

The Intertestamental Period

The Rise of Rome

Introduction:

1. This week we are going to depart from Israel and look at a culture that was growing on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Originally a small city-state, Rome grew into a regional power and eventually became the most dominating and impactful empire of all human history.
3. Without Rome...
 1. We would not speak the same language
 2. Modern Western culture would not exist
 3. Our government would not exist
4. The goal of this lesson is to provide an introduction to what made Rome so unique as well as give a very brief history of the Roman Republic.

I. Distinctive Qualities of Rome

A. Virtue

1. Civic Duty

- a) The idealized Roman man was a “farmer, citizen, Soldier”
- b) Ex. Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus — served as Dictator of Rome, returned power after 21 days, and retired to his small farm.

2. Discipline and Courage

- a) Ex. Gaius Mucius Scaevola — “‘Watch’, he is said to have declared, ‘so that you know how cheap the body is to men who have their eye on great glory’”

3. Piety

- a) Civic religion was part of day-to-day life. It created strong cultural bonds.

B. Emphasis on Relationships

1. Pater Familias/ Pater Potestas

- a) Very patriarchal and family-centered society.
- b) Your obligations were due
- c) The father of the family was given near absolute power over his family, even the power of life and death.
 - (1) Ex. Marriages, exposures, discipline, etc.

2. Slavery

- a) Slavery was expansive in Rome. Estimated that ~350,000 of the 900,000 inhabitants of Rome were slaves c.1 AD.
- b) Roman slavery is unlike American slavery. It was not racial. Often slaves were highly trained and educated.

3. Patronage

- a) “To accept kindness is to sell your liberty” Publilius Syrus.
- b) A very “strings attached” culture. Honor demanded that favors be repaid. Essentially slaving the debtor to the lender.

- c) Clients were honor bound to serve their patrician. This would extend to both individuals and client states.

C. Government

1. Polybius' Social Theory: Anacyclosis
2. The Romans created a government using the best of the other forms to stave off the inevitable corruption.
 - a) The Senate — An aristocratic institution that creates laws.
 - b) The Consulship — An elected position with 1-year terms shared between two men to perform executive actions.
 - c) The Assembly — Led by the Tribune of the Plebs, represented the average man.

II. A Brief History of the Roman Republic

A. Founding of Rome — 753 BC

1. Roman legend claims that a minor character from Homer's works named "Aeneas" fled and made his home in Italy. He was said to be the son of Aphrodite.
2. He eventually had two dependents, twins named Romulus and Remus. These boys were said to have been suckled by a wolf. Romulus eventually kills Remus and establishes Rome and makes himself king over it.

B. The Overthrow of the Kings — 509 BC

1. There were seven kings of Rome. Each becomes more and more corrupted by their power.
2. After the King's son Sextus Tarquinius raped Lucretia, the virtuous wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, a pact was made and the king of Rome was expelled.
3. Lucius Junius Brutus swore to never allow another king in Rome.

C. The Punic Wars — 264 BC to 146 BC

1. A series of wars between Rome and Carthage resulted in the exponential growth of Roman power throughout the Mediterranean world.
 - a) These wars existentially threatened Rome.
 - (1) Battle of Cape Ecnomus — Largest naval battle in all history. 680 Warships, with 290,000 soldiers. After the battle Rome lost more than 100,000 men in a storm.
 - (2) Battle of Lake Trasimene — 25,000 Romans killed. Including a consul.
 - (3) Battle of Cannae — ~53,000 Romans killed
2. The result of the Punic Wars was that Rome emerged more powerful than ever, and the indisputable most powerful force in the world.
 - a) Rome had a taste of conquest of distant lands, and Rome would continue to expand and conquer.

D. The Rise of Strong Men — ~107 BC - 44 BC

1. As Rome began to conquer and expand, certain individuals became enormously wealthy, corruption began to spread, and institutions began to lose credibility.
2. A series of strong-men came who seized great power in Rome. Among whom were: Marius, Pompey, Sulla, and Caesar.
3. Eventually, Caesar would amass such power that he would become “Dictator in Perpetuity” essentially becoming the first Roman Emperor.

III. Rome’s Relationship with their conquered lands

A. A System of Bureaucracy

1. A number of Roman bureaucratic offices are formed to oversee their expanding empire. These offices were often seen as stepping stones to higher offices in what was known as the *Cursus Honorum* (path of honor)
2. Two of these offices are:
 - a) Prefect/Procurator — They governed the territories of Rome.
(1) Ex. Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus
 - b) Publican — They collected taxes from the people on behalf of Rome.
(1) Ex. Matthew (Levi), Zacchaeus

B. Taxation

1. Poll Tax = 1 Denarius per person
2. Land Tax = 10%
3. Right to mint coins revoked

C. Religious Liberty

1. The procurator became the supreme judge stripping the Sanhedrin of some power (i.e. capital punishment)
2. The procurator appoints High Priests
3. Otherwise, Rome was fairly religiously tolerant and allowed Jews to worship.

D. Pax Romana

1. A time of (relative) peace throughout the Roman Empire. Allowed for ease of travel, trade, and the spread of ideas. An important factor in the success and spread of the early church.

Conclusion:

1. While much of the history of Rome happens behind the scenes of the Biblical narrative, it is nevertheless important. The Roman culture and empire are crucial for setting the stage for the success of the early church.