



Roman Empire, Caesars and Emperors

Summary Descriptions

The Julian Caesars: 49 BC - 68 AD

The Julian Caesars begins with Octavius and ends with Nero. This period starts with excellent leadership, but progressively degenerated resulting in the rule of Nero. Tiberius was reigning when Jesus Christ was born.

Nero, the last of these, used to strap on himself a lion skin with claws and personally claw to death Christians. He loved to tie Christians to stakes, pour tar over them, and light them for human torches.

The Flavian Caesars: 68 AD to 96 AD

The Flavian Caesars were the ones who conquered Jerusalem. Vespasian started the siege of Jerusalem. Titus continued it and concluded it. 1.9 million Jews died in a 90-day period.

Domitian was a real monster. He was responsible for putting John on the Island of Patmos. The day Domitian died, the Canon of Scripture was completed. The Book of Revelation was completed in 96 AD.

The Antonine Caesars: 96-192 AD

The seven Antonine Caesars included Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus. During this period, there was a big push of Bible doctrine. With the completion of the written Canon, Scripture copies were circulated all over the Roman Empire. During this period, each church had a complete Canon of Scripture. Thousands of Bibles were painstakingly detailed out by hand. During this time, the famous Sixth Legion, composed of born-again men only, amassed the greatest military record of all history. During this time, they supervised 100 years of continuous peace. You could be safe in any Roman city, even bandits and thieves were being saved.

Historians gave many accounts of how the Word of God was honored in those days. The greatest treasure of any home was the personal copy of the Word of God. An area the size of the U.S.A. had no war for 100 years.

The period was capitalistic. Christianity changed the stature of women from sleeping in stables to enjoying relative freedom. Charity abounded to the poor. Government did not feed them, so it was handled through personal charity. The only exception was the demon-possessed mob in Rome numbering about one million people.

For the first time they were humane to animals in that cats and dogs were not eaten for dinner, but became pets. Gibbon, a famous historian writing of his era said, "If a man were offered his choice of the age in which its preferred to live, he would pick the period of the Antonine emperors over any other period of history."

The historian Monson said, "If an angel or the Lord were to strike a balance, the best time to live would have been in the period of the Antonine Caesars."

The Barrack Emperors: 193-264 AD

After a great wave of positive volition toward Bible doctrine, there came a group of people who did not like Bible doctrine. And so the holiness crowd moved in - the experience people. The emphasis was on



emotion with dedications, rededications, use of tongues in worship, and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord. This was a time of controversy where positive volition toward Bible doctrine declined terribly as emotionalism gained.

Various Emperors: 264 AD to the Fall of Rome in 476 AD

Diocletian: 285-305 AD.

Constantine: 312-337 AD. He did a very bad thing by uniting church and state. This ruined Christianity. They totally rejected Bible doctrine. The Empire lost their gold reserves during this time to China and India up to 476 AD. Apostasy was rampant.

German barbarians came along and began to overrun the Roman Empire. Behind them came the Mongols. Finally in 476 AD, the Roman Empire was put down by one of the German groups. Romulus was the last emperor, but Constantine had sown the seeds for the Holy Roman Empire and from 476 AD on the church and state united taking over the Roman code completely mixing it with the Scriptural codex (law).

Profiles of the Emperors

Augustus: 27 BC - 14 AD

Augustus was emperor at the birth of Christ. He was commander in chief of the Roman army. He was appointed the permanent representative of the people for life by the Roman Senate in 23 BC. He had the right to introduce first business in Senate meetings and could call meetings. His rights were founded on a constitutional basis.

He purged the Senate of unworthy members. He demobilized much of the army and discharged veterans. Augustus created a regular professional army. He revived the state religion and rebuilt the temples. He introduced the worship of Rome as state in the provinces. He took a census of all the population and property for military recruiting purposes and for taxation. He absorbed Spain, Gaul, and the Alpine into the Roman Empire.

Augustus strengthened the defenses of his frontiers. His army lost a big battle with the Germans in the Teutoburg forest. He organized police and fire departments for Rome and appointed a secretary of agriculture to supervise the grain supply. Augustus reigned 41 years and brought order out of chaos, restored confidence in government, replenished the treasury, began an efficient public works department, and promoted peace and prosperity.

Tiberius: 14 - 37 AD

Tiberius was emperor at the beginning of the Church. He was the adopted son of Augustus. He took the throne at death of Augustus when he was 56 years old. He had a political background. Augustus had forced him to divorce his wife to marry Augustus' daughter, a real woman about town. This violation of volition and marriage institutions left Tiberius a bitter man for life.

He became suspicious, bitter, distant, and haughty. He was impartial and fair, though usually feared more than liked. His armies also lost to the Germans forcing a withdrawal of his frontier to the Rhine. He had constant domestic troubles. He retired in 24 AD leaving the empire in the hands of a subordinate. A conspiracy resulted, which when Tiberius found out was stopped by executing the conspirators. This made him more suspicious and any whisper would bring on the death sentence. He died in 37 AD.

Caligula: 37 - 41 AD



Caligula was the successor of Tiberius. He was popular in that he reduced taxes, pardoned political prisoners, gave public entertainments, etc. He had definite signs of mental weakness and demanded to be worshipped as a god. He was reckless in finances, spending freely, and soon depleted the Roman treasury. This led to replenishing it by violent means in the confiscation of property, compulsory legacies, and every kind of extortion. Caligula became such a tyrant that he was assassinated by the Imperial Guards.

Claudius 41 - 54 AD

Claudius was emperor during most of Paul's ministry and journeys. He was selected by the praetorian guard to succeed Caligula while the senate was debating restoring the republic. He did not have political background and had lived in obscurity. Claudius was a victim of some paralysis illness leaving him in a weakened state and horrible form. He was a good scholar and ruler.

Under Claudius, Rome became a bureaucracy with government by committee and secretaries. He gave citizenship to the provinces. His armies conquered part of Britain and he annexed Thrace. He attempted to restore ancient Roman religion.

Claudius expelled some Jews from Rome because of disturbances, which was possibly the reason why Aquilla and Priscilla left Rome. He married a fourth wife, Agrippina, who proved to be his downfall. Agrippina had a son, adopted by Claudius, under the name of Nero. Claudius died a year later leaving the throne to Nero, having been poisoned by Agrippina.

Nero: 54 - 58 AD

Nero was emperor under whom Paul and Peter were martyred. He was the adopted son of Claudius. His first five years were successful and peaceful. He had two main helpers; Sextus Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the praetorian guard and Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a philosopher and writer. His mother continued to maintain control over him and his advisors which they all resented.

He took care of this triarch problem by having his mother poisoned in 59 AD. By nature he was more artist than executive. He was extravagant and careless, therefore, going quickly through the funds of the treasury. Again, he also had to use violence to restore the treasury. In 62 AD, he murdered his wife and married a Roman matron named Poppaea.

The senate grew to hate him. In 64 AD, a great fire occurred and destroyed a large section of Rome. He was suspected, so he blamed Christians to take the guilt from him. As a result many Christians were arrested, tortured and killed to appease the loss. Tradition makes Peter and Paul a part of those executed in this persecution.

Several times conspiracies arose to destroy him, but not until a revolt of troops and provincials arose in Gaul and Spain was he removed. Then he fled from Rome and was killed by his own men to avoid capture. Some say he committed suicide.

He built an immense palace called to "Golden House" after the fire. Jerome states: "Paul was dismissed by Nero that he might preach Christ's gospel also in the regions of the West." This would be a reference to Spain or Britain. Clement, Chrysostom, Theodoret and other fathers assert that Paul went to Spain.

Galba: 68 AD

Galba was the successor of Nero and established by the military, but not with unanimous consent. He was killed at the instigation of Otho who had been a former supporter.



Otho: 59 AD

Otho's appointment was accepted by the senate and he became emperor. Vitellius of Germany marched on Rome. Otho was killed and Vitellius took his place.

Vitellius: 69 AD

Vitellius was recognized by the Senate. He could not control the military and could not establish a stable government. Vespasian, a general in the eastern army, had Jerusalem under siege, but left the siege of Jerusalem to Titus, his son, and went to Egypt to cut off the food supply to Rome. Vespasian's troops marched to Rome, conquered troops of Vitellius, captured and sacked Rome, and killed Vitellius. Vespasian was made ruler.

Vespasian: 69 - 79 AD

Vespasian was an old soldier type and a rigorous administrator. His son, Titus, completed the conquering of Jews in 70 AD. He made the treasury solvent by strict economy and new taxes. He built the famous Colosseum. He died in 79 AD leaving office to Titus, previously made a coregent. He was the first of the Flavian dynasty. His two sons Titus and Domitian were to follow.

Titus: 79 - 81 AD

Titus was one of the most popular emperors ever. He held great public entertainments and was personally generous. During his reign was the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum on the Bay of Naples. Titus did his utmost to rescue the victims. Rome was hit by another great fire which destroyed the New Capitol, the Pantheon and Agrippa's baths. Titus sold some of his private furniture to contribute to the general need. He built new buildings and a large amphitheater.

Domitian 81 - 96 AD

Domitian was emperor during John's exile. He was the younger brother of Titus and was appointed by the senate as emperor at the death of Titus. He was an autocrat. He attempted to establish or improve morals by clamping down on public prostitution and restraining corruption on the stage. He revived temples of older God's and suppressed outside religions. Persecution of Christians was attributed to him. Domitian demanded worship of himself, was an economist and used subordinates to carry out policy. By nature, he was suspicious of rivals and was a hard man. His own family was so keenly suspicious of Domitian that they secured his assassination.

Nerva: 95 - 98 AD

Nerva was the first of the so-called "Good Emperors." He focused on reconstruction and economy to bring order out of chaos in the empire's finances. He reigned only about 16 months being an old man when taking the throne. His reign was generally free from internal tensions and held the military in check by appointing Trajan as his second, who was strong both in the military and government administration.

Trajan: 98 - 117 AD

Trajan was a Spaniard and a soldier by profession. He was aggressive in temperament. He had a lot of revolts and insurrections. He suppressed a revolt of the Jews in the Near East in 115 AD. He died in route to the capital in Cilicia in 117 AD. He gave endorsement to the persecution procedures of Pliny the Younger regarding persecution of Christians.