He was unable to control his empire and extract its maximum potential. He remains a classical example of Aristotle’s warning that it is more important for a leader to control himself than to conquer others. He was born to the ruling family of Macedonia and given a command at 16 years. By age 20 he was King of Macedonia and 26 master of the entire eastern half of the ancient world. With his death at 33 everything fell apart. He conquered Greece, Asia Minor, Persia and parts of Pakistan/India before he was rejected by his troops and eventually died of poisoning. His greatest legacy was leaving the Greek language and culture as a standard for centuries to come.

The Roman Republic and Roman Empire

Roman history starts in 753 BC under Romulus its first King who conquered Rome.. After his death it was ruled by six kings each of which were absolute authoritarians with their divine right to rule on a legal concept termed **imperium...the right to inflict capital punishment on any subject who refused to obey him**. After the last king the Romans became a republic with two annually elected magistrates called consuls. Each was nominated by nobles in a Senate elected by male citizens. On birth you became a patrician (wealthy aristocrats) or plebeian (labor class –farmers, tradesmen). The

foundation of Roman government was its constitution a flexible system of beliefs, traditions and laws. The senate was powerful for it was permanent and a lifetime position. Plebeians were allowed to control Rome when they succeeded to elect an executive position called tribune **which had the legal right to stop any actions of the senate.** And, the Romans appointed a dictator when they needed quick and effective solutions to serious political or military problems. They built the empire in small steps first in Italy by the Third Century, Sicily, Spain (70BC), France, North Africa (111BC) and Greece and Asia (146BC). Soon a new class of men emerged to lead Rome like Pompey, Crassus and Julius Caesar.

Julius Caesar (101-44BC) equally a gifted writer and speaker, a consummate politician and one of the great military commanders. Much like Alexander his demise was that he considered himself the only one for the job. He mesmerized his followers but galvanized his enemies. In the Roman civil war, he conquered Pompey's army in Greece and North Africa. In 46BC the senate proclaimed him "dictator for life with divine honors." He then reformed the government, rebuilt Rome's infrastructure, fed the poor, and encouraged all doctors and educators to come to Rome for citizenship and stipends. He was murdered by a group of the senate.

Augustus (63-14AD) straddles two important periods – the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. The most significant figure in Roman history. Not a conqueror or warrior he was an administrator. By 42BC the Roman Empire was in a full state of civil war for the second time in less than 10 years. Antony and Augustus were the two players in the struggle for power as heir to Julius Caesar. Antony took Egypt and married Cleopatra. Augustus took Rome and succeeded in convincing Romans that Antony would move the capital to Alexandria. Soon he conquered Alexandria and became Rome's sole ruler. He promoted the virtues of simple life style and worship of traditional gods. He recognized the need for infrastructure and built a network of roads to the ends of the empire. Finally, he developed civil service posts which required the male be a born Roman citizens of substantial net worth along with military service and good character. This proved to be a vast administrative network for the empire over the next 400years. It also developed Roman private law, a basis for our Western civil law. However, Augustus was a dictator and fidelity in marriage was not his strong suit. In the end his stepson **Tiberius (14-37AD)** succeeded him and kept the empire stable and prosperous.

- **Eleven more emperors succeeded Tiberius ending this period of study with Septimuis Severus 193-211AD.**
- **Some claim the end of the empire in 476AD with the Germanic leader, Odoacer, who conquered the western part of the empire in Italy. Others claim that the eastern half was still Roman until the fall of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks.**

First Jewish-Roman War, 67-70AD

The defeat and burning of all of Jerusalem including the Temple (70AD) resulted in the Jews being scattered or sold to slavery. Over 1,000,000 killed in the war. The revolt began in Caesarea in 66AD due to Jewish and Greek (pagan) religious tensions. Later it grew into an anti-tax protest by the Jews.

Second Jewish-Roman War, 132-136AD

Simon Bar Kokhba, the commander of the revolt was acclaimed as messiah to restore Israel. He did establish an independent state of Israel for over two years but a Roman army of 12 legions crushed this revolt. Jewish Christians hailed Jesus as the Messiah and did not support Bar Kokhba. Jewish Christians were barred from Jerusalem along with the rest of the Jews. It was said that the Romans could not distinguish between the two religious Jewish groups. Probably because they attend the same temples. +++End+++