The background is a composite image. On the left, the lower portion of the Colosseum is visible, showing its iconic tiered arches. On the right, a large, classical marble bust of a man's head is shown in profile, facing left. The upper portion of the image features a map of the Roman Empire, with various regions labeled in Latin: DACIA, MYSIA, MARE, TRACIA, MARE, and ISADICANA. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of gold, brown, and beige, giving it an aged, historical feel.

ROME & THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Welcome!



Welcome to this new study on *Rome & the Birth of Christianity*! We are glad you chose to join us and trust you will be challenged and your life transformed as you consider the insights and principles that have come to us from the early days of Christianity.

Introduction

Jesus Christ was born into a vast world power: the Roman Empire. The story of his birth in Bethlehem, his life and ministry in Galilee and environs, his suffering and death in Jerusalem, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven were recorded by the New Testament writers who, themselves, lived under the far-reaching yoke of Rome. The Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires had all passed from the scene, including the successors of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). By 270 BC, the Hellenistic states consolidated into three: the Antigonid dynasty (centered on Greece), the Seleucid Empire (Syria), and the Ptolemaic Kingdom (Egypt). Over two centuries later, the Roman Empire would be ruled by Gaius Octavius, or Caesar Augustus.

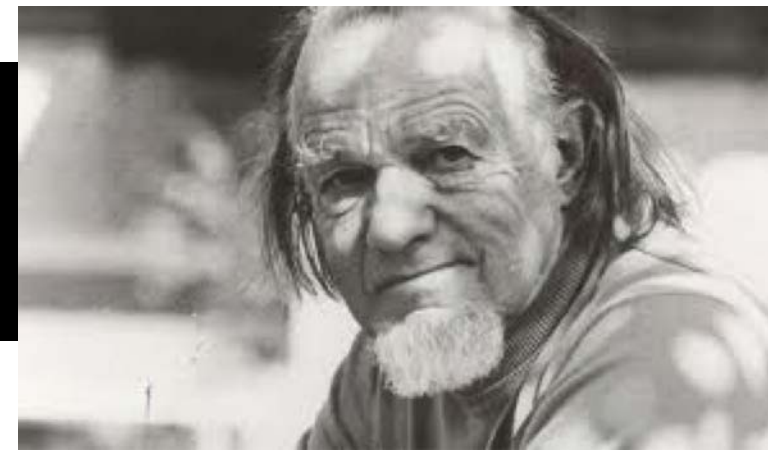


Introduction

If we would understand Christianity today and the impact it has had around the world, we must “recall,” as the late Yale historian Kenneth Scott Latourette urged, “the environment into which it was born. Many of the characteristics of what we call Christianity can be appreciated only as we see the setting out of which it arose and in which it first found itself.” From this vantage point, we will investigate the beginnings of the Christian faith and note how those who embraced the gospel lived their lives as true followers of Jesus Christ. Then, from a distance of over 2,000 years, it is hoped that we might read the Scriptures with new eyes and ask the question posed by the late Francis Schaeffer: “How Should We Then Live?”



Introduction



“There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind – what they are in their thought world determines how they act. This is true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of their thought world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world. This is true of Michelangelo’s chisel, and it is true of a dictator’s sword....‘As a man thinketh, so is he,’ is really most profound.”

- Francis A. Schaeffer

Paul: A Roman Citizen

“The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. And when they had stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge **a man who is a Roman** and uncondemned?’ And when the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, ‘What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.’ And the commander came and said to him, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman?’ And he said, ‘Yes.’ And the commander answered, ‘I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.’ And Paul said, ‘But I was actually born a citizen’” (Acts 22:24-28).

The Founding of Rome

- The legendary account that Rome was founded on April 21, 753 B.C. by the twins Romulus and Remus comes to us from Titus Livius, better known as Livy (64 or 59 BC – AD 17). See Book I for the complete story.
- The babies were abandoned at birth and, miraculously, a she-wolf emerged from the woods to suckle them until found by Faustinus, a shepherd on the Palatine Hill.
- When they grew up, they founded a new city bearing Romulus' name: Rome.



The Capitoline Wolf
Palazzo dei Conservatori
Rome, Italy

Birth of Rome Annual Celebration



- The celebration occurs every year on April 21.
- The capital celebrates its 2,769th birthday on Thursday, 21 April, 2017.

Overview: From 753 – 509 BC

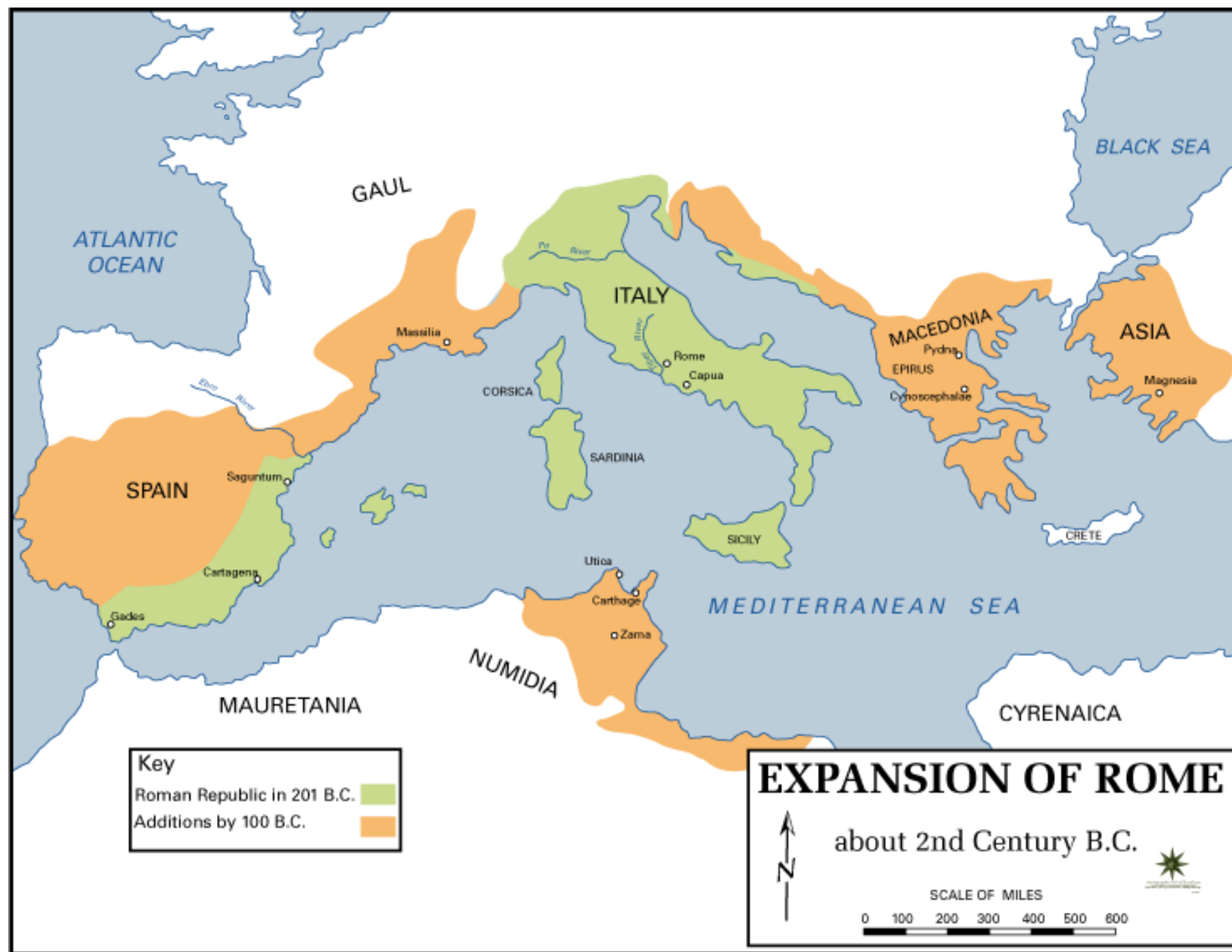
- Early settlements: Latin farmers or shepherds
- Etruscan Kings (616-509 BC)
- The founding of the Republic (509 BC); the Etruscan Kings were expelled.
- “To those of us who are accustomed to think of Rome in terms of Augustus’ famous phrase as having been built of brick before his day and marble afterward, it is not easy to envisage what primitive Rome must have looked like” (Georgina Masson).



Seven Hills of Rome

The Foundation of the Republic

- The Founding of the Republic: Around 509 BC, the Etruscan kings (monarchy) were replaced by elected officials.
- From the founding of Rome to its liberation was 244 years.
- Two consuls were elected annually by popular vote and held power with the Senate (patricians, nobility).
- Consul, *n.*, “the title of the two annually elected magistrates who exercised conjointly supreme authority in the Roman Republic” (OED).
- Stage One: The Conquest of Italy: 501 – 266 BC
- Stage Two: The Acquisition of the Western Empire: 264 – 133 BC (Three Punic Wars from 264-146 BC). Carthage was burned to the ground and became the first Roman *provincial* or imperial possession.





The Foundation of the Republic

- The first four territorial provinces of the Roman Empire were Spain, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. The number of annual consuls was raised from two (in Rome) to six.
- “The Romans knew no way of administering their public affairs except by annual magistrates, though, when there were more ‘jobs’ than there were magistrates...they hit on the device of continuing a magistrate’s command (*imperium*) after the end of his magistracy, giving him the title of pro-magistrate – proprietor or proconsul” (Balsdon).
- So the foundation of the Republic was laid as they learned how to levy taxes and create and enforce Roman law in the provinces.



Julius Caesar (100 -44 BC)

- In 60 BC, the Senate was forced to recognize the first Triumvirate (or, Gang of Three): Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus.
- Caesar gained a military reputation in Spain and, with the support of Pompey and Crasso, was elected consul in 59 BC.
- In 58 BC, Caesar went north to begin his lengthy conquest of Gaul. Caesar's Gallic Wars (58 – 51 BC).
- In 56, BC, the triumvirate was formally renewed.
- In 53 BC, Crassus was killed at Carrhae with his legions fighting in the desert with the Parthians.
- Now, only Caesar and Pompey remained in power.

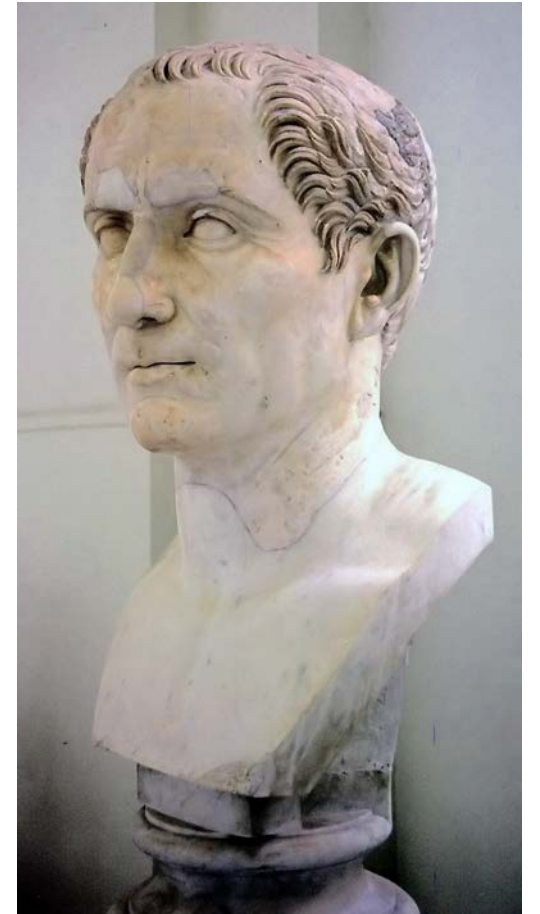


Julius Caesar (100 -44 BC)

- Caesar started a Civil War in 49 BC by crossing the Rubicon into Italy and seizing Rome.
- Caesar was appointed dictator by the people (Pompey fled to Egypt after being defeated at Pharsalus, where he was murdered upon arrival).
- He was seduced by Cleopatra and won victories in Africa and Spain, after which he returned to Rome and began his reforms.
- In early 44 BC, Caesar assumed perpetual dictatorship.
- The Senate, led by Brutus, assassinated Caesar on the Ides of March (March 15, 44 BC). About 60 senators were involved.

Julius Caesar: Shakespeare

“Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.”



The Second Triumvirate

- Mark Antony, Octavian Caesar (Julius Caesar's adopted son), and Lepidus formed a Second Triumvirate.
- They pursued Caesar's assassins to Greece and defeated them at Philippi in 42 BC.
- Octavian took control of the west, while Antony controlled the east, where he became involved with Cleopatra (he was married to Octavian's sister, Octavia).
- In 31 BC, Octavian and Antony faced each other in the Battle of Actium, northwest of Greece, and Octavian was victorious.
- Antony fled to Egypt, where he and Cleopatra committed suicide.
- In 29 BC, Octavian returned to Rome after these long civil wars.
- Octavian assumed the title *Augustus* in 27 BC.



From Republic to Imperial Monarchy

“It is surprising that the Republic had postponed trouble for so long, but its structures proved increasingly inadequate to cope with running its bloated empire. Rising poverty, land hunger and an accumulated popular sense of injustice came to a head around 100 BCE. Seventy years of misery and intermittent civil war followed, ending with the defeat of one party boss by another in 31 BCE, when Octavian won a naval victory at Actium against Mark Antony and his ally the Ptolemaic queen of Egypt, Cleopatra. Octavian, adopted heir of the assassinated general and dictator Julius Caesar, achieved supreme power within the Roman state in a series of unscrupulous manoeuvres; he now had to hang on to his power and bring back peace to the shattered state.



From Republic to Imperial Monarchy

“His lasting success came through meticulous adherence to all the old forms of the Republican constitution. The Senate and the two annual consuls continued to function for centuries – in fact a Roman Senate modelled on that of old Rome was still convening in Constantinople until the extinction of this New Rome in 1453.”

- Diarmaid MacCullouch



Philip Schaff: Church Historian

“The Romans were the practical and political nation of antiquity. Their calling was to carry out the idea of the state and of civil law, and to unite the nations of the world in a colossal empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the Libyan desert to the banks of the Rhine. This empire embraced the most fertile and civilized countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and about one hundred millions of human beings, perhaps one-third of the whole race at the time of the introduction of Christianity.”

The Roman Empire

in 117 AD, at its greatest extent





Duration of the Empire

“The western part of the Roman state survived for twelve hundred years, and in its eastern form the Roman Empire had a further thousand years of life after that.”

- Diarmaid MacCullouch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*



The Twelve Caesars

The Julio - Claudians	
49 - 44 BC	Julius Caesar, dictator
31 BC – AD 14	Augustus, first emperor
AD 14 – 37	Tiberius
AD 37 – 41	Caligula (Gaius)
AD 41 – 54	Claudius
AD 54 – 68	Nero
The Civil Wars	
68 – 69	Galba
69	Otho
69	Vitellius
The Flavian Emperors	
69-79	Vespasian
79 – 81	Titus
81 – 96	Domitian



Preparing the World for Jesus Christ

“The literature of the ancient Greeks and the universal empire of the Romans were...the chief agents in preparing the world for Christianity....They laid the natural foundation for the supernatural edifice of the kingdom of heaven. God endowed the Greeks and Romans with the richest natural gifts, that they might reach the highest civilization possible without the aid of Christianity, and thus both provide the instruments of human science, art, and law for the use of the church, and yet at the same time show the utter impotence of these alone to bless and save the world” (Philip Schaff).

Gaius Octavius: Caesar Augustus



“Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census should be taken of all the inhabited earth.”

- Luke 2:1