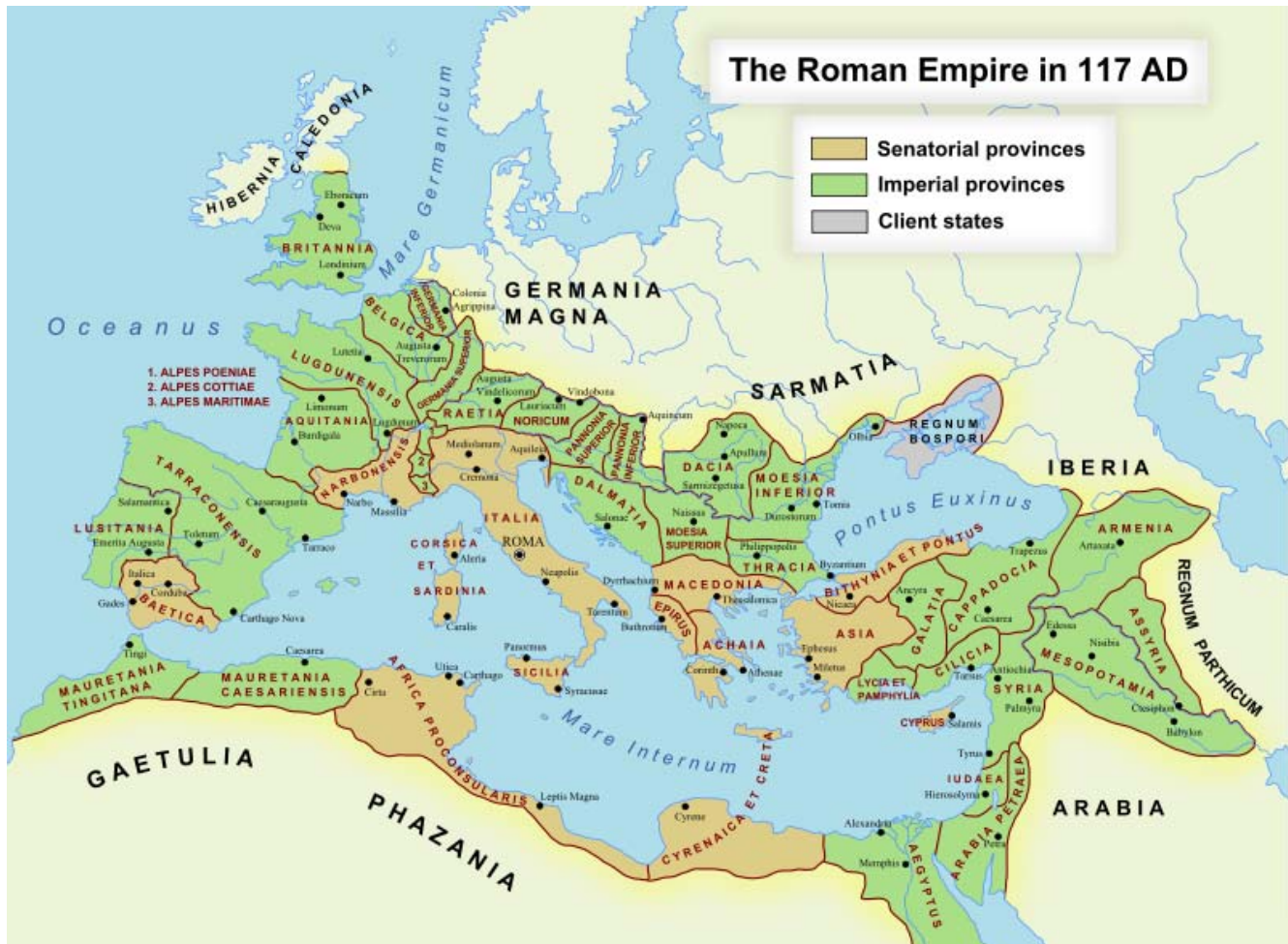


WEEK #3 “ROMAN RULE & EARLY CHURCH” (HANDOUT #1 OF 3)

History of Christianity—By Pastor Daren Erisman—March 18, 2009



ROMAN RULE AND THE SEEDS OF REVOLT

- **The Building Blocks of the Roman Empire**
 - **Military & Roads**
 - **Legions** comprised of 6,000 fighting engineers and based at the frontiers of the empire. There were about 25 legions in the early part of the 1st century.
 - Legions **built paved roads** (no mud), and high-arched **bridges** (no flooding) to be able to move 15 miles per day to crush any rebellion within the empire.
 - **Commerce & Culture**
 - Trade flourished along these Roman roads as well as communication
 - This resulted in Romanization (language, culture, urbanization, ideology)
 - **Politics**
 - Marked by the **increasing power of the Emperor or Caesar over the Senate.**
 - The Emperor had power over the Roman Senate and therefore central control of the empire during this time period. This power had come relatively recent to this time period with the rise of Julius Caesar (~48 BCE, after almost 500 years of being a Roman “Republic”).
 - Importantly, the newer provinces had legions directly under the control of the Emperor, including the province of Iudaea (Area around Israel)
 - **Egypt was the “breadbasket” for the empire** and directly controlled by the

- Emperor. A Roman Senator was not even allowed to enter the province.
- **Coinage** would often be minted with the face of the Emperor—an important method of propaganda
 - **Romanized aristocracy** from the provinces allowed some local elites to rise in power within the empire, even to the level of the Senate or eventually, Emperor.
- **Ideology & Religion**
 - The Roman empire understood itself as divinely mandated to conquer and rule the world eternally
 - The Roman empire largely tolerated the religions and cultures of the peoples it conquered as long as they observed and offered sacrifices to the divine emperors and loyalty to the empire
 - With the rise of the Emperor's power and accompanying Imperial Cult, friction increased between the Jews and the Romans

Iudaea Province in the First Century



WEEK #3 “ROMAN RULE & EARLY CHURCH” (HANDOUT #2 OF 3)

History of Christianity—By Pastor Daren Erisman—March 18, 2009

- **Roman Occupied Israel (Named the Roman Province of Iudaea in 6 CE)**
 - **Jewish Maccabean Family or Hasmonean Dynasty (165 – 37 BCE) Falls from Power**
 - Becoming independent from Seleucid (Greek) control, Israel briefly gained independent control under the Hasmoneans and gained recognition from the Roman Senate in 139 BCE.
 - **Herodian Monarchy under Roman Control (37 BCE - 92 CE)**
 - Roman influence and gradual control occurred with brief bouts of independence, but by 40 BCE, the Roman Senate declared **Herod the Great** as King of Israel.
 - Herod the Great, with Roman military authority, gained final control of the Iudaea province by 37 BCE and eliminated the last Hasmonean heirs.
 - Herod the Great died in 4 CE and the kingdom was divided between his sons.
 - One of his sons, **Herod Antipas** had control of Galilee (4 – 39 CE) and was therefore the Herod mentioned in the Gospels responsible for John the Baptist’s death and involved in the death of Jesus.
 - **Pontius Pilate as Roman Prefect (26 – 36 CE)**
 - Under control of the Emperor, the Roman prefect had military control of the province.
 - **Great Sanhedrin**
 - The Jewish supreme court of its time consisting of 71 judges that met near the Temple in Jerusalem to dispense justice on religious matters. The High Priest was its leader.
 - It was composed of Sadducees, and with their innate connection to the Hasmonean monarchy, Herod the Great severely limited their power in 37 BCE.
 - This is why they were politically limited in directly executing Jesus.
 - **Zealots**
 - A political group arising in the Iudaea Province against the Roman occupiers and their Jewish sympathizers
 - Their aim was to remove Roman occupation since only a King from the lineage of David could rightly rule Israel.
 - **Sicarii**: A violent group within the larger Zealot movement that carried out assassinations of Romans and Jews associated with the Roman rule such as the Sadducees.
 - The Zealots coalesced as a group particularly in the **Great Jewish Revolt of 66 CE**
 - The Zealots seized control of Jerusalem and held it until 70 CE when Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, retook the city and destroyed the Jewish Temple.
 - After the Temple’s destruction, 960 Zealots fled and took the Roman fortress of **Masada** and kept it for 3 years against the Romans. When the Romans finally captured it, they found that almost all the Zealots had committed suicide.

HISTORY AND HISTORIANS

- **Josephus** (37 - c.100 CE)
 - First-century **Jewish historian** who recorded the Jewish revolt against Rome (66-70 CE) in his *The Jewish War*, and Jewish history in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.
 - A controversial figure who was part of the Jewish revolt against the Romans, alluded committing suicide, was captured by the Romans, and later worked with the Romans with patronage from the Flavian line of Roman Emperors
 - Important source of information for:
 - Maccabees, Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties
 - Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots
 - Pontius Pilate, Herod the Great, John the Baptist
 - Jesus referenced in terms of James, the brother (or cousin?) of Jesus: “Ananus, therefore, being of this character, and supposing that he had a favourable opportunity on account of the fact that Festus was dead, and Albinus was still on the way, called together the Sanhedrin, and brought before them **the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James by name**, together with some others, and accused them of violating the law, and condemned them to be stoned.” *Antiquities* xx.200
- **Eusebius of Caesarea** (c. 263 - c. 339 CE)
 - Considered the **Father of Church History**, he wrote about Church and world history with his most known works being *Ecclesiastical History* and *Chronicle*.
 - Importantly, beyond his historical content, he references and gives the details of many historical sources that are now lost.
 - Bishop of Caesarea Palaestina and acquaintance of **Emperor Constantine**, he was a participant of the Council of Nicea (325 CE) at which the **Nicene Creed** was established.
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THE CHURCH BEGAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE

- **Christianity begins as a sect of Judaism**
 - They were Jews who worshipped in the Temple and the local synagogues
 - Not “Christian” but followers of Christ, the one who fulfilled Judaism
 - Term “Christian” later used first in Antioch (according to Acts 11:26)
- **Pre-existing Jewish divisions**
 - **Separate languages and locations**
 - **Aramaic** speaking Jews who **lived in Palestine**
 - **Greek** speaking Jews who **lived outside of Palestine** but would pilgrimage to Jerusalem during festivals such as Pentecost
 - These Jewish pilgrims often spoke Greek rather than the Aramaic of Palestine and they tended to group themselves separately from their fellow Aramaic speaking Jews
 - **Later, for Christians:** For those Greek-speaking Jews who became followers of Jesus, this separation continued and with it, a lesser regard for Temple worship and its associated laws
 - **Two types of Jewish converts:**
 - **Proselytes:** Circumcised Gentile converts to Judaism (became fully Jews)
 - **“God Fearers”:** Uncircumcised Gentile believers who prayed and worshipped with Jews, but could not eat with them (they were considered by the Jews to still be ritually unclean)
 - **Later, for Christians:** Who was considered “clean” and “unclean” due to circumcision would become an even more critical question for a faith that had at its core, the celebration of the “meal” of Holy Communion

EARLY CHURCH AND EARLY DIVISIONS

- **Importance of the Jerusalem Jews who followed Jesus**
 - **Peter** with the other disciples who were the earliest followers of Jesus became the obvious leaders of a quickly growing movement.
 - Also, Jesus’ own family members would assume roles of leadership, the most famous being James, the brother (or cousin?) of Jesus, sometimes called **James the Just**.
 - **TODAY:** The descendents of Jesus’ family would later be called the Desposyni (“of or belonging to the Lord”) → Leading to modern day speculations such as found in the book/movie, *The Da Vinci Code*.
 - An important feature of the Jerusalem Jews, particularly James the Just, was their **adherence to Jewish law and Temple worship**
- **Growing struggle: Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians → How “Jewish”?**
 - As the minority group of Greek-speaking Christians grows (particularly Gentile converts to Christianity) there is a natural strain on the community that has been almost exclusively Aramaic-speaking Jews in and around Jerusalem.
 - These Greek-speaking Christians tended to diminish the value of the Temple and its associated laws and this brought antagonism from the Jewish authorities (towards all Christians, Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians)
 - The **martyrdom of the Greek-speaking Stephen** is a prime example of

Jewish authorities punishing a voice from what was looking less and less like a benign Jewish sect.

- One of the Jewish authorities was a Pharisee named Saul who in a conversion experience on the way to Damascus would become Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles.
- **Paul and the mission to the Gentiles**
 - **Church at Antioch**
 - Antioch a natural “second home” for the Church and the place where “Christians” got their nickname.
 - A Greek-established, Greek-speaking city, the capital of Syria with a large Jewish population (perhaps 1 in 5 citizens)
 - The first mixed-race church with Jewish and Gentile Christians
 - Big debate within Christianity: Circumcision required to be Christian?
 - In Antioch: “No!” In Jerusalem: “Yes!”
 - Paul had been sent to work with Barnabas in Antioch before the circumcision debate and had established numerous churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)
 - **Pax Romana** and the opportunity for a nascent Christian Church
 - In ~47 CE, Jerusalem Christians came to Antioch to offer mass circumcisions to the Gentile Christians
 - **Jerusalem Council of 48 CE → The Break from Judaism**
 - Paul shared the stories of all the churches that had been established among the Gentiles and countered the required of circumcision.
 - Amazingly, James, Peter and John agreed.
 - **This was a critical turning point of the church**
 - Up to this point, Jewish-Christians had simply been a Jewish sect and were largely able to participate in Jewish worship, etc.
 - Now, with the full inclusion of uncircumcised Gentile-Christians, **Christianity had differentiated itself from Judaism.**