



Roman Empire, The Fall

Endurance of the Roman Empire

How was the destruction of the Roman Empire averted for so long? The strength given by law and order, good communication, the genius of Julius Caesar, the birth of the Lord, and dissemination of Bible doctrine.

Julius Caesar was a genius of organization, of military campaigns, he was supreme dictator of Rome from July 28, 46 BC to March 15, 44 BC. But he was influential for about five years before his assassination.

The spiritual emphasis is that Jesus Christ came in the fulness of time. Religion was bankrupt. Gal. 4:4.

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,” (Galatians 4:4, NASB)

The era of the Antonine Caesar was the greatest period of world peace the world has ever known apart from the future Millennium.

Many people were killed in the many civil wars in the Roman Empire. One major civil war took place from 49-46 BC.

There was moral decay, political decay, two parties fought it out in civil wars, as a result, widespread slavery. In the Spartacus Revolt: 10,000 slaves were crucified at one time on the roads leading into the Roman Empire. Reform was tried, but the reformers were assassinated. The principle here is that the greatest of reformers or legislatures cannot save a nation. There is no hope for a nation apart from evangelism and Bible doctrine.

The Fall of the Roman Empire Historically

The death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 AD marked the end of two centuries of imperial prosperity, thus beginning the leadership decline. This was followed by a century of civil wars and struggles. During the third century the empire was bombarded from the outside by other powers. Another great factor was the economic collapse. This developed from several sources. One was the fact that by the third century, virtually all land was in the hands of a small aristocratic group. This was the first step to feudalism, which would be the characteristic of the Middle Ages.

The currency was devalued by reducing the content of precious metals. Civil war decreased the purchasing power and disturbed trade. The country did not sell or export as much as it bought or imported. The prosperity of Rome was based on it extracting tributary money from the provinces. The federal system prospered at the expense of the local systems.

In 234 AD, Diocletian reduced the senate to merely a city council system and established himself as the absolute authority. Diocletian's power structure cut out almost completely local government by dividing the Empire into 12 units and organized the 12 units into four prefects. He created a huge civil service system. To keep things straight and the graft out, he had to create a huge secret service system. This spy system couldn't keep the graft out. At his death, more civil war began again. By 395 AD, the Empire was formally divided and Constantinople was made the new capital.

Great economic chaos resulted from the reign of Diocletian and Constantine who followed him. Some of



their results: Diocletian sought to fix maximum prices for goods, but couldn't enforce his laws. Constantine determined that no "colonus," a man farming a parcel of land owned by another (a tenant farmer), could leave his land and that the children had to accept the rank of their father.

The invasion from outside of the Empire: The Germanic tribes had attempted as early as 113 BC to break into the empire. In 375 AD, the great invasions began. The basic factor being restlessness and hunger for more land and plunder of Roman possessions. The Huns also grew restless and came into the Empire from the East. In 372 AD, the Huns invaded the Ostrogoths. The Visigoths entered the Empire to escape and defeated the Roman legion in 378 AD at the Battle of Adrianople, breaking the back of Roman defense.

In 410 the Visigoths sacked Rome. In 476 a German leader of the imperial army deposed the last of the long line of emperors and took over control of Italy. This man lost Italy to the Ostrogoths, thus dissecting the Roman Empire up into many sections: Visigoths in Spain, Vandals in North Africa, Burgundians in Gaul, Franks in the northern part, Anglo-Saxon in Britain, Ostrogoths in Italy.